

Rwandan authorities confirm heavy fighting on border with Uganda

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NAIROBI, Dec 21 (AFP) - Rwandan authorities confirmed on Saturday that its forces were locked in a bloody battle in an effort to repulse rebels of the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF), who attacked four areas in the northeastern Ruhengeri region on Thursday.

According to a broadcast on state-run Radio Rwanda, monitored here, the rebels crossed into Rwanda on Thursday night from Achiya forest on the Ugandan side of the border.

"They attacked Rutovu, Kinyababa, Chindonyi and Rugenda areas in Butaro district of Ruhengeri, killed many people and forced many others to flee their homes", the radio said, without giving casualty figures.

"The army has just begun battle with the rebels to try and dislodge them and drive them out of our ter-

ritory", the radio added, but did not say how many rebels were involved in the attack.

Butaro is 80 kilometres (50 miles) west of the Volcanic Mountains on the Rwandan Ugandan border, which is home to Rwanda's famous but rare species of mountain guerrillas.

Saturday's broadcast was the second time Kigali had admitted that rebels were fighting inside the country. The rebels are mostly Tutsi refugees who deserted the Ugandan army with their arms and unsuccessfully invaded Rwanda on October 2 last year.

About 400 rebels took control of parts of Ruhengeri last January, but were driven back over the border into Uganda by Rwandan government forces.

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