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Next Crisis in Central Africa: The Tanzania-Burundi Border

Judith Matloff, Staff writer of The Christian Science Monitor

BUJUMBURA, BURUNDI -- Anzania may be the next point of tension in Central Africa.

Pressure is mounting as Burundian Hutu rebels, routed recently from refugee camps in Zaire, make their way across Burundi to regroup in new bases in side Tanzania.

Aid workers report that fresh violence has rippled across Burundi's midsection as Hutu rebels travel east to Tanzania. They fled after Zaire's Uvira refugee camp fell to a mostly Tutsi rebel group last month.

Unlike Rwandan Hutu refugees in Tanzania, the Burundian refugees are sitting tight in their camps. Since Tanzania ordered a repatriation campaign for Rwandans Friday, up to 23,000 Rwandan Hutus have left their camps in northern Tanzania to hide in the bush, avoiding possible reprisals for the 1994 genocide against Tutsis.

"[The Burundis are] a separate case from that of the Rwandan refugees," says Peter Kessler, spokesman for the United Nations refugee agency in Nairobi.

Hutu insurgents who were pushed out of Burundi and neighboring Rwanda used refugee camps in eastern Zaire as bases from which to stage incursions for about two years. But a month ago, Zairean rebels sympathetic to Tutsi-led Rwanda and Burundi destroyed the camps and created a Tutsi buffer zone along the Zairean border with Rwanda and Burundi.

No one knows how many Burundian Hutu insurgents are in Tanzania now. But they are believed to be among about 78,000 Burundi refugees who have fled to Tanzania, swelling the number of refugees in camps to 190,000.

Cross-border raids are a major component in the Hutu-Tutsi ethnic strife that has torn Central Africa, killing more than 150,000 people in Burundi since late 1993.

Tanzania denies Burundi's claims that it is helping Hutu rebels. But the government of Burundi President Pierre Buyoya, who seized power in a July coup, insists Tanzania will do anything to destroy it.

And the Buyoya government points out that former Tanzanian President Julius Nyerere is leading an economic blockade by neighboring countries to force democratic change in Burundi. Military intervention by outside forces is possible, Burundi government officials claim.

"We believe Tanzania has a hidden agenda and that it wants our government to collapse," says Buyoya's spokesman Jean-Luc Ndizeye. "I foresee tensions increasing over the coming months."

Whatever Tanzania's role, what is certain is that, since the Zairean refugee camps fell, violence has increased dramatically across Burundi.

International relief workers attribute the new fighting to strikes by Hutu rebels as they move across the country - and increased confidence by the Tutsi-led Army after years of military stalemate.

Jean-Luc Siblot, head of the UN World Food Program in Burundi, reports that since the camps fell a month ago, fighting has increased in Cibitoke, a traditional rebel frontier zone in the northwest.

Clashes have also erupted across the country, causing 80,000 to become internally displaced. Most people in Burundi's countryside are ethnic Hutus, who make up 85 percent of the population. Convinced that many civilians support the Hutu rebels, the government has rounded up many of the 45,000 refugees who have returned from Zaire over the past month and placed them in supervised camps.

The danger now is that with the Hutu opposition in disarray, the government will be less inclined to pursue a political solution. Buyoya's response to sanctions was muted: In September he said he would reinstate parliament and allow political parties to operate in a limited fashion. No progress was made on demands by the main Hutu party FRODEBU to reinstate a constitutional government or open negotiations with the rebels.

Many FRODEBU leaders are now in exile, and former President Sylvestre Ntibantunganya remains in hiding at the US ambassador's residence in Bujumbura, where he sought refuge after the coup.

The difficult issue is how to share power between the Hutu majority and the Tutsis, who are 14 percent of the population but have dominated politics throughout Burundi's independence. Mindful of Rwanda's 1994 genocide of Tutsis, they want a large say in the government and Army for

self-protection.

The latest cycle of carnage began in 1993, when the country's first Hutu president, Melchior Ndadaye, was assassinated by Tutsi soldiers in a coup. An interim power-sharing government set up the following year was unable to halt the outbreak of ethnic violence.

Buyoya, who presents himself as a moderate, staged the July coup - his second since 1987 - saying he wanted to break the stalemate. But he is under pressure to placate extremists, and diplomats say he has scant room to maneuver.

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Can World Aid Agencies Be Politically Neutral?

Judith Matloff, Staff writer of The Christian Science Monitor

KIGALI, RWANDA -- Central Africa's refugee crisis has sparked aid agencies to question their uncomfortable role on the front line of world conflicts.

For 2-1/2 years, the United Nations maintained camps for Rwandan refugees in Zaire and Tanzania that doubled as bases for Rwandan Hutu militias, who used them to stage cross-border raids and hold thousands of refugees virtually hostage. This has prompted soul searching about the ethics of increasingly politicized aid work.

The camps have broken up. Some 600,000 refugees have returned from Zaire. Thousands more are streaming back from Tanzania. And aid groups are standing back to weigh the impact on their multimillion-dollar efforts.

Aid groups find themselves adopting morally questionable methods to distribute food.

Doctors Without Borders called a high-level meeting in Paris last Thursday to discuss the issue. Oxfam and Save the Children are taking a particularly critical look at the use of resources. The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) has heightened its examination of how to adapt to the

changing nature of conflict.

"This is a turning point. The debate goes wider than [Central Africa]. It has to do with the aid agencies' increasingly prominent role since the cold war ended," says Samantha Bolton of Doctors Without Borders.

Much of the debate centers around whether the aid agencies perpetuated the crisis by feeding the militias as well as the masses. Aid agencies privately admit to such inadvertent complicity elsewhere. Aid to Sudan has helped the rebels' fight there. In Angola, rebels were fattened by the UN during their struggle from 1992 to 1994.

The Central Africa crisis illustrates how aid groups have trouble promoting humanitarian missions without a political mandate to solve the problems. The events also force them to address criticism that they may have prolonged the crisis rather than provided relief.

Since Ethiopia's famine in the mid-1980s, aid agencies have been thrust into a highly visible position. Aid groups used the media to raise funds, becoming a huge industry. In turn, emergencies have often become media circuses. Aid agencies are often forced to fill a political vacuum caused by the West's reluctance to get involved in peacekeeping.

Many aid groups complain too much is expected of them, and that they must take the rap for governments' lack of political will. "Aid agencies are sometimes a fig leaf for lack of international action. You can attack the fig leaf, but if it drops off, there's nothing," says Peter Kessler of the UN refugee organization, UNHCR.

In the case of Central Africa, the UNHCR and the World Food Program (WFP)

promised to help anyone in need when an estimated 1.7 million Rwandan Hutus fled to eastern Zaire and Tanzania after the 1994 genocide. Many of the refugees were shepherded across the borders by Hutu militiamen who perpetrated the slaughter of more than half a million Tutsis. Most aid agencies continued their work, despite evidence of military training in the camps, which served as bases for cross-border raids.

Rwanda, tired of this threat on its border, backed Zairean rebels who broke up the camps several weeks ago. Relief groups predicted an epic humanitarian disaster, prompting the formation of a multinational force to create new camps.

But before the force could deploy, the refugees flooded back to Rwanda looking quite fit - hurting the credibility of aid agencies that had cried wolf.

