

UN facing difficult choice in Rwanda

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UNITED NATIONS, April 13 (AFP) - The UN Security Council faces a tricky decision on the fate of its mission in Rwanda, now that the evacuation of all foreigners from the war-torn east African country is practically complete.

Following consultations with its 15 members, this month's Council President Colin Keating, of New Zealand, told reporters late Tuesday to expect a decision "in the next day or two."

Keating said that in the Rwandan capital of Kigali "the level of fighting is reducing," adding that the Tutsi rebel Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) "seems to be increasingly in control of the situation on the ground," there.

The evacuation of foreigners carried out jointly by France and Belgium was "virtually completed," he said, adding all French and Belgian nationals would also leave Rwanda in the next few days.

France began to pull its 450 troops out of Rwanda Tuesday as the

last of its nationals were evacuated, the French defence ministry said.

Claude Dusaidi, RPF representative at the United Nations, told reporters Tuesday that foreign troops had 24 hours to evacuate all foreigners and leave Rwanda or risk being attacked.

Nearly 2,500 rebel fighters entered the Rwandan capital from a demilitarized area in the northern part of the country and joined a battalion of 600 fellow fighters surrounded by government troops in Kigali, Dusaidi said.

He added that UN peacekeepers were being encouraged to stay. They had been deployed to the east African country to monitor an August 1993 peace agreement signed in Arusha, Tanzania.

Altogether the UN has 2,300 soldiers and 300 observers in Rwanda from 23 countries. Nearly 1,000 of them come from Bangladesh, 840 from Ghana and 420 from Belgium.

UN spokesman Joe Sills said UN troops from Ghana were in the town

of Buyumba 25 miles (40 kilometers) north of Kigali which was under shelling.

Bloodshed between the Hutu and Tutsi tribes in the country erupted last Wednesday after president Juvenal Habyarimana died when his plane crashed as it was landing in Kigali, reportedly after being hit by a rocket. Burundian president Cyprien Ntaryamira was also killed in the crash.

Security Council members went over the alternatives facing the UN mission in Rwanda, according to diplomatic sources who attended the consultations late Tuesday.

Withdrawing the UN mission, which is poorly equipped to face a situation of escalating violence, seems unlikely since it would probably lead

to more chaos and violence, the sources said.

A second alternative being considered calls for beefing up the UN contingent and provide it with a new mandate to suit the situation.

But this formula also has little chance of prospering since the UN is reluctant to impose a peace on Rwanda in view of last year's fiasco in Somalia.

A third, Angola-like option would have the UN mission redeploy either in Rwanda or a neighboring country until the situation returns to normal.

The Security Council is waiting for the recommendations of UN Secretary General, Boutros Boutros-Ghali, on the matter before it comes to a decision.

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