

Belgium wants U.N. troops to use force in Rwanda

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UNITED NATIONS, April 8 (Reuter) - Belgium would like the United Nations Security Council to change its mandate for peacekeepers in Rwanda and permit U.N. soldiers to use force, diplomats said Friday.

Brussels is also considering asking that the peacekeeping force be expanded to include, under a U.N. flag, any troops it may send to rescue its citizens in the central African country, they said.

Government leaders in Brussels contacted Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali, currently in Geneva, with the request but the U.N. chief said he needed to think about it, the envoys reported.

Since Brussels already has more than 400 soldiers as part of the U.N. peacekeeping contingent, Belgium wanted any new troops it might send to be included under U.N. control also.

“They didn’t want them wearing

two hats,” one envoy said.

A major problem is getting control of the airport in Kigali, Security Council president Colin Keating told reporters late Thursday.

He said it was controlled by Rwanda’s presidential guard, responsible for much of the violence after the president Juvenal Habyarimana as well as President Cyprien Ntaryamira of Burundi were killed in a rocket attack on their plane as it flew into the city Wednesday night. It is not clear who was responsible.

No proposal from Belgium has been put to the Security Council which must make any final decision on the mandate. The 2,500 U.N. contingent is not authorised to use force except in self-defence.

Council members have been hesitant in allowing any more peace enforcement missions after the debacle of U.N. troops in Somalia where they were allowed to use force.

The U.N. troops first went into Rwanda to monitor the Rwanda-Ugandan border which was used by rebels and then observe a ceasefire and protect government leaders.

The operation was instituted last autumn at the urging of France, which which wanted to pull out its contingents from Kigali after they were accused of siding with the government.

Evacuating foreigners was not part of the mission.

Belgium has put paratroops on alert to evacuate its 1,500 nationals in from Rwanda, a former Belgian colony, after 10 Belgian soldiers were killed trying in vain to protect the country's prime minister.

France also was considering using

troops stationed in the Central African Republic to evacuate its 600 nationals from Rwanda and the United States said it would evacuate its 255 citizens but did not say how.

Red Cross officials reported Friday up to 400 bodies in just one hospital in the Rwandan capital Kigali and said thousands were now feared killed in a two-day orgy of ethnic violence.

Rwanda and Burundi have a bloody history of tribal rivalry pitting the majority Hutu against the Tutsi, the former feudal overlords. Tens of thousands of members of both tribes have died in recurring bouts of ethnic bloodletting.

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