[Kigali airport hit by mortar fire as French and Belgian troops prepare to withdraw]

AFP, April 14, 1994

KIGALI, April 14 (AFP) - Half a dozen shells were fired at Kigali airport Thursday as French and Belgian paratroopers prepared to fly out of Rwanda after evacuating foreigners stranded in a week of ethnic slaughter and chaos, military sources said.

No one appeared to have been hurt by the mortar attack and it was unclear who launched the offensive.

In Brussels, a Belgian Defense Ministry spokesman said two salvoes of mortar shells were fired Thursday at Kigali airport, but there were no casualties nor damage.

Both the military sources and the Belgian Defence Ministry spokesman said it was unclear who was responsible. The Brussels spokesman said a Belgian and a French aircraft at the airport were not touched in the attack.

The rebel Rwandan Patriotic Front Tuesday (RPF) gave foreign troops 24 hours to leave the country.

Government forces denied they were behind the attack since they are involved in guarding the airport and have troops stationed there, according to the sources here.

They said there had been no comments from the Tutsi RPF which has been engaged in battles with governemnt forces for the last week.

The Belgian Defense Ministry spokesman said the attack happened at about 0815 GMT as French and Belgian paratroopers prepared to fly out of Rwanda after completing a mission to evacuate foreigners stranded in a week of ethnic slaughter and chaos.

He said both Randan [Rwandan] government forces and the rebel RPF each accused the other of launching the attack on the airport.

"This is a serious incident which endangers the evacuation of foreigners," the Belgian spokesman said,

Talks between the RPF and gov-

ernment forces were to have begun Thursday, though apparently had not begun by midday.

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