

[France completes evacuation of nationals from Rwanda]

Susan Greenberg

AFP, April 11, 1994

PARIS, April 11 (AFP) - France completed the evacuation of its nationals from Rwanda Monday as an airlift of other foreigners from the war-torn central African republic continued.

The last of France's citizens were airlifted in two flights to Bujumbura, capital of neighbouring Burundi, French Foreign Ministry spokesman Richard Duque said Monday. Only a "very small number" remained in the country to continue their work.

Another 130 foreign nationals joined the French flights, the ministry said. A total 620 French nationals were evacuated, 500 by plane and 120 by road.

French officials said the 280 French paratroops sent to the capital Kigali for the evacuation were due to leave Rwanda as soon as their mission is completed, and may start to withdraw Tuesday.

Foreign Ministry spokeswoman

Catherine Colonna stressed that the troops' mission was "purely humanitarian".

The rebel Rwandan Patriotic Front has warned the French soldiers not to get involved in the ethnic conflict between Hutus and Tutsis, which was sparked by the deaths of Rwandan President Juvenal Habyarimana and Burundi President Cyprien Ntaryamira, reportedly after their aircraft was shot down by a missile.

In the Kenyan capital Nairobi, diplomatic sources said a Belgian army C-130 aircraft arrived Monday with foreigners from Rwanda, and more were expected to arrive later on a United States and a Canadian aircraft.

The Belgian embassy was unable to specify how many people had arrived.

On Sunday, another Belgian plane had arrived in Nairobi with in-

jured foreigners and the bodies of 10 Belgian peacekeepers killed in Kigali.

A total of eight Belgian C-130 planes were sent to Kigali Sunday to take part in the evacuation mission but it was not clear when the other aircraft would return to Nairobi with the rest of its 1,500 nationals.

In addition to the Belgian operation, two other planes were expected to arrive in Nairobi Monday from the Burundi capital of Bujumbura, bringing foreigners who left Rwanda by road.

A United States C-141 aircraft carrying some 75 evacuees of different nationalities was due to arrive later in the day and a Canadian C-141 was expected early Monday afternoon, carrying 75 Canadian nationals.

In the Swiss capital Berne, the foreign ministry said a group of around 20 Swiss nationals had arrived at Cologne-Bonn airport on a military flight from Bujumbura, along

with 141 Germans.

Another 75 were waiting at Kigali airport and were due to leave soon, ministry spokesman Christian Meuwly said.

Around 60 other Swiss nationals remain in Rwanda, including missionaries, five diplomats and 25 staff with the International Committee of the Red Cross.

In Paris on Monday, French Development Aid Minister Michel Roussin expressed fears for the fate of three missing French military advisors. "We have no certain proof of their deaths, but every hour that goes by makes me fear for the worst," he said.

Roussin had earlier said French forces would leave Rwanda as soon as the evacuation was complete and they would not "get mixed up" in the Rwandan fighting. He said it was up to "the UN to assume its responsibilities."

ml-sa/sg/ap