

Brussels [Rwanda: Belgian UN peacekeepers accused of shooting down presidential plane]

AFP, April 9, 1994

The bloodshed in Rwanda was triggered on Wednesday when presidents Juvenal Habyarimana of Rwanda and Cyprien Ntaryamira of Burundi were killed with 10 others. Their aircraft crashed in Kigali, reportedly after being shot down.

In line with propaganda being spread in Kigali, one Rwandan group based in Brussels issued a communique on Friday accusing Belgian UN peacekeepers of shooting down the aircraft.

It purported to quote non-Belgian UN sources as saying that "the shells with brought down the presidential aircraft was fired from a site occupied by Belgian military members of the UN Assistance Mission."

The communique, issued by the Hutu "Crisis Committee of the Rwandan Community in Belgium", maintained that the aircraft was shot

down as part of a plot to bring the rebel Tutsi Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) to power.

The 10 Belgian victims were slain Thursday after unsuccessfully trying to stop the murder of Prime Minister Agathe Uwilingyamana by troops of the presidential guard – hard-line supporters of Hutu President Habyarimana.

Van Deweghe said fighting between government troops and the RPF was continuing on Saturday, including on the road to the airport, making it impossible to assemble foreign nationals at evacuation points.

He said a convoy of Americans had managed to leave Kigali in a road convoy heading for Burundi on Saturday because they were so few. But there were too many Belgians to make their way safely to the airport.

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