

Document 34/03 (07.04.97)

Source: Reuters Date: 07 Apr 1997 -----

For educational use only:

Rebels Poised to March on Zaire's Second City

LUBUMBASHI, Zaire (Reuter) - Rebels appeared poised to march on Lubumbashi, Zaire's second city, and strengthen their position at peace talks now taking place at a secret location in South Africa with their civil war foes.

Expatriates said Laurent Kabila's forces had taken the small town of Tenke, planned site of a major copper and cobalt mine on a main railway 125 miles northwest of Lubumbashi, the capital of mineral-rich Shaba province.

Traders in nearby Kolwezi, where Belgian expatriates were massacred in a 1978 secessionist rebellion, said there was no sign of the Zairian soldiers who had been based in the town.

The rebels have won control of about one third of the vast sprawling Central African country but veteran President Mobutu Sese Seko, who seized power in 1965, has shown no sign of bowing to their demands and quitting office.

As the peace talks began, Mobutu played the democracy card, telling South Africa's Sunday Times in an interview in Kinshasa that he wanted to turn Zaire into "a modern democracy."

"Kabila is a nationalist patriot. I urge him to come to the table with his Zairian brothers and sisters to restore peace in the country and to contribute to the achievement of the current democratic process," he said.

No word filtered out about any progress in the peace negotiations, brokered by the United Nations and South Africa. "The talks have started," was all that a South African Foreign Ministry spokesman would say.

The negotiators moved to a secret location after a frosty start in Pretoria Saturday when rebel envoy Bizima Karaha in effect told the Kinshasa government delegation it was now or never if they wanted a peaceful settlement.

In Zaire's rebel-held third city of Kisangani, international relief workers faced daunting logistical and political obstacles in trying to airlift home 100,000 Rwandan Hutu refugees trapped by the war.

"With the equipment we have we can start this week," said Paul Stromberg, spokesman of the U.N. refugee agency UNHCR.

But decrepit airports in the area are a source of concern and Rwanda has yet to confirm that it will accept planeloads of Hutu refugees, some of whom it links to the 1994 genocide of minority Tutsis there.

The U.N. human rights investigator for Zaire said the Tutsi-dominated rebels had massacred civilians and Rwandan Hutu refugees after their conquest of eastern Zaire.

Roberto Garreton, the U.N. human rights investigator for Zaire since 1994, told Reuters that he was demanding a full U.N. investigation into killings and mass graves with the help of forensic scientists.

"In parts of east Zaire, the war is finished. But massacres by the rebels are continuing," he said.

The rebels took up arms in October in a dispute over Zairian nationality for ethnic Tutsis and have vowed to oust Mobutu, who has rarely been in the country since undergoing prostate cancer surgery in Europe in August.

Document 34/09 (08.04.97)

Source: Reuters Date: 08 Apr 1997 -----

For educational use only:

Loyalist Troops Say Zaire Rebels Repulsed

LUBUMBASHI, Zaire (Reuter) - Diehard members of Zaire's collapsing army said Tuesday they had repulsed an attempt by rebels to seize the copper city of Lubumbasha, which was rocked by explosions and gunfire overnight.

"We have repulsed the enemy," said an officer from President Mobutu Sese Seko's Special Presidential guard (DSP), the only part of the army which seems ready to put up a fight.

"The enemy has fled," said a DSP soldier at a checkpoint some three miles out of town toward the frontline.

Soldiers manning a roadblock said army units fought off rebels near Kipushi, 20 miles southwest of Lubumbashi.

"Everything is calm. We repulsed the enemy near Kipushi," one soldier said. There was no independent confirmation of this.

Nightwatchmen who had been guarding buildings said there were a few explosions in the direction of the airport, northeast of the city, around midnight.

A dozen DSP soldiers were blocking the road. Just behind them were growing crowds of townspeople, unanimous in their support for rebel leader Laurent Kabila.

Guerrillas trying to end Mobutu's 32-year rule have met little resistance since launching their armed campaign from Zaire's eastern borderlands six months ago.

Residents reported explosions overnight on approaches to Lubumbashi, Zaire's second city which is the next declared target of Kabila's rebels.

In the capital Kinshasa defense ministry sources said the DSP had been sent to push back rebels from Kipushi, on the Zambian border, reported to have fallen to rebels earlier.

It was not immediately clear if the heavy gunfire overnight was linked to the DSP's intervention.

The DSP has more weapons and is generally better disciplined than the rest of Zaire's ragged army that has distinguished itself in looting during the civil war but has put up little resistance against the rebels.

Its defined role is to protect Mobutu and vital national interests. As such it has been concentrated in northern Gbadolite where Mobutu has a preferred jungle palace, and in Shaba Province, which produces copper wealth.

