

# Rwanda rebels announce conditional withdrawal from positions

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PARIS, March 5 (AFP) - The Rwandese Patriotic Front (RPF) said Friday it had agreed to a partial, conditional withdrawal from positions in the north of the country its forces have occupied since February 8.

The withdrawal would depend on neutral military observers of the Organization for African Unity (OAU) taking control of evacuated positions and on Rwanda government troops respecting the ceasefire, the RPF said.

In a message sent to the U.S. State Department, a copy of which was made available to AFP, the insurgents said:

"We shall, as a gesture of seriousness and commitment to that ceasefire, withdraw some distance provided that:

"- The NMOG (OAU observers) verifies the current positions of both RPF and RGF (Rwanda government forces) and supervises the positions

and areas withdrawn from by the RPF;

"- The RGF stops further bombardment and attacks on our positions;

"- The Rwandese government forces stay in their current positions and observe the ceasefire."

The statement, seen by observers here as a breakthrough in the current deadlock, also calls "upon Rwandese government forces to show more seriousness and respect for the ceasefire in order for the peace process to continue."

The RPF, the statement said, "still believes that peace negotiations offer the best prospects for sustained peace and national unity for all Rwandans."

A rebel spokesman said Thursday in Kigali that the RPF conditionally favors a multinational U.N.-OAU force to replace the French forces deployed in Rwanda.

Diplomats in New York said France would be willing to place under U.N. command its 600 troops deployed in the African country, officially to protect more than 400 French residents and other foreigners in Belgium's former colony.

The announcement by the RPF

followed a visit to Kigali and Uganda – whose forces are backing the RPF, according to French intelligence sources – by French Cooperation Minister Marcel Debarge.

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