

Japanese troops return from Rwandan refugees camps

AFP, December 18, 1994

TOKYO, Dec 18 (AFP) - A batch of 120 Japanese soldiers returned home Sunday after a three-month humanitarian mission in Rwanda, Japan's first military-supported aid operation under national command since World War II.

Another contingent of 140 troops are due to leave the Zairean town of Goma - where they have assisted Rwandan refugees - on Tuesday and will arrive in Japan on Friday officials here said.

Their mission had been defined as strictly humanitarian, mainly providing support for a vaccination program and water supply, as Japan's post-World War II constitution bans the use of force in settling international conflicts.

Japan previously sent military personnel to Cambodia and Mozam-

bique, but both operations were under the auspices of the United Nations.

The 260 Japanese troops, who had little overseas experience, completed their mission amid fears of contagious diseases and security problems as well as the possibility of volcanic eruptions.

"I feel relieved after coming back safe and sound," 38-year-old medic Norio Fukuda told reporters after the 120-strong team arrived at Tokyo's Narita international airport on a commercial flight.

"I was shocked to see a boy, who looked as old as my own son, carrying his younger brother on his back," he said. "It was too different from what we see in Japan," he said.

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