

Rebels reported on the edge of Rwandan capital

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KIGALI, April 11 (Reuter) – Rwandan rebels pushed close to the capital Kigali on Monday and a senior French military source said they were just 2.5 kms (1.5 miles) away.

“The first RPF (Rwanda Patriotic Front) frontline unit is 2.5 kms away from the French school in downtown Kigali,” a French military commander who declined to be named told Reuters.

Earlier in the day, RPF commanders said their guerrilla force was closing from three sides to rescue a 600-strong rebel contingent battling government soldiers in the chaotic city.

He said that resistance from government units was disintegrating around the city while a tribal blood-bath raged within it.

“Our forces are advancing.. Government soldiers do not have the will to put up resistance so we shall know in days what the resolution is,” RPF chairman Alexis Kanyarengwe told Reuters in rebel-held territory.

As the French military officer spoke, seven truckloads of government army troops drove to the abandoned Belgian embassy in the city and took up defensive positions. They deployed machine guns and rocket launchers.

French paratroopers, who arrived over the weekend to protect the evacuation of foreign residents from the

tiny central African state, also deployed on the edges of the city.

Some 260 French were driven to the airport to be flown out on Monday night. About 200 Belgians gathered at the French school awaiting evacuation.

Most workers at the hotel where foreign correspondents are staying fled as news of the rebel advance filtered through the city. The hotel has food supplies for three to four days.

The 600 rebels in Kigali were stationed at the parliament buildings under a peace plan signed last year. They were cut off when tribal violence exploded after the president’s plane was shot down on Wednesday.

The rebels are drawn largely from the minority Tutsi tribe, whose kinfolk have been the main victims of the Kigali slaughter.

Rebel officials said more of their forces were moving on the northwestern road to the government garrison town of Ruhengeri. Another garrison town of Byumba in the north has been completely encircled and cut off, they added.

The RPF, which has about 20,000 men, regards as its main enemy, the 2,000-strong presidential guard which it blames for most of the killing in Kigali since the death of the Hutu president.

Kanyarengwe said the RPF would

take control, restore order and begin fresh talks with other parties to establish a transitional government.
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