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RWANDA DECLARES STATE OF EMERGENCY, WARNS REBEL FORCE MAY GROW
(Eds: updates with state of emergency, foreign minister press

conference)

By Frances Kerry

KIGALI, Rwanda, Reuter - The Rwandan government declared a state of emergency Monday despite relative calm in the besieged African state, and warned the 10,000-strong rebel force that invaded from neighboring Uganda could double or triple in size if Kampala does not stop the rebels' recruiting from the Ugandan army.

The state of emergency was backdated to Oct. 1, when the rebel invasion began.

"Fighting continues in Mutara (northeast Rwanda) and at the moment the enemy seems to be losing its grip," Foreign Minister Casimir Bizimungu said in a briefing for foreign diplomats in the capital Kigali.

The foreign minister told diplomats that the rebel force was estimated at 10,000 men, most of them deserters from the Ugandan army. "The figure could double or triple if recruitment from the Ugandan army continues," he warned.

Bizimungu called for energetic international condemnation of what he termed "an attack which was aimed only installing an (ethnic) minority government and a feudal regime under the veil of freedom-fighting and democratic slogans."

Some 500 Zairean troops flown in last Friday to support the Rwandan government clashed with the rebels in a two-hour battle near the northeastern town of Gabiro Monday, the official Zairean news agency AZAP reported.

That contradicted a statement by Bizimungu, who said the Zairean troops were protecting vital installations but were not involved in combat.

The Belgian news agency Belga quoted AZAP as saying that the elite Zairean troops of the Special Presidential Division forced a larger group of rebels to retreat.

One Rwandan government soldier was killed and two Zaireans were wounded in the engagement, AZAP said. No rebel casualties were reported.

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AZAP said Rwandan President Juvenal Habyarimana paid a five-hour visit to Kinshasa Monday to thank President Mobutu Sese Seko for Zaire's help in combatting the invasion.

Most of the rebel force are refugees from Rwanda's minority Tutsi tribe, whose parents fled to Uganda during upheavals in 1959 which led to the majority Hutu tribe seizing power.

Bizimungu said he hoped Uganda would keep its pledge to stop more rebels crossing into Rwanda from Uganda "so that the recruitment of new attackers and their rebel infiltration into our country stops immediately."

Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni, who is on a European tour, said in Copenhagen Monday that the Rwandan government should find a way of allowing the 250,000 Rwandan refugees in his country to go home."

"The government should find a way of accommodating these refugees, they should be allowed back into their country," he told a news conference here after talks with Prime-Minister Poul Schluter and other Danish officials.

Museveni said the rebels who invaded Rwanda were "fighting to be allowed to go back to their country."

"It's not really our problem," he added.

Museveni said Belgian leaders had told him during talks in Brussels Sunday that the Belgian troops sent to Rwanda last week were there solely to protect their citizens and that he had accepted this assurance.

"But we shall not accept European troops being used in internal conflicts in Africa," said Museveni, who is also chairman of the Organization of African Unity.

France has also sent several hundred paratroopers to Rwanda to protect and evacuate its nationals.

Bizimungu said the rebels had been joined by sympathizers within the country and 500 rebels and rebel sympathizers had been arrested in Kigali following a night of gunfire in the capital last Thursday.

The detainees are being held in a stadium on the outskirts of Kigali. Witnesses said they saw up to 1,500 people there Monday, including some women and children.

Bizimungu defended the detention of the children, saying "you can hold children for a while to get information."

Asked how Rwanda's army of around 6,000 could fight off a force of 10,000 or more, Bizimungu said there were plenty of young people in Rwanda's seven million population who could be recruited if necessary.

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