[RPF sets ceasefire conditions as Belgium discusses withdrawal from Rwanda]

Annie Thomas

AFP, April 16, 1994

KIGALI, April 16 (AFP) - Rwandan rebel leaders demanded the dissolution of the interim government as a precondition for entering truce talks, AFP learnt here Saturday, as renewed fighting rocked the capital and trapped refugees and UN troops at the airport.

The rebel commanders' demand for the dissolution of the interim government and of the Hutu-led presidential guard headed a list of conditions passed to an AFP reporter still in Kigali by a UN official.

Meanwhile the chief of staff of the interim government's forces issued his own set of truce conditions, appealing for an immediate halt to all fighting in the east African country, as media sources reported heavy arms clashes between the two sides in the capital Saturday afternoon.

The airport was another flashpoint, with Belgian Foreign Minister Willy Claes saying Saturday in Brussels that some 400 Belgian UN peacekeeping troops were "trapped like rats" there and under imminent threat of a rebel attack.

The list of truce conditions issued by the Tutsi-dominated rebel Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) was presented Friday to government forces during the first meeting between the two sides since ethnic bloodletting began ravaging Rwanda 10 days ago.

The meeting failed to reach a truce accord.

A second bilateral session scheduled for Saturday in a hotel in a rebel-held sector of Kigali had yet to get under way at 6:00 p.m. (1600 GMT) in Kigali, AFP learnt. The meeting was called to discuss both sides' ceasefire proposals under the auspices of the United Nations assistance mission in Rwanda (UNAMIR).

In Brussels, Claes told journalists his troops were "trapped like rats ... We have information from very

good sources that armed Rwandan (rebel) forces are preparing to attack the airport, while the chaos in Kigali is growing by the hour and anti-Belgian sentiment is still intense."

Claes added that the commander of UNAMIR, General Romeo Dallaire, had been charged with ensuring the safe departure of the Belgian troops along with around 100 European and Rwandan refugees still at the airport.

"There is no time to lose, the runway at Kigali airport is in danger of being destroyed," he said.

Belgium has decided to pull out its troops from Rwanda, where 10 days of inter-ethnic bloodletting has ravaged the country and left thousands dead since the April 6 death of the country's long-ruling Hutu president Juvenal Habyarimana, whose plane is thought to have been destroyed by rocket fire.

Reporters witnessed from their hotel as violent heavy arms exchanges rocked the eastern side of the Kigali Saturday afternoon, the combats centred on a communications centre equipped with a satellite broadcast receiver.

The conditions set by the RPF, which has refused to acknowledge the interim administration's authority and whose reinforcements from northern Rwanda UNAMIR officials have said are poised to take the capital, were drafted under four main headings. They comprise:

– "Dissolution of the government and (resignation of) the self-proclaimed president."

– "Condemnation of the (Hutu-dominated) presidential guard for intitiating the massacres," and rendering the guard "incapable of doing further harm" by dissolving it.

– "Halting and putting an end to massacres throughout Rwanda" by forming joint patrols comprising rebel, government and UN forces in a bid to evaluate the number of victims.

– Ensuring the arrest of militiamen, local authority officials, politicians and journalists who took part in reprisal attacks or "incited massacres."

Meanwhile, in a document received by AFP in Nairobi, the government forces' chief of staff, Colonel Marcel Gatsinzi, called for "an immediate end to fighting and military operations" in Rwanda as one of a series of "mechanisms to be put in place to help ensure a return to peace.

He demanded an end to "punitive expeditions and revenge operations led by the RPF," and called on rebel radio to end its "provocative campaign of lies."

Government forces also called for frequent meeting between themselves and RPF commanders to help put an end to attacks by renegade forces, and the establishement of emergency

aid corridors to feed "forces on both sides."

A truce accord signed last August by the two sides provides for a power-sharing agreement between the majority Hutu and minority Tutsi tribal factions, and for free elections to be held next year.

at/jms/job