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MY TELNO 1285: RWANDA

SUMMARY

1. Further Secretariat report on situation. UNAMIR Force Commander has been trying to establish a truce. RPF and Rwandese army co-operating in evacuation of foreign nationals. UNAMIR troops escorting convoys from Kigali to airport. Force Commander preparing an assessment of prospects for UNAMIR. Recommendations will be put to the Security Council within the next couple of days.

DETAIL

2. As foreshadowed in TUR, further informal consultations on Rwanda were held on 11 April. They began with a briefing from Riza (Assistant Secretary-General, DPKO). He said the situation in Kigali was unchanged. There was fighting in the streets, clashes between the RPF and the Presidential Guard, small arms fire, mortar and artillery shelling. As had been reported in the press, a hospital had been hit by a shell: thirty were dead and many wounded. The Force Commander was still trying to establish a truce. The RPF would not agree to a ceasefire unless it was part of wider political discussions. The Force Commander had therefore decided to attempt a truce, at least as long as the evacuations were underway. This was supposed to come into force at 6am on 11 April but had not held. The new plan was for the truce to begin at 6am on 12 April.

3. Riza said killing and looting continued. However, the army



seemed to be taking a more active role in seeking to restore order. They had announced that all those caught looting would be shot. This was probably connected to the fact that the Minister of Defence in the previous government who had been outside the country when the crisis began, having decided at the last minute not to travel on the President's plane, had now returned. The RPF and the army were co-operating with the evacuation, as they had promised. Most UN civilian staff and non-essential UNAMIR staff had left the country either by land or by air. Some had left in UN chartered planes, others as part of the Franco-Belgian operation. A good proportion of the foreign nationals resident in Kigali had now left. French and Belgian forces were in control of the airport. However they did not have the capability to escort convoys from Kigali to the airport. They had asked whether UNAMIR could help. It had been agreed that this fell within UNAMIR's broad humanitarian mandate.

4. The interim Government which had been formed was still in place but it was unclear what authority it had. The return of the Minister of Defence might have an impact on it. The RPF remained opposed to the interim Government but the SGSR was still trying to foster dialogue. The UNAMIR contingent was still in place in the demilitarised zone. The RPF commander had asked them to withdraw rather than risk getting caught in clashes between the RPF and the Rwandan army. However it had been decided that UNAMIR should remain since patrolling the DMZ was one of the key tasks in its mandate. Large numbers of RPF troops had already moved across the DMZ and had reached the outskirts of Kigali. They had not yet engaged in the fighting. The principal task being carried out by UNAMIR at present was the escort of land convoys leaving Rwanda and convoys to the airport, and guarding areas where large numbers of civilians had taken refuge. It was undertaking some patrolling in Kigali. There had been no serious UNAMIR casualties but there was always the danger that they would get caught in cross-fire.

5. Riza said DPKO had requested an assessment of the long-term prospects for UNAMIR from the Force Commander and the Special Representative. This was expected on either 11 or 12 April. Once it had been received the Secretariat would be in a position to make recommendations to the Security Council. There were two alternative scenarios. The first was that some agreement at political level might be reached, order returned

and the beginning of a return to the implementation of the Arusha Peace Accords. In this case UNAMIR could stay in place with its current mandate. But if no political settlement of any kind could be reached the Council would have to look both at the mandate and at the presence of the force.

6. Merimee (France) said that France was in the final phase of its evacuation. About 600 French nationals had been evacuated. Only about 20 remained. They had proven difficult to contact. France had co-operated in evacuating persons of other nationalities.

7. There was a brief discussion after Riza's statement. Sardenberg (Brazil) asked what UNAMIR was doing to protect Rwandan civilians. Riza said that UNAMIR were essentially acting as intermediaries. Its first duty was to protect its own and other UN personnel. Protection of the civilian population was not strictly within its mandate but UNAMIR was helping in so far as it could, for example with 8000 refugees at the Anahorou Stadium and another 8000 at one of the hospitals in Kigali (not the one that had been hit over the weekend). Keating (New Zealand, Council President) said the Council would await the recommendations of the Secretariat before discussing further the future of UNAMIR. Further consultations would be held on 12 April.

8. The Belgians here have told us separately that, according to their latest information (111800Z), 465 people had been evacuated by Belgian means so far. Of these 355 were Belgian, 20 Swiss, 12 Swedes, 24 US, 5 Canadian, 5 Italians, 4 Portuguese, 3 British, 3 Danes, 4 Germans, 3 French, the rest "miscellaneous". They expected the evacuation of the 1000 or so Belgians resident in Kigali to be relatively simple. The greater problem was the 500 or so scattered across the country. Our Belgian colleagues said Brussels would be reluctant to take their assets away from Rwanda before a decision was taken on the future of UNAMIR. While their position remained that their UNAMIR contingent would stay under UN command (paragraph 21 of TUR refers), they would not wish to leave it behind if the security situation remained as at present, with considerable anti-Belgian sentiment. Their hope seems to be that the Force Commander will decide to evacuate the bulk or all of his force sooner rather than later.

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