Heartened by the easy repatriation from Zaire, Tanzania announced it was closing its camps. Despite cries of forced repatriation by Amnesty International, the UNHCR backed Tanzania's decision, and thousands of refugees began returning home this weekend.

At times aid groups have adopted morally questionable methods to distribute food. In Zaire, they bribed officials to get supplies in. In Liberia, they cooperated with faction leaders. Adding to the ethical debate, some have accused relief workers of exaggerating the scope of the crisis. At one point, Doctors Without Borders and others estimated that tens of thousands had died from lack of assistance.

While admitting they got it wrong, relief workers argue that they worked with the information they had. They were under pressure not to be as

ill-prepared as they were in 1994, when tens of thousands of Rwandan refugees arriving in eastern Zaire died.

"We are in a part of the world with huge calamities due to war, disease, and famine. There is always criticism that aid organizations did not warn early enough. So this time they felt that they had to give a warning," says Brenda Barton, WFP spokeswoman for Africa.

Whether there will be any major changes in relief philosophy will become clearer as the debate unfolds. Some agencies are seriously considering how they will target resources in the future. But so far the ICRC and the UN have indicated that they will continue to refrain from making judgments about whom they help. "It is not up to humanitarian organizations to say 'these are the good guys and the bad guys,' " says Kim Gordon-Bates of the ICRC.

"Anyone who is hungry or a victim of conflict should be helped, no matter what their political situation."

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African Nations Losing Will to Punish Burundi

Judith Matloff, Staff writer of The Christian Science Monitor

BUJUMBURA, BURUNDI -- Burundi is filled with ghost towns and ghost roads.

One of them is Route 1.

Once a major thoroughfare, the road, which stretches from the border with Rwanda to the capital, Bujumbura, is virtually deserted. It passes through empty towns, vacant houses, and shuttered shops. There is no one to buy from them and their stocks have long run out.

War and sanctions have emptied roads like this one across the tiny Central African country. Burundi's neighbors are trying to force its Tutsi-led military government to adopt more democratic methods. The result is that a struggling country has become even poorer.

"We don't see any positive political consequences of the sanctions," says Jean-Luc Siblot, head of the World Food Programme's (WFP) Burundi mission. "Thousands of people are jobless. Agriculture has decreased, and industrial production is down. But the government has managed to do what it wanted to with or without sanctions," Mr. Siblot says.

The trade embargo was imposed in August in response to the July 25 coup by

Maj. Pierre Buyoya, who ousted the interim power-sharing government led by Hutu President Sylvester Ntibantunganya.

Major Buyoya claimed he took power to save Burundi from the Tutsi-Hutu ethnic violence that has claimed more than 150,000 lives since 1993. But nearby countries, tired of the conflict destabilizing the region, saw it differently. In a rare gesture by African leaders to crack down on one of their own, Uganda, Tanzania, Ethiopia, Cameroon, Zaire, and Rwanda declared the blockade to force Buyoya to adopt democratic reforms.

So far the sanctions, which were renewed on Oct. 12, have done little to achieve their aim. Buyoya has made only limited changes - reinstating parliament and allowing opposition parties to operate in a restricted fashion.

The sanctions seem to be hitting the poor the hardest, aid groups say. The UN's Food and Agriculture Organization says the embargo, coupled with the conflict between Hutu rebels and the Tutsi-led Army, makes it almost impossible to relieve food shortages.

Because of gas shortages, food cannot get to markets and people can not get to work. The towns are filled with businesses that have closed down. The prices of some foodstuffs have soared by 500 percent.

Burundi says the embargo has cost it more than \$150 million. Coffee exports, the main source of export revenue, have virtually halted. The main industry, a brewery, is operating at 50 percent capacity.

Sanctions-busting does occur. Clandestine shipments of fuel and food slip by Rwandan border officials, who are lax about searching trucks.

Industrious individuals risk ambushes on the highway to sneak supplies into Burundi. People smuggle supplies on the twice-weekly Ethiopian Airlines flight to Nairobi, which is chartered by the WFP.

"It's worth the danger," says one mechanic who is making a minor fortune carrying in diesel fuel from the Rwandan border.

A condition to lift the sanctions was that Buyoya hold negotiations with Hutu rebels and institute more-profound constitutional reforms. But he shows no signs of budging, saying rebels must declare a cease-fire first. With the political stalemate continuing and the poor hurting, many countries are increasingly questioning the wisdom of the sanctions. Some believe the embargo has put even more pressure on Buyoya to pander to militants.

Pressure is increasing in the region to lift the sanctions. Earlier this month, a summit for Central African leaders in Brazzaville, Congo, recommended ending the embargo. A similar call was made at a French-African summit in Burkina Faso.

Some diplomats believe that the break-up of Hutu militant refugee camps in eastern Zaire last month has eroded cohesion among the countries adhering to the blockade. Zaire is in great disarray, with a rebellion spreading. Rwanda turns a blind eye when goods slip through its border. Ethiopia and Cameroon apparently have lost their enthusiasm for sanctions. Only Kenya and Tanzania seem to be standing firm.

"The front was strong before. The pressure was a means to an end. Now it is just an end and is collapsing," one diplomat says.

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Rwanda Seeks To Bridge Deep Ethnic Divide

Alan Zarembo, Special to The Christian Science Monitor

KIGALI, RWANDA -- Despite the images of rebels and refugees flickering across US TV screens, Rwanda is more stable than it has been in years - for now.

To be sure, there will be more disputes over houses and land as the hundreds of thousands of Hutus who spilled home from Zaire settle back in their villages. Thousands are likely to be packed into fetid prisons when their neighbors accuse them of participating in the 1994 genocide of up to 1 million Tutsis and moderate Hutus.

The half-a-million refugees who have already returned may soon be joined by up to 500,000 more from Tanzania. Last week, the Tanzanian government, with the backing of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, ordered all Rwandan refugees to leave the country by the end of the month.

Yesterday, aid workers reported that more than 40,000 Hutu refugees had abandoned two camps in northwestern Tanzania. They speculate that the mass exodus was organized by hard-line Hutu groups, which control the camps, in response to the order to return home. Many Hutus are afraid to return to Rwanda for fear of being accused by the Tutsi-led government of participating in the genocide.

Rwanda's most pressing problem, the refugee camps in eastern Zaire, has disappeared.

Even if the refugees come home peacefully, the question remains: What is their country's future?

Rwanda's most pressing problem, the refugee camps in eastern Zaire, has disappeared. Perched on the border for two years, they became bases for Hutu militants to raid Rwanda. Now that they have been dismantled by Zairean rebels, Rwanda is more stable than it has been in years.

But some observers wonder if the stability can last under a minority-led regime. Ultimately, it is the difficulty of the situation, not the intentions of the leaders, that may make lasting peace elusive.

Rwanda's old leaders forced ordinary Hutus to butcher their Tutsi neighbors - in what current leaders say was a deliberate effort to create a society their enemies could never rule.

The legitimacy of the Tutsi-led regime is that, as a rebel force, it stopped the genocide in its final stages. Now its challenge is to piece Rwanda back together.

