

Kigali [Rebels accuse French of supervising artillery gunners on the government side]

AFP, March 3, 1993

Several hundred thousand Tutsis fled Rwanda three decades ago after losing a power struggle to the majority Hutu tribe.

Gunshots were also heard in the capital Wednesday evening, a frequent occurrence as armed robberies have become commonplace, according to residents who said the shots were unrelated to the war.

French troops evacuated 70 French residents and other foreigners from Ruhengeri last month.

But diplomats said there were still some foreigners in the town.

France has quadrupled the number of its soldiers in Rwanda, a former Belgian colony, to nearly 700 since the rebel attack.

On Tuesday several major opposition parties called for the French troops to be replaced by a multinational force under United Nations command.

Officially the French forces are

here to protect more than 400 French residents of Rwanda and other foreigners including 1,600 Belgians.

The rebels accuse the French of supervising artillery gunners on the government side. But Paris strongly denies the allegations.

An AFP reporter saw French troops patrolling in jeeps near one of the combat zones about 25 kilometres (15 miles) northwest of the capital on Tuesday.

French troops accompanied by Rwandan soldiers are manning roadblocks on the outskirts of the capital.

The French soldiers were checking identification papers of Rwandans travelling to and from Kigali on Wednesday. They were also searching cars, apparently for guns.

"Why should foreigners ask me for my papers in my own country?" said an angry Rwandan civil servant called Virgile who declined to give his surname.

"France is propping up the dictatorship of Habyarimana," Justin Mugenzi, leader of the opposition Liberal Party (Parti Liberal) told AFP. The Tutsi-dominated party is believed to be sympathetic to the rebels.

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