

UNSP 062/80
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26 APR 1994
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SUMMARY

1. Situation in Kigali continues to deteriorate. Government forces shell national stadium where large numbers of refugees sheltering and part of UNAMIR stationed. No UNAMIR casualties but at least 25 civilians killed and more wounded. Prospects for ceasefire bleak. Positions of both sides hardening. [REDACTED]. Secretary-General to submit his recommendations on the future of UNAMIR to the Security Council on 20 April. I underline need for the Council to take a substantive decision immediately on the basis of these recommendations. Secretariat tell us Secretary-General likely to recommend immediate withdrawal of all but 250-300 of UNAMIR's personnel. Force Commander believes it would be dangerous to announce complete withdrawal.

DETAIL

2. During informal consultations of the Security Council on 19 April, Gharekhan (Secretary-General's special political adviser) briefed on the latest developments in Rwanda. The situation in Kigali continued to deteriorate. Fighting had intensified late on 18 April, culminating in the direct shelling of the national stadium where 5,000 refugees were sheltering and where parts of UNAMIR were stationed. At least 25 people had been killed, 50 wounded and there were an unknown number of casualties outside the stadium: one shell had landed on the roof of the UNAMIR headquarters there but it did not explode. There had been no (no) UNAMIR casualties. The shelling had stopped after UNAMIR had protested to the Rwandan government forces (RGF) who were responsible for it. The wounded had been taken to King Feisal Hospital where there were already some 8,000 civilians sheltering.

The evacuation of foreigners continued with UNAMIR's assistance.

3. Gharekhan said the shelling of the stadium by the Rwandan government forces represented an escalation of the conflict with no regard to the consequences for the civilians inside or for UNAMIR personnel. The Force Commander and Special Representative (SRSG) were doing their best to encourage negotiations but the prospects for a ceasefire were becoming increasingly bleak. The positions of both sides were hardening and they seemed to be preparing for prolonged armed conflict. UNAMIR had put forward a draft ceasefire agreement which the RGF said they could agree. [REDACTED]

4. Gharekhan said that, in these circumstances, it was almost impossible for UNAMIR to carry out its mandate. There was also an increasing threat to UNAMIR personnel. The Secretary-General was considering reports from the Force Commander and the SRSG and expected to submit a report to the Security Council at the latest by 201600Z.

5. Keating (New Zealand, Council President) said he had had further discussions with the troop contributing countries (TCCs). The TCCs had appreciated the efforts made by the Secretariat to keep them informed of developments in Rwanda and welcomed the Security Council's recognition of their concerns. There was a wide range of views amongst the TCCs. The Ghanaians had said they wanted to stay come what may and urged others to do the same. At the other end of the spectrum a number of TCCs were extremely concerned at the lack of a clear mandate.

6. Cardenas (Argentina) asked whether it was correct that radio stations had been broadcasting anti-UNAMIR material. Gharekhan replied that there had been broadcasts critical of UNAMIR because UNAMIR had rejected RGF suggestions of joint UNAMIR/RGF control of the airport but so far neither side were overtly hostile to UNAMIR. However, given the rapidly deteriorating situation, this could change at any time. Walker (US) asked whether UNAMIR still had the ability to extricate itself safely. Gharekhan said that they did, as of now, and probably also in the immediate future. But the situation could change at any point. The situation was

grave. The Secretary-General would be making a clear recommendation to the Council, not presenting options. The recommendation was unlikely to be for a total pullout (though he subsequently made a point of saying that no option could be ruled out) but rather for the maintenance of a smaller force.

7. I said the Council must take action on the future of UNAMIR before the end of the week. The situation had deteriorated significantly since our earlier discussion of UNAMIR's mandate (our telno 1374). We could not delay a decision further when UNAMIR personnel were exposed to such very real risks.

8. Gharekhan told me separately that elements of UNAMIR (principally unarmed military observers and civilian police observers) were already being withdrawn. Annabi (DPKO) told us later that Riza (ASG for Peacekeeping) had been inclined earlier in the day to recommend immediate and complete withdrawal. The Force Commander had however argued very forcefully indeed that announcing a complete withdrawal would precipitate an immediate battle between the parties for the airport and put UNAMIR at severe risk. His advice, which DPKO had accepted, was that the Secretary-General should recommend to the Security Council the immediate scaling down of UNAMIR. The Secretariat would no longer argue that a ceasefire was a necessary pre-condition for such scaling down. They envisaged a presence of 250-300, which should continue to be called UNAMIR: the alternative, suspending UNAMIR and talking of a UN presence under a different name, might help the Americans but would play badly in Rwanda. Annabi said that in practice the UN would keep a very close watch on the situation, and review the continued presence of the "rump" UNAMIR in no later than two weeks. He implied that he, at least, foresaw it too being withdrawn at that point unless there were unexpected developments in the interim, but that it would be better not to be specific at this stage.

[REDACTED]

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