To start, leaders are trying to bury the ethnic question. They have banned the words "Hutu" and "Tutsi" from the radio, and teach that colonialism created the divisions. While the Belgians, who ruled as a colonial power, practiced divide-and-rule techniques, Rwanda's ethnic battle lines have never been so crisp as in the wake of the genocide. And while officials may downplay ethnicity, they are acutely aware of it. For example, few

officials dare utter the word elections in public. A vote now, they say, would be an ethnic census.

Instead, they installed more Hutu ministers than Tutsis in an effort to win broad support. Few Hutus buy it. Many see the ministers as Uncle Toms who would be fired if they cross certain lines, a view supported last year when the prime minister and three other top Hutus were replaced after criticizing the Army.

The government's top priority is punishing the killers. More than 85,000 genocide suspects have been locked up after being denounced by neighbors. But the drive-by arrests and the failure to try even one suspect 2-1/2 years after the crime have not helped heal ethnic divisions.

Still, Rwanda has strong support from its Western allies, most importantly the United States. The US sees a strong Rwanda, with all of its people home again, as the best way forward. They raised no objection as evidence mounted that Rwanda was supporting rebels in eastern Zaire to dismantle the refugee camps and solve the border crisis.

Across Rwanda's southern border, another Tutsi power, Burundi provides a totalitarian blueprint for keeping control. Both countries have nearly identical colonial histories and the same ethnic mix - 85 percent Hutu and 14 percent Tutsi. There Tutsis have stayed in power for three decades by periodically massacring hundreds of thousands of Hutus - and aborting the country's only attempt at democracy in 1993 with the assassination of the first Hutu president three months after his election. There have been attempts at power-sharing, but the Tutsi-dominated Army has never relinquished its grip.

The fear is that Rwanda is heading down the same path. While many have predicted that Burundi will explode in a Rwandan-style genocide, the opposite is happening: Both countries have armies that view themselves as the protectors of the Tutsi minority. Both have become so polarized that even the most moderate of politicians are squeezed into extremist positions. And until recently, both faced attacks from Hutu insurgents.

For now, the strip of Zaire held by Zairean Tutsi-led rebels serves as a buffer of protection for Rwanda. But the Hutu militants won't disappear forever. In the end, the massive refugee return may have a downside for the Rwandan government: The next time Hutu militants attack Rwanda, they may find many more supporters waiting for them.

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Zaire's Future Uncertain As Rebels Advance in East

Jennifer Ludden, Special to The Christian Science Monitor

KINSHASA, ZAIRE -- As Eastern Zaire's upstart rebels continue to gain territory at a remarkably fast pace, it is becoming harder to dismiss the possibility that sub-Saharan Africa's largest nation may be splitting apart, and threatening to inflame much of central Africa as it does.

The rebels' stated goal of overthrowing what they say is President Mobutu Sese Seko's corrupt regime still seems quixotic; the multiethnic rebel alliance is believed to number only a few thousand, and Zaire's capital, Kinshasa, is a thousand miles away over rough terrain.

Yet their decisive military strikes and continued momentum during the past six weeks have been impressive, and all the more disturbing because of the help they have received from Rwanda.

Rebel commanders deny official backing, but it was Rwandan mortars that allowed the rebels to take their first major cities, and Rwanda's defense chief has admitted some in his military have crossed over to join the rebels.

Western diplomats worry the scenario will foment terrorism and more instability in an already politically fragile region. "The region will

explode," says one official in a Western embassy. "It will be dangerous not just for Africa but also ... for Western nations and private companies who operate here. If you allow one country to hold up his neighbor, each country will say, 'Hey, me too.' "

Like so many of Africa's conflicts, this one finds its roots in ethnicity. The rebels first claimed to be fighting for the rights of oppressed Zairean Tutsis. They targeted Rwandan Hutu militia in the region who had been using refugee camps as bases from which to continue the slaughter of Tutsis that they began during Rwanda's 1994 genocide.

The rebel offensive effectively drove the militia from the camps, allowing more than 500,000 Rwandan Hutu refugees to return home last month. Several hundred thousand refugees believed to remain in Zaire are scattered by the fighting, and the hunt for fleeing militia apparently continues.

Last week, reports surfaced that rebels were separating out young men from other refugees, and piles of massacred bodies were discovered. The US State Department condemned the killings and asked that international organizations be allowed into rebel territory to investigate.

Diplomats and other analysts see a tidy explanation for it all. They point out that the rebels have created a buffer zone for Tutsi-led Rwanda, eliminating the presence of the Hutu refugee camps and ending two years of violent border attacks.

They presume this is Rwanda's sole aim, to simply keep the land recently won. And they say rebel leader Laurent Kabila - who talks of ousting President Mobutu - is nothing more than a front. It is, says one diplomat, "Rwanda manipulating Kabila's ego."

Still, those same analysts wonder if Rwanda ever thought the rebels would get as far as they have. Mr. Kabila's Alliance of Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Congo-Zaire now holds 320-mile-long strip of land bordering three of Zaire's neighbors and is poised to push west toward the regional capital of Kisangani.

Zaire's Army controls only one major town in the east, Bunia, which rebels had previously claimed to have captured. But rebels have the city surrounded.

Most humiliating for Zaireans, rebel gains have come with hardly a shot fired from their own ill-equipped and corrupt Army. Soldiers have fled their posts on the mere rumor of approaching rebels, pillaging from the citizens they are supposed to protect.

If the same happens in Kisangani, a small rebellion would become a serious regional crisis. Kisangani is a strategic staging post for any counterattack and, poised on the Zaire River, a key trade link with Kinshasa.

This isn't the first time Zaire's Army has been shamed. But during past rebellions, when Mobutu was a cold-war ally, French, Belgian, and American troops were sent to the rescue. Not so now.

Barring outside help in the form of mercenaries, a political solution seems the only tack that could get Zaire its land back. Yet with the upper hand, the rebels may see no reason to talk.

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New Rulers, US Plan Give Africa a Future

Judith Matloff, Staff writer of The Christian Science Monitor

KINSHASA, CONGO -- They came to power by guns, not glad-handing. They once touted Marx but now talk markets. They don't order their pictures hung in public but instead build schools, clean streets, grapple with graft.

A new breed of leaders is arising in Africa - leaders who know they must distance themselves from the days when despots bought villas in France while their people went hungry. A semblance of stability is being created in eastern and central Africa by the likes of Rwanda's Paul Kagame, Uganda's Yoweri Museveni, Eritrea's Issaias Afewerki, and possibly Congo's recent conqueror, Laurent-Desiré Kabila.

They embody a break with the cold-war, post-colonial era, when big powers backed proxies in Africa. These men toy with democracy to win limited praise from Washington. To stay in power, they embrace market reforms that woo foreign investors.

They are leaders whom President Clinton is banking on for his plan, announced Tuesday, to alter the way the West treats the world's poorest continent. The plan, to be taken up this weekend at the Group of Seven summit in Denver, accents trade over aid, business over dependency.

"Americans want ... us to start treating Africa like we treat the rest of the world, as economic partners," said one co-sponsor of the initiative, Rep. Jim McDermott (D) of Washington. The initiative would reward African countries reforming their economies by lowering tariffs, give some \$650 million in loan guarantees to spur investment, and urge the World Bank and International Monetary Fund to forgive debts of the poorest countries.

