

Rwanda Faces New War Unless International Force Is Sent, U.N. Aides Say

Raymond Bonner

The New York Times, November 6, 1994

United Nations officials say that if this tiny country is to be spared another war, an international force must be quickly sent to the refugee camps in Zaire, where soldiers and militiamen of the former Rwandan Government are increasing their preparedness for battle. Forces of the former Government are already making regular incursions into Rwanda and in some instances have ambushed the new Government's soldiers, the commander of the United Nations troops here, Maj. Gen. Guy Tousignant, said in an interview today.

As the former army continues to regroup and regain its strength, with food being supplied by the international community, the attacks are likely to increase in number and in military efficiency, General Tousignant said.

He said three battalions, or some 2,100 soldiers, were needed to provide security in the camps in Zaire and disarm the former army. Washington is actively lobbying within the United Nations Security Council for the deployment of a large force, said a senior United Nations official who spoke on condition that he not be identified. But the official said he did not know what the United States was

offering in the way of troops, money or materiel.

General Tousignant's assessment was shared by other senior United Nations officials.

"We are sitting on a volcano," the organization's ranking official in Rwanda, Shahyar Khan, said in an interview before leaving on Friday for a meeting in Geneva, where the rapidly deteriorating security situation will be discussed in a meeting called by Secretary General Boutros Boutros-Ghali.

Mr. Khan, the Secretary General's special representative in Rwanda, said he would like to see a commando force of about 500 sent to Zaire immediately.

"We must separate the wolves from the sheep," Mr. Khan said about the need to get soldiers and militia members out of the camps. The mission of an international force would be to disarm the regular army and militia of the former Government and to move the soldiers, who are thought to number 30,000, into camps farther from the border. The international force would also provide security in the camps so that refugees who wanted to return would be able to do so. Many refu-

gees have been prevented from returning by threats from the former Government's militia, whose members now control the camps.

The Zairian Government has promised on several occasions that it will disarm the former army and move it from the camps, as well as prohibit political activity in the camps by officials of the former Government. But United Nations officials and aid workers in Zaire said the Government there had done virtually nothing on any of these counts.

Soldiers wearing camouflage uniforms swagger through the camps, and they train in nearby forests. They still have most of their weapons, from rifles to artillery pieces, military vehicles and even three helicopters, which they took with them when they fled. And there is no doubt that they can buy whatever additional arms they need with money they looted from Rwandan banks.

Senior leaders in the former Government, including the President, Prime Minister and Defense Minister, regularly visit the camps, delivering the message that the time is near when the people can go home behind their army.

Getting the money for an international operation – it could easily cost \$1 billion, General Tousignant said – will not be easy, to say nothing of getting countries to provide soldiers.

It is a mission fraught with danger, even if it were limited to assisting the refugees in returning. The former Rwandan Army, whose soldiers are mostly members of the country's majority Hutu ethnic group, could become "actively obstructive should there be organized convoys of returnees, and it is believed

that they have the means to block such initiatives," Jorl Boutroue, the director of operations in Goma for the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, said in a memorandum to Geneva last month. He called for the urgent dispatch of an international force.

"A direct confrontation between F.A.R. and an international force cannot be ruled out," he said, referring to the former army of Rwanda, which was defeated in July by the Rwandan Patriotic Front, led by members of the Tutsi minority.

Expressing the difficulty of getting any country to send troops into a potentially violent situation, Mr. Khan, the special representative, said: "Who's going to bell the cat? America? No way. Europe? They've lost interest."

He said he thought that France might be persuaded to send troops again, as it did after massacres began in April, but he noted that Rwanda's current Tutsi-dominated Government would vehemently object. When General Tousignant took command here on Aug. 21, he laid out his military assessment for the next three months. The general said he did not think that the badly defeated Rwandan Army would be capable of much for the first 30 days, as it healed its wounds and regrouped. After 60 days, it would have "the capability to infiltrate and disrupt anything we're doing here." And after 90 days it would be a force "that poses a potent threat to Rwanda."

He said nothing had caused him to change that assessment, noting that infiltration and disruption had already begun.

General Tousignant said an investigation on Friday had convinced him that it was anti-

Government forces infiltrating from Zaire who had attacked the village of Rutagara in western Rwanda a week ago. With grenades, rifles and machetes, the attackers killed 10 adults and 26 children, United Nations investigators said. It was a “well-coordinated” attack, executed with “perfect timing,” General Tousignant said.

And he said he strongly believed that anti-Government forces had laid a land mine two weeks ago that tore the leg off one United Nations soldier and wounded four others.