Lubumbashi is the capital of Zaire's lifeline copper and cobalt mining industry that has financially underpinned Mobutu's hold on the vast Central African country.

Military sources said defense chief General Mahele Lieko Bokungo had long wanted to bring the DSP into the fighting following his appointment last December but had failed because of disagreements with the unit's commander.

There were few people on the streets of Lubumbashi on Tuesday morning after the overnight curfew ended at 6 a.m. and some soldiers milled about aimlessly.

International efforts to negotiate an end to the fighting showed no sign of a breakthrough after a third day of talks on Monday between warring parties in South Africa.

Earlier Monday a Zairian government army commander said the rebels were about 10 miles from the city.

In South Africa envoys from Kinshasa and those of rebel leader Kabila met through Monday with no tangible sign of any progress in the search for peace.

In Washington, the United States insisted it had no intention of intervening militarily in Zaire's civil war.

"The presence of the American military in Gabon, in Congo and on the seas is to be available for any kind of evacuation that should be necessary of American citizens and American government employees," said State Department spokesman Nicholas Burns.

8:40 AM EDT

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Document 34/27 (10.04.97)

Source: Reuters Date: 10 Apr 1997 -----

For educational use only:

Zaire Rebels Call 'Pause' to Let Mobutu Quit

KINSHASA, Zaire (Reuter) - Rebels dealt a potentially fatal blow to the 32-year rule of President Mobutu Sese Seko by wresting control of Zaire's economic backbone, then proclaimed a three-day pause in their offensive to allow him to quit.

With the capital Kinshasa gripped by anti-Mobutu unrest on Wednesday, Laurent Kabila's rebels entered Zaire's southern copper capital Lubumbashi, the biggest prize in their six-month campaign to topple the president.

"I am waiting for a little period of three days for Mobutu to make a decision to contact us to negotiate his departure," Kabila said at Mobutu's former palace in Goma, now used as rebel headquarters.

Asked whether he was declaring a ceasefire, he said: "No, a pause. I am not saying more. We hope that something big will happen within three days."

Kabila's forces took the diamond hub of Mbuji-Mayi last week and now hold about half the territory of Africa's third largest nation, including all the mainstay mineral-producing provinces.

They entered Lubumbashi after stiff resistance from Mobutu loyalists on the approaches to the city of 1 million people.

Kabila told a news conference he had received signals from Mobutu's entourage of Mobutu's willingness to negotiate but declined to elaborate and said Mobutu should contact him personally by telephone, adding "he knows how."

During the three-day period, Kabila said, he awaited "good news on the willingness of Mobutu to depart to the north. If this doesn't happen we will be forced to advance on all fronts."

Lubumbashi was calm overnight after heavy gunfire near the airport four miles to the north and sporadic firing elsewhere in the city late on Wednesday died down.

It was unclear who was in control of the airport. Two planes could be heard leaving late on Wednesday, their lights turned off, but it was unclear if this was an evacuation of all the remaining Zairean military.

Before dawn noisy crowds returned to continue stripping army fields near army headquarters of all the food in them. Some people came across a small lake by canoe to join in the looting.

"We want Kabila to come and free us. We have no work and no food," said Moise Mwinkeyu, carting away sacks of maize on an old black bicycle.

Residents in the city centre said street children had started looting shops in the night, joined by adults with guns, who some said were former soldiers in civilian clothes.

"The forces of Kabila came and restored some order, it is largely calm now," Desi, one resident at the central Park Hotel, said in the morning.

The United States added to the pressure on Mobutu by urging an end to "dictatorship" in Zaire.

"We do know one thing, we think the time for dictatorship is over in Zaire and the time for stability and democracy, if democracy can be achieved -- we think that time is approaching," said State Department spokesman Nicholas Burns.

White House spokesman Mike McCurry said it was time for an "orderly transition" in Zaire and that "we want everyone to cooperate to make that orderly transition possible."

The United States and other Western allies have stationed about 1,000 troops in Brazzaville, the Congo capital across the River Zaire from Kinshasa, to evacuate their nationals from Zaire in case of a breakdown of law and order.

However, U.S. embassy sources said unrest in Kinshasa had not yet reached the stage where evacuations were necessary.

Mobutu on Wednesday named a senior general as emergency prime minister in a move that seemed a desperate bid to reassert his dwindling authority in the capital, where his army clashed with angry opposition supporters.

"We won't take this lying down. They will find us in their path," one Tshisekedi aide said on hearing that Mobutu had appointed Gen. Likulia Bolongo prime minister.

Mobutu, 66, decreed a nationwide state of emergency on Tuesday and sacked newly appointed prime minister Etienne Tshisekedi, his arch-foe, on Wednesday.