Here are profiles of four heads of state who are putting a new face on governing in Africa:

YOWERI MUSEVENI could be called the founding member of the new club of strongmen. Uganda's president has set an indelible example of African leadership since taking the reins 10 years ago. He has inspired two protégés, Rwanda's Mr. Kagame and Congo's Mr. Kabila, whom he helped bring to power.

Mr. Museveni cut his political teeth in the 1970s, taking part in the Mozambican war of independence. He rose to power in the struggle to overthrow Ugandan dictators Idi Amin and Milton Obote. Now a decade into the job, Museveni presides over one of Africa's happier stories. Under his leadership, the ethnic massacres that tore the country apart have stopped.

Buoyed by this newfound stability, foreign investment has poured in. Uganda's 19 million people have enjoyed 8 percent economic growth since 1992 - one of the stronger economies on the continent.

But while winning plaudits for his financial pragmatism, Museveni's political approach has prompted some consternation among advocates of pluralism, who accuse him of authoritarianism. Under Museveni's "no party" state, individuals, but not parties, can take part in elections.

Museveni is irritated by foreign criticism, arguing that in Uganda political parties are inherently tribalist, and could tear society apart. He insists that, until stability is fully restored, the country cannot take the risk of fomenting ethnic tension.

Judging by the situation now, that could take some time. The country is still divided along ethnic lines, and he has a severe security threat with rebels in the north.

Whether or not one agrees with Museveni's views, it is undeniable that he is a man of vision who cares about his country. And his vision extends to the entire region. His reported backing of Kabila, Kagame, and of Sudanese rebels is justified as a way to bring stability next door. But such meddling has raised the hackles of neighbors such as Kenyan leader Daniel arap Moi, who accuses Museveni of expansionism.

Paul Kagame, the main power figure in Rwanda, could be called Museveni's first political son. This Tutsi defense minister and vice president is credited with engineering the overthrow of the country's Hutu-led government just months after Hutus murdered at least 800,000 Tutsis in 1994. "Serious" and "austere" are adjectives often applied to General Kagame. The new state created by Kagame and his Tutsi government is centered on security, often likened to Israel in its concern with self-preservation.

Kagame's roots are in Uganda, where, like many other Rwandan Tutsis, he was raised in exile. He took part in the ouster of Ugandan dictator Milton Obote in 1986 that brought Museveni to power. It proved a training ground for the rebellion he spearheaded in Rwanda later on.

Kagame and his men set an almost puritanical example, free of the excesses of other African states. The country he leads is an earnest one where schools function, streets are clean, bribery is frowned on, and hard work rewarded.

Critics of Kagame's Tutsi-dominated administration say it has done little to incorporate the 84 percent majority Hutus. But like Museveni, Kagame dismisses suggestions for multiparty elections, for now. He argues that first he must deal with the legacy of Rwanda's genocide. Last fall, mostly Tutsi rebels in what used to be eastern Zaire did Rwanda's leadership the service of

breaking up refugee camps, which Hutu militiamen and former soldiers had used as bases to attack Rwanda. That sent hundreds of thousands of refugees, many of whom had been held virtually prisoner by the perpetrators of the genocide, running home to Rwanda. His task now is to find homes in the already-crowded country for all these people. Plus, he must deal with armed Hutu infiltrators who have been staging attacks, and trying more than 90,000 genocide suspects in a judicial system with less than 20 legally qualified lawyers.

'The notion here [in Eritrea] of corruption is using a government car to take your kid to school.' - Western diplomat

Laurent-Desiré Kabila, Museveni's second political son, may be the latest to join the club of leaders. Since he ousted despot Mobutu Sese Seko in May, Mr. Kabila has become the self-proclaimed leader of what used to be Zaire, the new Democratic Republic of the Congo.

What is certain, diplomats say, is that Kabila is close to Kagame and Museveni, who reportedly helped arm his uprising, which in seven months conquered a country the size of Western Europe.

It is not quite clear what Kabila's vision for leadership is. His Alliance of Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Congo is a mishmash of bushfighters and academics who say themselves that they have no unifying ideology.

There is an apparent contradiction in their spouting Maoist rhetoric about furthering the cause of peasants while they court foreign mining companies to develop the country's mineral wealth.

Optimists say they already see signs of a more enlightened economic policy, as well as a war on the endemic corruption left over from Mr. Mobutu's three decades in power. But Kabila's past record doesn't impress many diplomats. He was a mediocre guerrilla, a gold smuggler, and a womanizer, by most accounts. The late Argentine revolutionary Ernesto "Che" Guevara dismissed Kabila as a revolutionary lightweight who spent too much time living the high life rather than slugging it out on the front line. "Kabila hasn't proved himself," says one Western diplomat based in Kinshasa. "He's been an opportunist and an adventurer for much of his revolutionary career. The jury is still out."

It is also still out on Kabila's professed advocacy of human rights. Disturbing mass graves have been uncovered of Hutu Rwandans seeking refuge in his territory. But some diplomats here give Kabila the benefit of the doubt, believing that rogue forces may have carried out the dirty work for Rwanda's Tutsi government.

Kabila, who included few opposition members in his Cabinet, has promised elections in two years, which some Western diplomats say is just fine. "There is no point in rushing things and having a bad election just for the sake of it," says one.

Issaias Afewerki, the president of Eritrea, maintains a lower profile than the three other men. And that is fitting for the leader of this unique country. The ruling party looks askance at the

cult of personality so prevalent in the rest of Africa. And Mr. Afewerki and his fellow leaders have a commitment to the masses that is unparalleled elsewhere in Africa.

Since they declared independence from Ethiopia in May 1993, they have strived to create a culture of self-sufficiency.

Demobilized soldiers are employed in public-works projects. Foreign aid with strings attached is rejected. UN personnel have been kicked out for meddling.

For instance, when a European donor suggested a project to rebuild roads, Eritrea decided it was cheaper to do it itself. And an offer for US scholarships for government officials was politely turned down on the grounds that they were needed at home to rebuild the country.

The example of self-sacrifice, diligence, and integrity is set from the top. "The notion here of corruption is using a government car to take your kid to school," says one Western diplomat.

There is a downside, however: social control. Beggars are rounded up. Citizens complain they are watched and are expected to help the reconstruction effort.

Behind this mindset lies the 30-year war for independence waged by the Eritrean People's Liberation Front. When it was apparent they would get little outside help, they became entirely self-reliant. The result was one of the most remarkable guerrilla movements in modern history. They built factories in caves. Literacy classes were held on the battlefield.

This self-reliance has bred a suspiciousness of the outside world, which is not completely unwarranted. The biggest threat is from Sudan next door. Eritrea accuses the militant Islamic country of arming guerrillas who infiltrated its borders. In turn, it aids southern rebels fighting Sudan in the name of self-protection.

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One Man Cries Peace In a Land of Massacres

Andrea Useem, Special to The Christian Science Monitor

NAIROBI, KENYA -- In an African country where conflict is often resolved with a gun, Moses Bigirimana has chosen an odd career: professional peacemaker teaching the futility of violence.

His message of choosing life over revenge has been especially poignant in his native land of Burundi, where a frenzy of eye-for-an-eye ethnic violence has left some 50,000 dead since 1993.

Mr. Bigirimana, a Quaker, began his mission of peace in 1993, when a group of ethnic Tutsi officers in the Army assassinated the first democratically elected Hutu president.

