

French, Belgian residents arrested in DR Congo

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KINSHASA, Sept 26 (AFP) - Intelligence service agents have detained a prominent Frenchman who has long lived in the east of the Democratic Republic of Congo, together with a Belgian national, diplomatic sources said Friday.

Jean-Marie Bergesio, who owns a forestry business, lives in the Kisanгани region of the former Zaire, and was arrested on September 10 when he got off a plane from Kisangani to Kinshasa, the French embassy told AFP.

The Belgian foreign ministry on Thursday disclosed that one of its nationals, Antoine Declerc, who also lives in Kisangani, was arrested on September 14 in that town and brought to the capital Kinshasa. Sources in Brussels said Declerc works for Bergesio.

A Belgian official, who asked not to be named, disclosed on Thursday that Declerc was a witness to

alleged atrocities committed against Rwandan Hutu refugees by rebels of Laurent Kabila's alliance early this year, before the new leader seized Kinshasa in May and renamed Zaire.

A diplomatic source said Bergesio had been kept incommunicado for five days after he was detained by agents of President Kabila's government but was subsequently allowed visits by consular staff.

"He has not been interrogated and he does not know why he is being held. Neither do we," said the source, who added that Bergesio appeared to be well.

Declerc was being detained by security forces and could also receive visits and assistance from his own consulate's staff, the ministry said. He too was apparently in good health.

Though Bergesio has no formal diplomatic title, he is the only longterm French resident in Kisangani and has often assisted French diplomatic or

private visitors in the capacity of an unofficial honorary consul, embassy staff said.

A French foreign ministry spokesman, Antoine Doutriaux, confirmed in Paris on Friday that Bergesio was being held, but "does not officially know the reasons for his detention".

Kabila's government is at odds with the United Nations over alleged massacres of Rwandan Hutu refugees during the rebel march on Kinshasa from the east of Zaire, which began in October and ended in the ouster of dictator Mobutu Sese Seko, who recently died in exile in Morocco.

A UN human rights investigation team has been waiting in Kinshasa for more than a month, wanting to investigate allegations of massacres and mass graves made by a previous UN investigator, but the DR Congolese authorities have several times deman-

ded changes in the role of the mission and said that it needs sufficient protection to go about its work.

Congolese authorities have given no reasons for the arrests and detentions of the two foreigners.

Hutu refugees from Rwanda's civil war of 1994 were caught up in the Zairean uprising, in which Rwanda's now Tutsi-dominated government has admitted playing a part. Kabila's rebel alliance was initially largely made up of ethnic Tutsis living in Zaire.

Among the refugees were many Hutu extremist militiamen and former troops accused of the genocide of up to 800,000 Tutsis and moderate Hutus between April and June 1994, before they were routed by rebels led by Paul Kagame, now Rwandan vice-president and defence minister.

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