

Cyumba [The rebel invasion prompted accusations that Uganda backed the RPF]

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The rebel invasion prompted accusations that Uganda backed the RPF – a claim denied by both Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni and Kagame.

Diplomats in the region say Uganda supplies arms to the RPF. But the allegations have never been substantiated.

Kagame, like many of his lieutenants, is a former Ugandan army officer who grew up in a refugee camp.

His parents were among hundreds of thousands of Tutsis driven into exile by tribal massacres as the Hutus seized power from the Tutsis, Rwanda's feudal rules, in the runup to independence from Belgium in 1962.

The RPF is fighting for their right to return.

Despite the rebels' closeness to Kigali, they seem unwilling to risk an immediate all-out push to take the capital as the government controls territory further north, behind their

advance positions, military analysts said.

The rebels may also fear a bloodbath if they attack Kigali, preferring to wage a slow war of attrition while they try to win the hearts and minds of the Rwandan people.

The RPF fighters are mainly Tutsis, vastly outnumbered by Hutus, who form 80 percent of Rwanda's 7.5 million people.

The RPF says it rejects sectarian politics and wants democracy, not minority rule by the Tutsis.

It has won over some Hutus. But many remain suspicious even if they oppose Habyarimana, forced to introduce multi-party politics after the RPF invaded.

Despite the RPF's superficial resemblance to another of Africa's ragtag guerrilla forces, it is a well-disciplined fighting machine.

Kagame says he wants to end "ethnic cleansing." Habyarimana

agreed to bring the RPF into in a transitional government under last year's accords. game said after claiming to have killed 250 soldiers in ambush last week.

But Kagame says that if tribal bloodletting continues he will overthrow Habyarimana by force. "We would prefer a negotiated solution, but we'll do it by force if we have to."

"The army's morale is low," Ka- dc/hl AFP AFP SEQN-0017