That assassination, compounded by the outbreak of similar Hutu-Tutsi killings in neighboring Rwanda, has sparked continued massacres.

At the time, Bigirimana, a Hutu, was training 15 pastors-to-be when armed Tutsis raided the dormitory and murdered 11 of his students. One Tutsi went hunting for him, but he escaped. The massacre pushed Bigirimana into preaching peace at nearby churches.

"If you kill one person, then those who belong to that person will plan to eliminate you or your family," he says. "With revenge, you are ... creating more death."

Bigirimana is a rarity in Burundi. Five percent of the population is Protestant; even fewer belong to the pacifist Quakers. Most people in Burundi are Roman Catholic. But it is his ideas and willingness to stand up for peace that make him stand out.

Last summer, he organized a two-month seminar on conflict resolution for young men and women in the town of Gitega.

Bigirimana's students, most of them Hutu, carried a strong sense of injustice. Many had quit school for fear of being killed. Soldiers sent to "guard" schools often help Tutsis kill their Hutu classmates; both educational institutions and the Army are dominated by Tutsis, who make up 14 percent of the population.

Burundi's recent history is full of repression by Tutsis of Hutus, who make up 85 percent of the population. In 1969, 1972, 1988, 1993, and 1995, there were purges of educated Hutus by Tutsis. "They are angry. They don't understand how all Hutus can be refused the right for schooling," says Bigirimana. "Nobody is there to say, 'This is not good.' So they have to find their own justice."

Many seek justice through the armed wing of Leonard Nyangoma's radical Hutu party, the Council for the Defense of Democracy. His rebel bands are engaged in a civil war with the government, led by Maj. Pierre Buyoya who staged a bloodless coup in July 1996.

Instead of violence, Bigirimana preaches patience. "With patience everything can be changed, and it is our responsibility to change."

He also gave his students another peacemaking strategy, one that has saved his own life: Remain friends with members of the opposite ethnic group.

Last summer at an Army checkpoint, a Tutsi soldier told Bigirimana to lie on the ground, a sign that he was about to shoot. But a crowd of Tutsis who used to pray with Bigirimana had gathered. "When they realized I

was going to be killed, they started to cry," he says. The soldier, bewildered, told Bigirimana to get up and leave.

In March, he organized another peace seminar with other church leaders. He included one special guest: the Tutsi who tried to kill him in 1993.

Last month, he left Burundi to join his fiancée in Nairobi. But he plans to return to teach "people to keep their senses instead of killing."

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Source: Christian Science Monitor

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Looking for A Few Good Legal Eagles

Lara Santoro, Special to The Christian Science Monitor

KIGALI, RWANDA -- When US Marine Capt. Peter Sennett first visited Rwanda a year ago, he found a country so traumatized by the 1994 genocide that wiped out one-eighth of the population, his mission seemed, well, impossible.

It wasn't so much that the prosecutors and criminal investigators he was to train lacked sophisticated knowledge of courtroom protocol and investigative techniques. It was that they lacked focus and direction.

"They were completely overwhelmed by what had happened. They did not know where to begin bringing people to justice," Captain Sennett recalls. "I'd get them in class and ask a question, and all I'd get were these blank stares."

A dark-haired, solid-looking reservist in the Naval Justice School Detachment, Sennett was sent by the US State Department in May 1996 to help Rwanda's justice system deal with the consequences of the 1994 genocide. About 800,000 people, mostly from the Tutsi ethnic group, were buried in mass graves, and some 50,000 suspects, mostly from the Hutu ethnic group, were sitting in jail, awaiting trial.

A process of national reconciliation is now struggling to make headway. Tutsis and Hutus are no longer identified as such on ID cards.

And large-scale efforts have been made to re-integrate Hutu refugees, who fled after the genocide, fearing retribution from the Tutsi rebels who took over the country in 1994. Since their forced return last year, hundreds of thousands have flowed back into Rwanda from camps in eastern Congo and Tanzania.

Still, with the number of suspects jailed on genocide charges now up to more than 110,000 - with only 156 having been tried so far - Rwandan courts are under a far greater strain today than they were a year ago. Many prisoners are held in overcrowded cells without adequate food or water.

"We estimate that at this rate it will take them 345 years to prosecute all the people they have sitting in jail," says Andrea Ori, an aid worker with the UN refugee agency in Kigali.

Which may be why Sennett and a team of two attorneys and three criminal investigators were sent in again with blessings from the State Department and 50 headsets for simultaneous translation.

'At this rate it will take them 345 years to prosecute all the people they have sitting in jail.' - UN worker

"We have classes from 8:30 a.m. until 4:30 p.m.," Capt. John Marley, now a civilian attorney, explains. "We teach our 32 students basic courtroom skills like opening arguments, evidence exhibit, closing statements, and so on."

Twenty of the trainees are civilian prosecutors selected by Rwanda's Ministry of Justice; the rest are military prosecutors.

"We found a completely different situation this time around. The people we're training now are much more focused in identifying problem areas. We're now getting questions about duplicitous charges and witness protection," Sennett adds.

Back to basics The three criminal investigators brought in from the Rhode Island and Los Angeles Police Departments are teaching aspects of building a case against an accused person. In class, they focus on a few basics, such as the preservation of evidence and preservation of crime scenes. They also teach ballistic comparisons and methods of fingerprint collection.

"Since we can't tell them to just scrap up the evidence and send it to the lab, we're going back to the fundamentals of criminal investigation," Captain Marley, a sandy-haired, energetic man, says. "Ballistics comparisons started with magnifying glasses, and that's where we're at today."

Rwanda spiraled into violence in April 1994, the day after the plane carrying its Hutu president, Juvénal Habyarimana, was shot down. He was on his way to Arusha, Tanzania, where he was to sign a power-sharing agreement with the Tutsi-led Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF). The massacres began within hours, with local Hutu authorities endorsing the slaughter of the Tutsi population and engineering the murder of moderate Hutus in the army and in politics.

Three months later, Tutsi RPF rebels swept into the capital, driving those who perpetrated the genocide from power. But they left behind a daunting task for Rwanda's new leaders: Thousands of alleged killers to bring to justice, and until last year, only 16 legally trained lawyers to try them with.

With investigations largely hinged on testimony by genocide survivors, Rwandan prosecutors are also being taught how to handle witnesses in court. Getting witnesses to show up has proved almost impossible. Many survivors balk at the idea of pointing their finger at an accused for fear of retribution. At least 200 genocide survivors were killed last year, according to the UN.

No witness-protection plan"Obviously, we can't expect the Rwandans to come up with a witness-protection program like we have in the States, so getting people to testify is still the greatest hurdle," Capt. Greg Noon, another US Marine reservist, points out. Those who agree to take the stand are immediately faced with another problem: contradiction by witnesses called in by the defense.

"Say an old woman, the sole survivor of a village that's been entirely wiped out, decides to testify. The defense will produce witnesses who'll say she's senile, or just crazy, and it's their word against hers," Captain Noon says. "We deal with that by discussing motive, by focusing on what makes a witness credible.... Unfortunately, no methodology will provide a quick fix."

The investigation faces another significant obstacle: the preservation of crime scenes in areas being repopulated by returning Hutu refugees.

