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MY TELNO 1232: RWANDA AND BURUNDI

SUMMARY

- Secretary-General's special political adviser briefs Council members on situation in Rwanda and Burundi: Burundi tense but calm. No reports of unrest in Bujumbura or elsewhere in the country. Situation in Rwanda has deteriorated sharply. At least 10 Belgian UNAMIR soldiers killed, interim Prime Minister reported killed. Number of Hutu opposition leaders including 3 ministers and President of Constitutional Court abducted. Unconfirmed reports that they have also been killed. Risk of violence in demilitarised zone (DMZ). RPF forces maybe making their way from DMZ to Kigali. UNAMIR urging restraint on all sides. Assistant Secretary-General for Peacekeeping tells us separately Secretariat believe that things should be given a couple of days to settle down before decisions are taken as to whether UNAMIR will be able to carry on in Rwanda or not.
- Presidential statement adopted condemning recent events and calling for an end to the violence and attacks on UN personnel.

DETAIL

- During informal consultations of the Security Council on 7 March, Gharekhan (Secretary-General's special political adviser) briefed Council members on developments in Rwanda and Burundi in the light of the assassination of the Presidents of those countries reported in TUR.
- The news on Burundi was relatively good. The situation was tense but calm with no reports of unrest in Bujumbura or elsewhere in the country. The President of the National Assembly has taken charge of the country. The UN fact finding mission (our telno 990 refers) had informed the Secretary-General that the situation was

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calm. They had decided to extend their stay in Burundi by a few days since their presence might be act as a stabilising factor (and that withdrawal could, conversely, be taken as signalling lack of confidence).

5. Gharekhan said that the picture in Rwanda was very different. The situation had deteriorated sharply in Kigali early this morning. According to reports, the interim Prime Minister had been executed by members of the Presidential guard but there had so far been no eyewitness reports. She had apparently sought refuge in the compound of a UNDP staff member, but the APC's sent by UNAMIR to rescue her were prevented from getting through by roadblocks. Her guards were overpowered and she was taken away from the compound and reportedly killed elsewhere.

6. Gharekhan said UNAMIR premises (and personnel) had been under sporadic fire. They had returned fire where necessary in self defence. 10 Belgian UNAMIR soldiers were unaccounted for, and 3 more were reported killed. The Belgians have since told us that 11 were killed and 2 more were unaccounted for. 20 more Belgian UNAMIR soldiers had been disarmed and detained at the airport by the Presidential Guard but were otherwise unhurt. A Belgian airforce C130 was stationed at Kigali airport but the crew had been prevented from gaining access to it, again by the Presidential Guard who are also denying the UN and UNAMIR access to the wreckage of President Habyarimana's plane). 2 Ghanaian UNAMIR soldiers were also unaccounted for. The Presidential guard had kidnapped a civilian staff member of UNDP but the UN Force Commander had secured his release.

7. Gharekhan said the RPF battalion which had come to Kigali as part of the Arusha Peace Agreement had been confined to their barracks. They had sought to leave but UNAMIR had restrained them as the Presidential Guard were close by. However about a third forced their way out and there was subsequently fighting in the streets between the RPF and the Presidential guard, as well as looting.

8. The situation had deteriorated still further when the Presidential Guard started abducting opposition leaders and their families. 3 Ministers, the President of the National Assembly and the President of the Constitutional Court had all been abducted and there were unconfirmed reports that all had been killed. The Prime Minister designate was in hiding and his whereabouts unknown.

9. There was no authority in control in Kigali. UNAMIR and the SRSG had urged the military and the gendarmerie to seek to establish some form of interim authority. UNAMIR had sought to carry out joint patrols with the gendarmerie in an attempt to restore some kind of order. The Defence Ministry spokesman had also appealed several times for calm via radio broadcasts.

10. The Force Commander and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General had also warned of violence in the demilitarised zone where the Rwandan Army and the RPF face each other with UNAMIR deployed in between. The RPF Commander had told the UN Force Commander his troops would be advancing to Kigali but would avoid UNAMIR positions on the way. Gharekhan said, however, that any movement of RPF troops to Kigali from the DMZ would inevitably result in clashes with Government forces which might impact on UNAMIR.

11. The consultations then adjourned to allow the NAM caucus to work on the draft Presidential Statement which had been prepared earlier by the (New Zealand) Council President and France. The text in MIFT was subsequently agreed in informal consultations and adopted at a formal meeting later on in the evening. The reference to the killing of the Belgian peacekeepers was included at the request of the Belgian Ambassador.

COMMENT

12. A lot of the talk in the margins of the Security Council meeting was of the possibility of the withdrawal of UNAMIR in the face of the breakdown of law and order in Rwanda. Merimee (France) told me on the morning of 7 April that French troops in the Central African Republic were standing by to evacuate EU nationals, but as yet no decision had been taken, and that two battalions of Belgian special forces were also standing by.

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13. The Assistant Secretary-General for Peacekeeping, to whom we

spoke late on 7 April, said that the Secretary-General's Special Representative and the Force Commander were making a serious effort to bring the leadership of the police, gendarmerie etc. together in some form of interim authority to fill the power vacuum. There was to be a further meeting tomorrow, and UNAMIR's objective was to get joint UNAMIR/gendarmerie patrols on the streets in Kigali. Riza said that he thought a couple of days should be allowed for the dust to settle. It was too early to start talking of withdrawal yet, though he did not rule it out.

14. See MIFT for text of Presidential Statement.

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