

Ceasefire being respected: defence minister

AFP, August 2, 1992

KIGALI, Aug 2 (AFP) - The ceasefire between the Rwandan Patriotic Front and the regular army is still holding since taking effect, the Rwandan defence minister told Radio Rwanda.

James Gasana said late Saturday that "overnight Friday was calm on all fronts." He added, however, that on Saturday night there were "three rounds of machinegun and one heavy weapon shot" heard in the region of Matara in the northeast of the country.

The ceasefire accord signed in the Tanzanian town of Arusha on July 13 took effect at midnight Friday (2200 GMT).

"Just before the ceasefire there was heavy fighting in the Kagago zone, in the Kidaho commune (north-west). The fighting ended at 5:00 p.m. (1500 GMT)," Gasana said.

Rwandan President Juvenal Habyarimana said on the radio that he was very pleased with the ceasefire accord "which is a last chance to solve this war," begun on October 1, 1990

when the Rwandan Patriotic Front, made up largely of the minority Tutsi tribe, launched its offensive against the domination of the majority Hutu tribe which has held power since the Hutu uprising of 1959.

"Rwanda immediately respected the terms after signing the Arusha agreement. I call on everybody's goodwill to help us strictly respect this agreement," the president said.

Rwandan Foreign Minister Boniface Ngurinzira said a first contingent of the Group of Neutral Military Observers (GNMO) was expected in Kigali on Tuesday.

The GNMO, commanded by a Nigerian general, will supervise the ceasefire. It is made up of 10 officers each from Nigeria, Senegal, Zimbabwe and a fourth country which has not yet been chosen but could be Egypt, sources say.

The operation will be financed by France, Belgium and the United States.

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