"There are masses of people streaming back into genocide areas, and they're just shoving bones aside and destroying massive amounts of evidence," says Sennett. "There's nothing we can do about that, and in a way it's understandable. People just want to go on with their lives."

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Source: Christian Science Monitor

Date: 18 Sep 1997

Old Habits Hurt New Leader in a New Congo

Jennifer Ludden, Special to The Christian Science Monitor

KINSHASA, CONGO -- Four months after Laurent Kabila seized power in this vast decrepit nation, opinion remains divided over whether the reclusive former rebel leader is forging a bold new era or simply a different version of the old.

The high expectations that accompanied last May's dramatic toppling of late dictator Mobutu Sese Seko have been replaced by a hard pragmatism in some quarters and bitter disappointment in others.

And some of President Kabila's most fervent supporters during his seven-month rebellion are now among his loudest critics. "He lied to us!" shouts Jean-Pierre Lianza, as a crowd of men surrounding him on a dusty street corner in the capital nod in vigorous agreement. These men supported the former Zaire's political opposition leader, Etienne Tshisekedi, and they welcomed Kabila's promises of democracy.

Now they echo widespread anger that Kabila has not included former Prime Minister Tshisekedi in his government. "He came with the politics of exclusion," Mr. Lianza says. "He came simply to continue what Mobutu was doing. There's no state of law, no democracy. We're really stuck."

Kabila says political parties will remain banned until elections are held in two years. Late last month, he also announced a ban on closed-door meetings and ordered political groups to take down public signs.

"We don't believe this is the time for discussion and going back and forth," says Interior Minister Mwenze Kongolo. "We're trying to avoid the situation that was in this country for seven years, where all people did was argue all day long and not accomplish anything. People expect action to change their lives, not more long political arguments."

Yet few in the new Congo can point to much concrete change in their daily life, and many don't like what change they have noticed.

An odd nostalgia has even developed for something Congolese thought they'd never miss: Mobutu's notorious army. "Under Mobutu, if you gave a soldier money, he would let you go," explains Kasereka Sekuliyolo, a human rights worker in Goma. "But now that's

not the case. The soldier arrives in your house, he takes all your belongings, and still you are abducted and disappear. So you see, it's twice as bad as before."

Human rights workers say Kabila's army, dominated by the Tutsi ethnic group, has killed hundreds of Congolese, often targeting ethnic Hutus or those who have spoken out against what is perceived as a Tutsi stranglehold on positions of power.

The latest charges follow eyewitness reports that Kabila's soldiers massacred hundreds of Rwandan Hutu refugees last spring. The refugees, including the perpetrator of the 1994 slaughter of about 800,000 Rwandan Tutsis, had fled their homeland two years ago after Rwandan Tutsi rebels took over the country. Rwanda's Tutsi-led government aided Kabila and his rebels during their rebellion.

Kabila's government has gotten into a diplomatic scuffle with the United Nations over the alleged massacres. Tuesday, Kinshasa accused the UN of violating its sovereignty, after UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan that the UN mission could be withdrawn if a probe into the allegations wasn't allowed to go forward. The probe suffered a setback when the government refused to let investigators look for evidence in Mbandaka in the northwest.

But while allegations of human rights abuses are eliciting warnings that the UN and the United States will isolate Congo diplomatically, the country is being courted by international entrepreneurs. Kinshasa's two luxury hotels are full of business people impressed with stepstaken to revive the gutted economy. Inflation fell by more than half, from roughly 70 percent to 30 percent, by July, after new central-bank managers ordered an end to runaway printing of money.

Ministers have announced an ambitious three-year plan to repair or construct 17,000 miles of roads along with upgrades in rail, air, and water links. Neighboring countries are already calculating the projected increase in trade. The only problem is money: Officials have budgeted \$2.5 billion for the project but admit that they don't know yet where it will come from.

Meanwhile, they're having trouble paying civil servants. Salaries have been handed out in fits and starts: Workers receive between \$10 and \$40 for a month's work. It may be better than nothing, which is what Mobutu's government paid, but it's hardly enough to live on, says one civil servant who refused to give his name. "The government says it wants to end corruption, but if people can't get by on what they make, they'll be left with little choice.... People are corrupted, and that's not going to change overnight."

And it seems old habits do persist. One young aide in Kabila's office shook his head while complaining to this reporter that he hadn't yet been paid. He then glanced up with a hopeful expression, and asked, "Would you like to help me out?"

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Source: Christian Science Monitor

Date: 18 Sep 1997

Corruption Net: Small Fish Sit In Jail, Big Ones Swim Free

Jennifer Ludden, Special to The Christian Science Monitor

KINSHASA, CONGO -- During his rebellion, Laurent Kabila spoke repeatedly of not only stamping out the endemic corruption that marred Mobutu Sese Seko's reign, but also tracking down offenders and making them pay back the public money they stole.

Public sentiment sizzled with anticipation at such a long-awaited "settling of accounts." But now that Kabila has begun following through on his promise, many Congolese don't like it at all.

"Their attitude has been pretty negative toward us," says Kinshasa pollster Francesca Bomboko. "In the beginning, some ministers even made public statements saying things like 'You are all corrupted, you are all part of the system.' We listen to that and think, 'Who do you think you are?'"

Many also say the new government is too heavy-handed in its pursuit of the country's guilty elite. Some 60 former ministers, bank directors, and businessmen have been detained so far, and confined to cramped concrete-floored quarters around the capital.

"We must even sleep here, with the mice and mosquitoes," says one former ambassador, pointing to the thin foam mattresses stacked against the wall in one of the detention rooms. Family members provide food during restricted visiting hours, and detainees are taken on supervised trips to a nearby field to relieve themselves.

Meanwhile, some have been held more than two months, with no charges levied and no sign of due process in sight.

The government has set up a Commission on Wrongly Acquired Goods and promises well-documented prosecutions. But there's been widespread grumbling that officials are overzealous in targeting the small fish who chose to stay in the country while not doing enough to retrieve millions from the higher level Mobutists who fled for Europe.

Meanwhile some are seeing an irony in the proceedings as accusations mount that Kabila's government is falling back into the same corrupt habits as Mobutu's regime. Senior ministers and military officers have seized luxury homes at will, kicking out owners on the spot. A series of scandals hastened the Finance Ministry, prompting an investigation.

"We have a kind of proverb in this country about the piglet and its mother," says one prominent businessman now hiding out in his home for fear of being detained. "The baby pig asks its mother, 'Why are you so ugly -with such a big nose and hairy ears,' not understanding that it will grow up to look the same way. This new government will grow up too," he says, "and realize it's no different from the last one."

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Garden of Children Grows in Rwanda

Sui Hin Lee, Special to The Christian Science Monitor

MUTURA, RWANDA -- In the middle of Rwanda's ethnic strife, an American octogenarian has created a flower-filled oasis for orphaned children.

Rosamund Carr, who left New York to come to Rwanda with her late husband in 1949, has dedicated herself to helping those orphaned during the country's 1994 genocide. Her seven-acre plantation is awash with flowers, which the locally famous florist sells to buy food, clothes, and medicine for her young charges.

During the genocide, in which Hutu extremists murdered about 800,000 ethnic Tutsis and moderate Hutus, Mrs. Carr fled to the United States, leaving behind all of her possessions. She says when she learned that Hutu soldiers had murdered her Tutsi workers and "cleaned up" her house, she thought, "I will never [go] back to Rwanda anymore."

