France cannot be "policeman of Africa"

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PARIS, April 13 (AFP) - France called on Wednesday for an international effort to restore peace to Rwanda, saying Paris could not be "the policeman of Africa."

Development Aid Minister Michel Roussin, addressing the National Assembly, said it was "the international community's duty to take over from us and the United Nations should now bring together the different parties and bring the protagonists to a ceasefire."

In the Senate, Defence Minister Francois Leotard said the last of 450 French paratroopers flown into the central African state at the weekend were about to be withdrawn.

The French, who flew in from their base in nearby Central African Republic, evacuated 1,300 foreign nationals from the Rwandan capital Kigali, 454 of them French.

Roussin said Prime Minister Edouard Balladur had told Foreign Minister Alain Juppe "to impress its role upon the UN, for we cannot be the policeman of Africa."

The minister also confirmed the deaths of two French gendarmes who were military advisors and the wife of one of them, without giving details. He said the bodies would be repatriated.

On Saturday army chief of staff Jacques Lanxade said he believed they had been killed by rebels of the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF).

Roussin also paid tribute to the three French crew who died with Rwandan president Juvenal Habyarimana when his plane crashed as it was landing in Kigali last Friday. Burundian president Cyprien Ntaryamira was also killed in the crash.

The UN already 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.

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