

# EMBASSY OF THE REPUBLIC OF UGANDA



OUR REFERENCE

C/POL/W4

5909 16TH ST., N.W.  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20011

TELEPHONE: (202) 726-7100  
FAX: (202) 726-1727  
TELEX: 440338 UGDA, UI.

August 26, 1993

Mr. Stephen D. Goose  
Washington Director  
The Arms Project  
Human Rights Watch  
1522 K Street, N.W.  
Suite 910  
Washington, D.C. 20005-1202

Dear Mr. Goose,

I am writing in reply to your letter of August 11, 1993 and wish to respond as follows:

Major General Fred Rwigyema was no longer on active duty with the NRA at the time of the invasion in October 1990. Because he opted to remain a Rwandese national, he and many other Rwandese in this category were removed from the NRA by a decision of the National Resistance Council (Parliament). During the Parliamentary debate on the Uganda Investment Code, non-nationals including Rwandese refugees were precluded from owning land. It is believed that the combination of these two fundamental decisions convinced Rwandese refugees that they did not have a bright future in Uganda and precipitated the mass desertion from NRA and invade Rwanda to regain their rights in their country of origin.

Rwandese refugees, especially young men and women joined the different fighting factions during the 20 years of Uganda's era of dictatorships and turmoil. Rwandese and Sudanese refugees served in Idi Amin's Army. During the five years of civil war, 1981-1986, Rwandese refugees fought on all sides of the parties to the conflict. Their presence in NRA in significant numbers was due to the areas in which the civil war was most active and where most of the recruitments took place.

During the late 1960s, Uganda agreed to assimilate the refugees population on its soil under a Program sponsored by the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR). The figure of 4,000 officers and men may seem large to be in NRA but Rwandese refugees are integrated in every aspect of Ugandan life. There are as many in each field as Teachers, Doctors, Traders, Police/Prisons officers and a lot more in the general civil service.

When the NRA started the struggle on February 6, 1991, just a group of 27 people surprised Kabamba Military Training College and took large quantities of arms from the Government armory under the very nose of a combined force of Uganda and Tanzania Armies. It should not surprise you that the Rwandese in NRA, every single one of them, carried his personal weapon because that was policy for the entire NRA, were able to steal the equipment you describe.

Uganda is operating a tight budget under the strict supervision of the World Bank and IMF. If Uganda gave RPF logistical support as it is being alleged by the French and Rwandese government officials who are partisan in this issue, the cost would have been reflected and would have been a detectable strain on the Uganda budget and economy. It is my belief that if Uganda gave RPF the alleged logistical support, RPF would have defeated the Rwandese government troops outright and in quick time. It is the refusal of Uganda to give RPF any help that prolonged the war.

In response to your direct question, the Uganda government did not provide assistance of a military or non-military nature to RPF:

1. Uganda's role was to ~~attempt~~ to mediate between the conflicting parties.
2. The Uganda Government did not permit private groups or individuals to provide assistance of any kind. Smuggling on Uganda's borders of Sudan, Zaire, Rwanda and Kenya is an age old endemic problem. The civil strife raging on Uganda's border with Rwanda, provided healthy ground for smuggling especially of food which was in short supply in Rwanda.
3. On the day of the invasion, October 1990, the Uganda Government declared all Rwandese who had left NRA to attack Rwanda as Deserters under the Operational Code of Conduct. That means, on conviction by a Court Martial, they would be punishable by death. This is no incentive for them to cross back into Uganda.
4. President Museveni shared intelligence information with his colleague, President Habyarimana of Rwanda. The problem of one million Rwandese living around Rwanda in neighbouring states was pointed out to President Habyarimana by President Museveni almost in every meeting they held, with suggested solutions. As soon as news of the invasion broke, President Museveni met President Habyarimana twice in New York and Washington, D.C. and offered him full co-operation. In Uganda any further defections from the NRA were thwarted. All those who attempted to cross into Rwanda were arrested and put in jail.
5. I do not believe that after the signing of the Peace Accord in Arusha, Tanzania, between RPF and the Rwanda government, the Uganda government can or is required to exercise any authority on Rwandese who returned to their country by force of arms.

Thank you for giving us an opportunity to respond to general issues of your findings. We shall be happy to deal with details when they are made known to us.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "S.T.K. Katenta-Apuli".

S.T.K. Katenta-Apuli  
AMBASSADOR