A few days later, watching TV with her family in New Jersey, she saw a story about thousands of Rwandan orphans at a refugee camp just six miles from her house that changed her mind. There are about 45,000 children in Rwanda who have been orphaned or separated from their families, according to the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC).

'This is my home, and I will stay with my children.' - Rosamund Carr

After Tutsis took over the country later that year, Carr returned, with a mission. "I wanted to bring these kids to my place, and open an orphanage," she says.

With help from friends and relatives in the US, she remodeled an old warehouse near her house and opened an orphanage called Imbabazi (Care) for refugees.

Carr says all expenses for the orphanage come from the profits of her flower business and financial support from friends and relatives in America. "I want [it] to be independently run," she says.

Since opening three years ago, Carr has taken in 150 children. Of these, 75 have been reunited with their parents through the help of the Save the Children Fund and the ICRC. Currently, Imbabazi has 74 children. Most lost their parents during the 1994 genocide. Others were separated from their families during the mass refugee returns from the former Zaire last

year. Still others are here because their parents fell victim to the ethnic strife that is still going on today. Last week, for instance, Hutu rebels killed 37 Tutsis in the northwestern town of Gisenyi, 20 miles away.

The surrounding violence can make a simple task like feeding the children a challenge, Carr says. Children six years and older attend primary school next door. Every day, she brings the children to play in the gardens around her house. On a recent afternoon, as she was handing out donated clothes to the children, a bomb went off nearby, illustrating the orphanage's precarious position.

Despite the violence, Carr's children have ordinary wants. "I want to play, I want to go school," one boy says.

Carr's English-style villa is right in the killing zone. A few miles away is the Mudende Refugee Camp where on Aug. 22 more than 148 Tutsi refugees were killed by Hutu rebels. After the massacre, many Tutsis retaliated. Dozens of Hutu houses were burned to the ground just outside Carr's home.

"Things have been getting worse for the last two months," Carr says, noting that tensions between her Tutsi and Hutu staff are growing. (At Imbabazi, no one is allowed to discuss their ethnic background.) One staff member, a Hutu who asked not to be identified, said his home was burned by the Tutsi in August. Another said his family of seven was killed.

Carr doesn't have a phone, and the dirt road - the only link from her house to the main highway - is no longer safe. Every week she hires Tutsi porters to send flowers to Kigali, the capital, for sale. "Only Tutsis are safe on this road now," she says.

Carr recalls that when she went back to Rwanda three years ago, she thought the country would be able to rebuild again. But since the Hutu perpetrators of the genocide returned along with the refugees last year, the killings have started again. "I am so pessimistic now," Carr says with shaking hands. "I don't see any short-term solutions."

Although Carr receives Army protection, she has been a target for the rebels. One night in late August, a group of Hutus with guns attempted to rob her house, but were stopped by the military. A shootout started outside her door. "I thought we were all going to die," Carr recalls. Three weeks later, one of the soldiers guarding her house was killed.

Last week, Carr was advised by the United States Embassy to move her children to a safer location, a step she is reluctantly considering. But she refuses to leave Rwanda or the children. "This is my home," she says, "and I will stay with my children."

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Where the UN Hesitated to Tread, America and Angola Dared to Step In

Cathryn J. Prince, Special to The Christian Science Monitor

UNITED NATIONS, N.Y. -- The overthrow of the democratically elected government in Congo Republic earlier this month has become a test case for the United Nations and Secretary-General Kofi Annan, one that many say the world body has failed.

"This is just another step in the marginalization of the UN in the region," says Barnett Rubin, director of the center for preventive action for the Council on Foreign Relations in New York. "There was a time when a peacekeeping operation made sense in Congo-Brazzaville. But the Security Council, led by the US, blocked it. UN credibility has been greatly reduced in the region."

Stepping in where the UN feared to tread was Angola.

Earlier this month, Angola sent about 3,500 troops backed by tanks and fighter planes into Congo to help Gen. Denis Sassou Nguesso, Congo's once and future military ruler, in his successful bid to topple President Pascal Lissouba.

General Sassou Nguesso previously ruled from 1979 to 1991, when a wave of democratic sentiment then sweeping Africa led to Mr. Lissouba's election.

The Angolan intervention, coming just months after it aided another successful coup in the other Congo, was seen as a bid to choke off support for UNITA, Angola's former rebel movement.

America's ambassador to the UN, Bill Richardson, who has called Angola "the key to peace" in the region, met with Angolan President Jose Eduardo dos Santos on Congo this week. The visit was one of several Mr. Richardson made in a US effort to help stabilize the region.

"Ambassador Richardson pressed the issue of foreign troops in Congo-Brazzaville," says Julie Reside, press officer for Africa with the State Department.

"He stressed a departure date of Nov. 15, and the Angolan government said they would leave as soon as possible."

Ms. Reside said the US has not issued any ultimatum should the Angolans fail to meet the deadline, although it's possible aid would be cut off.

The leaders of the former Zaire (renamed Congo after President Laurent Kabila overthrew long-time dictator Mobutu Sese Seko in May), Angola, Gabon, and Sassou-Nguesso met in Luanda, Angola's capital, Oct. 27 to cement stability. The US has called this summit a good initiative, Reside says.

Foreign troops and mercenaries still occupy the small country, and the humanitarian situation is reported to be grave.

Yet since the conflict erupted four months ago between Sassou-Nguesso's Cobra militia and government troops, the UN has failed to take the lead in a region beset by conflict.

Ironically, the fighting in the Congo Republic erupted shortly after the Organization of African Unity met in Harare, Zimbabwe, to state that it would no longer tolerate the overthrow of democratically elected governments by force.

"This was the first test for the OAU, and they and the UN have failed to protect a fragile democracy," says Salih Booker, a senior fellow for Africa for the Council on Foreign Relations in Washington. "You had a civilian-elected government with a weak national army toppled by a former head of state who had his own militia and help from foreign governments."

Mr. Annan began pressing the Security Council to establish a UN presence in the Congo four months ago.

For its part, the Security Council had set three conditions for the establishment of such a force: adherence to a cease-fire, agreement to international control of the Brazzaville airport, and commitment by the parties to a negotiated settlement. None of these conditions were met.

In a report to the Council last week, Annan said he will draw up plans for a suitable UN presence to protect humanitarian aid and provide electoral assistance.

"Continued conflict in the Republic of the Congo, especially if the involvement of foreign forces persists, would represent a clear threat to regional peace and security," says Annan.

"The United Nations system has a duty to take the lead in efforts to relieve the suffering of the people."

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Justice for Rwanda's Genocide May Require a Plea Bargain With Killers

Lara Santoro, Special to The Christian Science Monitor

KIGALI, RWANDA -- Euphrasie Kamatamu was a well-known figure in Kigali. As the Hutu administrative counselor for the central district of Mohima, she bestowed favors, often settled disputes, and never moved without her two bodyguards.

At the onset of the 1994 genocide, she allegedly got hold of as many guns as she could, stacked them in her house, and distributed them to anyone willing to help in the planned extermination of Rwanda's Tutsi population. Survivors say she also urged her bodyguards to go out and kill.

