

Hutu militias training in Zaire refugee camps: BBC

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LONDON, March 16 (AFP) - BBC television Wednesday broadcast "the first real evidence" so-called refugees camped on the Zairean border are actually armed Hutu guerrillas, training covertly for attacks in Rwanda and Burundi.

The report for the programme Newsnight, focussing on the Kamanyola refugee camp, near the borders of Burundi and Rwanda, contained footage of militias training at night.

It reported that men in the camp, which contains about 27,000 refugees, were armed and already launching cross-border raids, and said that, ultimately, the Hutu wanted to destabilise the minority Tutsi powers in both Rwanda and Burundi.

The report commented that its "first real evidence" that training was going on would be severely embarrassing for the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, but particularly for the commanders of the defeated

Rwandan army, now exiled in Zaire, and for the Zairean government, who have steadfastly denied rumours of training.

The military training witnessed in the report took place along the shores of the river Rusizi, bordering Burundi and Rwanda.

"Increasingly this looks like a flash point - a base from which both Rwandan and Burundian militias are operating, and to some extent operating together," said the report.

Last September, under pressure from the Zairean authorities, aid agencies cleared thousands of refugees out of Bukavu, on the border between Zaire and Rwanda.

Truck convoys were organised to take them to camps and for reasons that were not clear at the time many of the passengers were single young men.

It was all part of the bigger strategy conceived by the former Rwandan

army and supported by its Zairean allies to create a base for thousands of Hutu militiamen, claimed the report.

The objective of collaboration between Rwandan and Burundian Hutu militias appears to be the creation of a secure zone in northern Burundi through which both forces can move arms and troops freely; a base for both Rwandan and Burundian Hutus to launch attacks into their countries, it added.

The refugees said their struggle was against Tutsi oppression and they were prepared to fight it together in Rwanda and Burundi.

"As far as Hutus are concerned, we have the same problems. We can collaborate maybe for a common

cause," one was quoted as saying.

"We will go and fight even if we have no weapons," said another.

The Rwandan government is dominated by the Tutsi ethnic minority. It was installed by the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF), which seized power last July after three months of ethnic carnage blamed on Hutu extremists.

The Burundian government is a coalition linking parties of the Tutsi minority, who dominate the armed forces, with moderate Hutu parties under an agreement reached last year to stave off mass ethnic bloodshed in the traditionally unstable nation.

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