

Shooting reported on Rwanda-Burundi border

Reuters, April 20, 1994

NAIROBI, April 20 (Reuter) - A number of people were reported killed on Wednesday in shooting on Rwanda's border with Burundi when thousands of Rwandans tried to force their way across the frontier.

The World Food Programme (WFP), the U.N. food arm, said the skirmishes broke out overnight and continued Wednesday morning when thousands of refugees tried to force their way from Rwanda into Burundi.

It said the exact number of people killed in the shooting was not known.

WFP, in a statement issued in Nairobi, also reported shooting overnight in the Burundian capital of Bujumbura, which diplomats fear could also explode into conflict because of the Rwanda bloodbath.

WFP said its officials in Bujumbura reported shooting in the northeastern suburb of Kamenge, the focus of a week of tribally-based fighting last month in which hundreds of people were killed.

Both Rwanda and Burundi have a majority from the Hutu tribe and a minority from the Tutsi tribe with a record of bloodletting between them since gaining independence in 1962.

The new influx brought the number of Rwandans who have fled from Rwanda to Burundi to 6,000 since civil war and massacres broke out after both countries' presidents were killed when a rocket downed their plane in the Rwandan capital on April 6.

WFP said an estimated 30,000 Burundians, who took refuge in Rwanda during earlier bouts of conflict in their own country, had returned to Burundi since the battles broke out in Kigali.

Aid workers said on Tuesday a Rwandan government estimate that the fighting displaced two million people was plausible.

(c) Reuters Limited 1994