

Rwanda rebel reinforcements advance on Kigali

Reuters, April 22, 1994

NAIROBI, April 22 (Reuter) - Rebel reinforcements advanced on government forces in the Rwandan capital of Kigali after both sides agreed to peace talks and the U.N. voted to withdraw all but a few hundred of its peacekeepers.

U.N. officials in Kigali said Rwanda Patriotic Front (RPF) reinforcements were heading for the capital after they were reported to have captured the town of Rwamagana, about 25 miles to the east.

The officials, speaking by telephone, said they had fresh reports of massacres of civilians near the southern towns of Butare, Gityrama and Gikondoro but had no figures for the dead.

Hundreds of thousands of people are feared to have been slaughtered since the presidents of Rwanda and neighbouring Burundi were killed when their plane was shot down near Kigali on April 6.

In New York, the U.N. Security Council interrupted a debate on Bosnia to adopt a resolution reducing the Rwanda force, once numbering 2,500, to a bare minimum of 270 military and civilian personnel. The resolution would leave the force commander, Canadian General Romeo Dallaire, and his staff in Kigali as an intermediary between the warring Hutu and Tutsi groups and to assist relief operations.

Remaining also would be the chief U.N. civilian representative, Jacques-Roger Booh Booh of Cameroon.

Tanzania said yesterday Rwanda's government and rebels had agreed to talks on Saturday in the Tanzanian town of Arusha.

In Burundi, state-radio said President Sylvestre Ntibantunganya held a meeting of ministers and representatives of the security forces and local government to find a lasting solution to sporadic violence in the past week.

The radio said fighting was continuing in the capital of Bujumbura. Diplomats fear Burundi, which also has a long history of conflict between the Hutu and Tutsi groups, may soon explode.

(c) Reuters Limited 1994