

WFP food looted in Rwanda

AFP, February 20, 1995

NAIROBI, Feb 20 (AFP) - A UN World Food Programme food convoy on its way to refugee camps in eastern Zaire was looted at Gisenyi near the Rwanda-Zairean border, the WFP announced in a statement released here on Monday.

It said the trucks, carrying humanitarian supplies to camps in the Zairean town of Goma, were stopped on Saturday near the the border at Gisenyi for inspection by border officials, but a crowd of about 50 people from the Gisenyi area transit camp surrounded the trucks and began looting them.

Although government troops opened fire on the crowd, killing two of them, in an attempt to control the situation, the crowd quickly grew to between 400 and 500 people who went on to loot three WFP trucks, the statement said.

The UN Assistance Mission in Rwanda (UNAMIR) was called to assist and three armoured personnel carriers from the Tunisian Battalion in Mutura were despatched to the

scene.

Somebody ordered that the trucks remain at the site until evening, after which they were allowed to turn back from the border to drive to the security of the Tunisian Battalion Compound in Mutura, the statement said.

On the way to the compound, seven of the trucks were again detained until Sunday morning, but when they were released, they were stopped at the Gisenyi area transit camp where looting of the remaining vehicles took place, it said.

After the incident, UNAMIR Force Commander Major-General Guy Tousignant had pledged that "steps were being taken to determine who hindered the situation by preventing the WFP trucks from withdrawing to a safe location and by delaying the arrival of UN troops on the scene" that led to the "unacceptable looting of humanitarian relief supplies".

lto/bm

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