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SUBJECT: <u>SITREP No 015/94</u>	No OF PAGES: 3

1. The tragic disappearance at Kigali airport of both Burundi and Rwanda presidents in the later plane has of course overshadowed all other national events. With them also disappeared six officials including two Burundi Cabinet members (B. Ciza and Simbizi, Ministers of Planification and of Information respectively) and three French crewmen of the Falcon 50 jet. It is unfortunate that, in order to save time, President Cyprien Ntaryamira of Burundi chose, at the last minute, to travel on the modern Rwandese presidential jet rather than his chartered low speed plane.
2. Informed of the crash/attempt on Wednesday 6 April at 9:30 p.m. (2:30 New York time), I immediately called J. C. Aime to give him first hand news; I called later 1:00 a.m. (6:00 p.m. New York time) with further details on the situation and briefing on action taken by the mission in close cooperation with the Government to maintain peace and order throughout the country.
3. By coincidence this Wednesday 6 April started with the signature by all political parties members of the coalition Government of a document formalizing their January-February agreements on political cooperation. The signature, which took place under my chairmanship, was hailed by all participants and observers as a major achievement able to bring tranquility and peace to Burundi. After signing the document, political leaders rushed to the airport to welcome back the President who left early that morning for a subregional summit convened by Tanzania at Dar es Salam. The summit was precisely to address Burundi political situation (see SITREP 13 and 14) and regional cooperation for peace in that country.

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4. The summit recommended inter alia a visit to Burundi by participating countries (Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania, Uganda) foreign ministers and OAU to evaluate and assess the situation. It recommended also an OAU observers mission in Burundi composed of African troops.
5. The real causes of Kigali airport tragedy are not known yet though it seems certain that the presidential plane was shot at while it touched down. There are no survivors among the 11 passengers. In this connection, the body of Burundi President has been identified. I called on my colleague SRS in Rwanda to help transfer to Bujumbura his remains and those of his two compatriots. In Burundi we were the first informed of the tragic situation and with my mission colleague we went on the spot to the speaker of the Parliament residence to discuss measures to be taken and how to address the whole situation. Prime Minister, Minister of Defense and Army Chief of staff were present. To avoid political vacuum (as in October 1993) and any disturbances, the group decided the following:
 - a) Establishment of a small committee to follow-up the situation composed of: Speaker of the House (Hutu) and leader of country main political party; Prime Minister (Tutsi) from the main opposition party; Minister of Defense (Tutsi); Army Chief of staff (Tutsi); Head of Internal Intelligence (Hutu) leader of the majority in the Parliament (Hutu). The Committee is chaired by the Speaker of the House and constitutional interim successor of the President;
 - b) Immediate message, at 23:00 p.m. (4:00 p.m. NY time) on TV/Radio by Chairman of the follow-up Committee preparing public opinion to the tragic news and calling for peace and cooperation;
 - c) Official announcement of the disappearance of the President and his two ministers. The message addressed to public opinion is that the tragic event is accidental, not directed to the President and happened outside Burundi. Therefore no group should be singled out as author or accomplice of the tragedy;
 - d) Meeting of the follow-up Committee at Army Headquarters to make direct calls to provincial civilian governors and military camps commanders requesting them to cooperate for a peaceful message to population;
 - e) Convening of a Council of ministers at 8:00 a.m. on 7 April for briefing and joint missions of high level Government officials and military officers to rural populations;
 - f) Convening of National Security Council headed by Prime Minister in the absence of the President to address global security issues and cohabitation among communities;
6. We spent all this time, from 9:20 p.m. to 2:30 a.m. with the follow-up Committee supporting and encouraging them for wise and swift action. The next day 7 April, after interview to international press we briefed our colleagues of the UN system at 8:00 a.m. and with diplomats at 10:00 a.m. Later we attended

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on evening events by Chairman of follow-up Committee, on passed evening

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~~activities~~. He recognized the mission for its active presence during this difficult time.

7. In this briefing he noted that the Government is in charge and functioning and the Parliament also. He reiterated as a leitmotiv that the tragic events were not intended to kill Burundi President, that it was an accident outside country borders and therefore the situation should not to be exploited for criminal purposes.
8. The gravity of the situation in Rwanda where the President guard and other armed factions are killing all personalities perceived as adversaries to President Habyarimana is of real concern to us. Though the situation is completely calm in the capital and in the countryside, the mission is seriously worried by a contagion coming from the North. We are thus multiplying contacts at all levels, civilian and military to avoid or minimize possible explosion. Though not the only one to be watched, the behaviour of Tutsi refugees from Rwanda and living in Burundi could serve as a detonant to an uncontrollable crisis.

A. Ould Abdallah
SRSG - Burundi
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