

Rwanda government, rebels want peacekeepers to supervise merger

AFP, April 7, 1993

DAR ES SALAAM, April 7 (AFP) - Rwanda's government and its rebel adversaries have agreed that international peacekeepers should supervise the merging of their forces into a new joint army, a Tanzanian official said Wednesday.

The two sides have yet to reach agreement on the number of soldiers each side should contribute, but are continuing peace talks in the northern Tanzanian town of Arusha, said Ami Mpungwe, a Tanzanian diplomat mediating at the talks.

He said they had agreed that peacekeepers to be provided by the Organisation of African Unity and the United Nations would supervise the demobilisation of soldiers and rebel guerrillas of the Rwanda Patriotic Front.

The peacekeepers would then oversee the gradual formation of a proposed 13,000-strong army made up of soldiers from both sides.

The government and the rebels have agreed in principle to form the joint army.

But the RPF last week rejected the government's demand to provide 80 percent of the soldiers, saying no more than 60 percent should come from any one side.

After talks with observers from France, Belgium, the United States, Uganda and other countries, they resumed discussions about the composition of the new army on Wednesday after agreeing to set aside the question last week and focus on other issues.

Mpungwe denied reports that the talks aimed at ending two-and-a-half years of civil war in Rwanda had collapsed despite international pressure for a peaceful settlement.

"Negotiations are going on smoothly," he said, adding that he expected a peace agreement to be signed this month.

hb/dc/ap 0308
2356 07Avr93 AFP AFP SEQN-