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Rwanda: Battlefront 'Stabilized'; Official Denies Arrests

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[Text] Nairobi, 4 Oct (AFP) -- The battlefront between the rebels from northeastern Rwanda and the regular Rwandan Army was today stabilized around 70 km from Kigali, the Rwandan capital, where the authorities have been waiting for an intervention from Belgium. According to diplomats, the former colonial power reportedly agreed to reply favorably to Rwanda's intervention request on Tuesday night.

(In Brussels, the private television network RTL-TVI has announced that between 150 and 300 paratroopers of the 2 Commando Battalion are preparing to leave for Rwanda.)

However, it is not known what mission these soldiers will be asked to undertake -- whether they will take an active part in the battle against the antigovernment forces led by "Commander Fred", or will only be sent to protect the more than 1,600 Belgians living in the "country of 1,001 hills."

In Kigali, the situation is apparently calm, several sources reported this morning. As for the front, it was stabilized around the Gatsibo-Gabiro line, some 70 km northeast of Kigali, which the rebels are intent on taking, according to diplomats contacted in Nairobi.

According to official Rwandan sources, the president, Major General Juvenal Habyarimana, has returned to Kigali, while the Rwandan ambassadors to Burundi and Tanzania have been summoned by the authorities of those countries.

In Bujumbura, the Rwandan ambassador was received by the head of state, Major Pierre Buyoya, who affirmed to him that nobody capable of helping "Commander Fred's" men in southern Rwanda has crossed the Burundi-Rwanda border. According to Burundian sources, the border has been completely closed, especially to prevent Rwandan refugees from penetrating into Burundi.

Diplomatic sources also reported that the battles in northeastern Rwanda will soon have a negative impact on Burundi's economy.

Bujumbura is in fact completely dependent for its supplies on the "northern corridor" which passes through Rwanda, Uganda, and across Kenya to the Port of Mombasa. In Dar es Salaam, Ambassador Thomas Nyanezi has been summoned by the permanent secretary of the

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Tanzanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Mr. Ashur Abbas. Mr. Abbas said to have complained about a bombing attack on Tuesday against a group of Rwandan refugees in Tanzania by an aircraft of known origin, but which was probably Rwandan, it has been learned from a very reliable source.

In Kigali, the permanent secretary of the Rwandan Ministry of Defense, Colonel Leonidas Rusatira, has denied that there have been systematic arrests of Tutsis in the capital. Diplomatic sources had indicated that a wave of arrests affecting politicians and military personnel of the Tutsi ethnic group had begun in Kigali following the offensive of Fred Rwigyema's troops. Similar rumors however persisted in Kigali today, according to informed sources.

Col. Rusatira also told AFP that no foreign mercenary was present in the ranks of the rebels. The only arrests concern persons moving out during the curfew hours and who are being released immediately, said the permanent secretary of the Defense Ministry.

1. Rusatira estimated the number of rebels, who are trying to overthrow the regime of President Juvenal Habyarimana, which has been in power since 1973, at 10,000.

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