More than three years later, Ms. Kamatamu's appearance in a moldering courtroom in downtown Kigali on charges of genocide sent a murmur through the crowd. Her head shaved, her stocky frame pulling at the seams of her bright-pink prison wear, Kamatamu took her seat, waiting for the all-too familiar procedure to begin.

It was the seventh time the civil parties seeking damages had trickled in from the hills around Kigali to see justice carried out. But seven months after the first hearing in April, the trial had yet to begin.

This is because she is being tried along with three others: her husband, suspected of being a reluctant accomplice, and her two bodyguards, who are accused of murdering more than 300 people. The three have taken turns not showing in court, claiming illness and forcing the tribunal to adjourn hearing after hearing.

Ironically, the three codefendants have a far greater incentive to show up in court than Kamatamu. Listed as Category 2 prisoners, they would automatically qualify for a 50 percent sentence reduction if they confess and name other accomplices. Kamatamu is in Category 1, along with roughly 2,000 people who used their position of power and influence to carry out the planned slaughter of Tutsis and moderate Hutus in 1994. The sentence for prisoners found guilty of Category 1 crimes is death.

The four cases illustrate the obstacles the government faces in trying to implement a plea-bargaining program that stands out as the country's only hope of processing a case-load of

120,000 genocide suspects. "Plea-bargaining is this country's only chance," says a foreign humanitarian aid worker in Kigali. "Otherwise we're looking at 150 years worth of trials."

Yet in "the Kamatamu affair," as it has come to be known, prosecutors as well as defense lawyers suspect Kamatamu has coached her codefendants in flat-out denials and instructed them in the delaying tactics that have made prosecution impossible. "They have not confessed, and I don't think they will," says Diabira Boubou, a Mauritian attorney recruited by Lawyers Without Borders, a nonprofit organization that is single-handedly providing defense counsel for the detainees. Says Mr. Boubou: "If they confess, they get a sentence reduction, but she gets the death penalty."

Because alleged Category 2 offenders share their prison space with their former leaders, fear of retribution often prevents them from confessing. Out of 195 trials completed by the end of August, only 45 accused chose to plea bargain. "[Category 1 suspects] are still preaching their politics of hatred, telling the others that the government will never honor its part of the bargain," says Gerald Gahima, secretary general of the Justice Ministry and widely credited as the brain behind the plea-bargaining program. Separating suspects in the two categories would appear to be the obvious solution. However, the government lacks the resources to build new jails or reroute prisoners, and no foreign government or institution has agreed to help fund the project.

Also working against the plea-bargaining program - which the government muscled through against the will of genocide survivors whose idea of justice does not include drastic sentence reductions - is the civil-law mentality Rwanda inherited from its former colonial ruler, Belgium.

"In common-law countries, plea-bargaining is the rule, not the exception. Ninety percent of cases in the United States are plea-bargained and it can take three minutes to settle a case," says the aid worker, "In civil-law countries, you actually litigate a plea-bargain, meaning you go to court and stay there for years."

Rwanda has been trying to streamline plea-bargaining by removing some of the constraints of civil-law procedures. "For one we have made the 50 percent sentence reduction for those who confess automatic," says Mr. Gahima, "This is a novelty for us."

Still, with the courts steeped in civil-law mentality and with most defense attorneys provided by Lawyers without Borders also trained in civil-law countries, hauling plea-bargaining out of the courts is proving an impossible task.

"What this country needs are lawyers from common-law countries who can plea-bargain with their eyes closed," says the aid worker. Rwanda has in fact been trying to recruit American lawyers through the United States Institute for Peace. But so far, success has been limited.

"Lawyers without Borders is trying as hard as it can, but the only response they are getting is from attorneys in Senegal and Mali, some of them with limited experience," says a Western observer, "People should be sending their best in Rwanda, but they are not."

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Genuine Ethnic Accord Still Eludes Rwanda

Lara Santoro, Special to The Christian Science Monitor

KIGALI, RWANDA -- The menu at La Villa reads like a manual of high culinary art. Slivered roast duck and poached lobster come beautifully laid out in platters as the high notes of a Bach concerto hang in the palm-cooled air of the fanciest restaurant in Kigali, the capital of Rwanda.

But the clink of silverware against the fine china and the hum of conversation in impeccable French contrasts brutally with the latest news reports. At least 300 people were killed last week in a failed attempt by ethnic Hutu rebels to free suspects jailed for the 1994 genocide that left about 800,000 people, mostly Tutsis, dead.

Underneath the trappings of normality, in a country where the images of bodies clogging the streets and waterways remain etched in the minds of genocide survivors, fear runs like an electric current.

'The country has a long way to go... [But] Rwandans know they are all together on a small boat, and it's leaking.' - Western observer

"Deep underneath the surface, everything is tainted," says a Western aid worker who lives in the capital.

In the streets of Kigali, as in the villages wedged in Rwanda's hills, everyone has a story about the genocide. And nearly three years after the bloodletting, an obstinate, Hutu-led insurgency in the north is exacerbating tensions between the 9 percent Tutsi minority and the Hutu majority, many of whom are suspected of having taken part in the genocide.

So far, the rebels, many of whose leaders participated in the genocide, have taken more of a psychological toll than a military one.

"These so-called rebels are the same people who committed atrocities in 1994. Three years later, they are still trying to finish off what they started," says Claude Dusaidi, a government official and close aide to the country's de facto leader, Maj. Gen. Paul Kagame, whose troops toppled the then-Hutu government in 1994, halting the genocide.

The rebellion is hardening at a time when the Tutsi leadership is trying to absorb hundreds of thousands of Hutu refugees who returned last year, fleeing the civil war in the former Zaire.

With the stark logic of numbers forcing the Tutsi elite into a policy recently characterized as "control at all cost" over the vast Hutu majority, many worry that genuine reintegration may be too premature a concept.

Although confined to the northwest, the insurgency has also given the Army a good excuse to curb the powers of the civilian government.

"The civilian government is definitely weak, but it only makes sense at this stage, whether we like it or not," one Western observer says. "These are people who have fought together and have developed strong bonds of solidarity."

Gerard Prunier, the author of the most-extensive work on the Rwandan genocide, "The Rwanda Crisis," recently maintained in a report that the bulk of Hutu returnees have been confined to the hills to "practice basic peasant agriculture." According to Mr. Prunier, Hutus who qualify for salaried jobs have little or no chance of getting one. The result, he concludes, is a virtual monopoly of the economy by the Tutsi elite.

Many analysts, however, disagree. "Hutus who had jobs in banks and schools left this country voluntarily and stayed away," counters the Western observer. "They didn't always get their job when they got back, but that's the way it works in most countries."

Still, few would dispute Prunier's analysis of the two communities' present attitude: "For the Tutsi, it is: 'Unless we maintain absolute control, they will finish us next time.' And for the Hutu: 'We only have to wait, numbers will play in our favor and the so-called international community will neither want [to] nor be able to stop us.' "

There have been considerable efforts by the government to change these attitudes. A recently instituted program is bringing social workers into villages and camps to change the two groups' perception of each other. But such efforts will yield results only in the long run.

"The worst thing that could have happened in the world happened here in Rwanda," notes the Western observer. "The country has a long way to go.... At the same time, Rwandans know they are all together on a small boat, and it's leaking."