

# Hutus fearing revenge prepare to fight or flee as Tutsis advance

Annie Thomas

AFP, April 13, 1994

KIGALI, April 13 (AFP) - Terrified Hutus formed self-defence militia Wednesday to defend themselves against a feared revenge onslaught by Tutsi rebels, poised to capture the Rwandan capital Kigali.

A grenade in each hand, a Hutu soldier quizzed the few drivers risking travel in Kigali's streets after a week of bloody ethnic conflict in the eastern African state, and searched the back of their cars.

"We're looking for (Tutsi rebel) infiltrators," he said at the roadblock in the centre of town, where three bodies lay in a row on the side of the road.

The militia, armed with grenades, Kalashnikovs, machetes, bows and arrows, were being "trained" by Rwandan soldiers as they marched through the streets in small groups.

More than 10,000 people have died and millions have been forced into flight during the killing of minor-

ity Tutsis by majority Hutus which followed the death of Hutu president Juvenal Habyarimana in a plane crash last Wednesday.

The Tutsi Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) continued to battle with the Rwandan army for control of the capital Wednesday, after saying its reinforcements had succeeded in penetrating the city.

Heavy morning fighting died down into occasional rumblings by the afternoon, amplified by the echo of the hills. In some areas the two sides were on different sides of the same street, exchanging rounds of machinegun fire, mortar or artillery shells.

There was no independent confirmation Wednesday of how many RPF troops were involved or how quickly they were advancing.

It was also not clear if the rebel reinforcements from the north had managed to join the RPF unit in the

east of the capital, where they had been stationed under the terms of an earlier peace agreement.

According to the agreement, signed at Arusha in Tanzania last August to end three years of civil war between the two tribes, the troops were invited to protect Tutsi leaders set to join a transition government.

The interim government installed after the president's death says government troops are in control and denies that rebel troop reinforcements have already entered Kigali.

The government, which fled the city and set up headquarters just outside Kigali Tuesday, argues that fighting outside eastern neighbourhoods is caused by rebel "infiltrators", who are being hunted ferociously.

The RPF says the reinforcements and western troops have met up and claims to have taken control of four strategic points in Kigali.

According to an official of the UN Mission for Aid to Rwanda, rebels were trying to capture a police camp in the north of the capital.

UN officials were continuing shuttle diplomacy after the government

offered a ceasefire Wednesday, but this was rejected by the rebels who refused to "talk with criminals" and recognise the "illegal" new cabinet.

A rebel spokesman late Tuesday gave the French, Belgian and Italian forces present in the capital 24 hours to quit or face attack. He urged the 450 Belgian UN peacekeepers to stay, however, and said the RPF still wanted to implement the UN-backed peace agreement after "restoring order" to Kigali.

The final decision rests with the UN Security Council, which must decide whether the agreement has any future after the latest killings.

On Wednesday a unit of Belgian paratroopers sent to help the evacuation of foreigners remained in the city, holed up in the French school. Reports from the airport said Belgian and French troops might leave in the evening.

The RPF has accused France of siding with the Hutus, while the government has accused the Belgians of backing the Tutsis, the former overlords when Rwanda was a Belgian colony.

at-sa/sg/bm