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Subject
SECURITY COUNCIL: RWANDA

Summary

- President gives indication of likely African contributions to expanded UNAMIR
- Secretariat provides briefing on state of UN talks in Rwanda with the RPF and the government
- RPF continue to take confrontational position towards the UN

Action

Information

Report

President began discussion at informal consultations today (23 May) with an account of his discussions today on Rwanda with the African Group, particularly concerning responses to the SecGen's requests for troops. Gambari said Senegal had written to the SecGen to offer 800 troops. Ethiopia was also about to put its offer (unspecified) in writing. Ghana had already agreed to bring its battalion back up to full strength. Nigeria would confirm its offer "very soon". When asked for a total picture of likely African offers, Gambari said that offers were expected from Zimbabwe, Tanzania, Ghana, Nigeria, Namibia, Gambia, Senegal, Ethiopia and Congo.

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2 Secretariat (Gharekhan) then gave a brief update about visit to Rwanda of ASG Riza and Military Adviser Baril, and on the situation on the ground.

3 Riza and Baril had flown over the weekend to Uganda and had driven into Rwanda to Mulindi, the RPF headquarters where they had had talks with the RPF leadership. They had intended to go on by road to Kigali to meet with the "government" but the RPF had refused to agree. They had, therefore returned to Uganda. They hope to fly tomorrow from Entebbe to Kigali. Gharekhan described the objectives of their talks as being to try to "firm up" a ceasefire or cessation of hostilities and to work out modalities for deploying the expanded UNAMIR.

4 Both the RPF and the government forces had agreed to suspend hostilities in Kigali during Riza's visit. The truce had held all day today and the city had been very quiet. This was in marked contrast to the situation of the previous three days when there had been heavy shelling.

5 Gharekhan confirmed press reports that the RPF had taken Kigali airport and the adjacent military camp. The RPF had also secured the surrounding area so the airport was completely under RPF control. The Ghanaian company of UNAMIR soldiers was still at the airport and one UN relief flight had used the airport today.

6 Gharekhan said he hoped to receive a report from Riza tomorrow. He noted that the RPF was "not happy" that Riza was to talk to the Government, since this might imply UN recognition.

7 We asked Gharekhan privately whether the RPF takeover of the airport made things better or worse for UNAMIR. He said "better". He noted that although he had not said so in the official briefing (because things could change), the RPF had in fact secured a sufficient perimeter around the airport to take the airport out of range of the government forces' guns. He also said that UNAMIR had not had to evacuate the airport while the RPF took over; the fighting had in fact tapered off as the government withdrew.

Comment

8 While the RPF takeover of the airport may make things better for UNAMIR on a day to day basis, it may not make things markedly better when it comes to deployment of the expanded UNAMIR. The RPF representative told us today that the RPF would let the UN use the airport but it would not let them take over as is implicit in the SecGen's concept of a neutral zone. That may not matter if the RPF is able to secure Kigali so that the airport does not again become the object of fighting. But, if the government forces are able to regroup and go back on the offensive, continued fighting

around the airport could make the operational concept of a mission centred on Kigali unfeasible.

9 Gharekhan's comments about the RPF attitude to the Riza talks were borne out in the latest RPF communique (see accompanying fax, Wellington only). RPF unhappiness at having to deal with the people responsible for ordering the ethnic massacres is understandable. But their confrontational attitude towards the UN, particularly the SecGen's Special Rep, is troubling. We and other have urged the RPF rep here to soft peddle. We have also passed on our understanding that the SecGen's assignment of Booh-Booh to Nairobi is to save his (and the SecGen's) face. He is effectively out of the loop now and it is our understanding he will not be replaced when his current term expires in June.

10 We expect to see the RPF deputy Commander when he comes to New York later this week. We will be urging him to take a more conciliatory line towards the UN in order to enable the deployment of the expanded UNAMIR as early as possible.

End Message