His army clashed in Kinshasa on Wednesday with thousands of supporters of the veteran opposition leader. Tshisekedi, his eyes streaming from the effects of tear gas, tried in vain to make his way to the prime minister's office complex on foot to install his new team.

Likulia, a former defense minister, said his government would crack down on lawbreakers and attempt to restore order to the crumbling state.

He ruled out any thought of Mobutu stepping down, saying it was not for the United States to call for Mobutu's departure.

9:05 AM EDT

Reuters Limited

Document 35/24 (14.04.97)

Source: Reuters Date: 14 Apr 1997 -----

For educational use only:

Mobutu Opponents Close Down Zaire's Capital

KINSHASA, Zaire (Reuter) - Opponents of embattled President Mobutu Sese Seko crippled Zaire's capital Kinshasa on Monday with a stay-at-home strike called by opponents of President Mobutu Sese Seko, witnesses said.

On the war front, rebels who ended a three-day pause in their offensive, said they had captured Kananga, capital of Western Kasai province and one of the largest towns outside Kinshasa that was still in government hands.

In Kinshasa itself, shops, schools, and businesses were closed and public transport was off the streets as were most private vehicles.

Security forces deployed heavily at potential flashpoints notably opposition bastions near the Njili international airport. There were no immediate reports of incidents.

Mobutu, who seized power in 1965, faces a twin threat from rebels closing in from the east and south and from a Kinshasa-based political opposition emboldened by the guerrilla advances.

Laurent Kabila's rebels have resumed their whirlwind offensive after a three-day pause to allow Mobutu to step down honorably. Mobutu ignored their Sunday deadline.

Authorities in Kinshasa declared that Monday's dead-city action by the opposition was an infringement of emergency rule.

The general appointed prime minister by Mobutu to enforce emergency rule, Likulia Bolongo, vowed that troops would deal with militants stopping people from going to work, but the opposition played down the threat.

"Tomorrow is a dead city. Nobody will be on the streets, if the army wants to intervene they will have to go find people in their homes," opposition spokesman Laurent Mbayo said Sunday.

Supporters of radical opposition leader Etienne Tshisekedi, angered by his sacking last week after only a few days in office as prime minister, were preparing for the worst.

Taxi drivers reported seeing youths gathering piles of tires to be used as flaming barricades.

Residents of the city of over five million people rushed to stock food, sending prices soaring in markets and the handful of shops that opened Sunday. ``People have been stocking up since yesterday," said Mauritanian storeowner Sidi Mohamed.

Kinshasa's military governor appeared on state television on Sunday to urge people to remain calm.

``An atmosphere of panic, due essentially to the situation in the east of our country, reigns among Kinshasa's men and women," General Amela Lokima said. ``The most fantastic rumours according to which the city of Kinshasa would soon fall to the armed rebellion are gaining ground."

Lokima said the army was ready to defend Kinshasa, adding: ``The security of our capital is our fundamental duty."

Mobutu's collapsing army has been unable to check the rebel offensive that began near Zaire's eastern border last October. Kabila's forces now hold over half the country including the diamond, copper, cobalt and gold mines at its economic heart.

There was no independent confirmation of Kananga's fall.

In Zaire's second city, Lubumbashi, which fell to the rebels last week, a new governor took over. Kabila's financial commissioner, meanwhile, said there that they planned to renegotiate contracts with international mining companies.

In the short term, the companies could continue working under existing terms, Mwana Nanga Mawampanga added.

Reut09:20 04-14-97

(14 Apr 1997 09:19 EDT)

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Document 35/37 (15.04.97)

Source: Reuters Date: 15 Apr 1997 -----

For educational use only:

Fearing Trouble, Zaire Troops Block Campuses

KINSHASA, Zaire (Reuter) - Paramilitary security forces in Zaire's capital blocked off main roads leading to campuses on Tuesday after students skipped classes as part of a campaign to oust veteran President Mobutu Sese Seko.

Witnesses said most shops and businesses in the city of five million people remained closed for a second successive day as Mobutu's political opponents stepped up pressure to end his 32-year rule.

Gendarmerie units directed traffic on the central November 24 Avenue, on which are located two flashpoints campuses, notably the higher institute of commerce.

"We are not letting traffic through. Very soon the students will start snatching cars for their protest," one officer said.

There was no immediate sign of demonstrators in front of the institute but taxi drivers from the outlying suburbs said they saw groups of students heading for an unknown destination.

Witnesses said most troops had concentrated at the Gaba roundabout leading to the main University of Kinshasa campus.

Supporters of ousted prime minister Etienne Tshisekedi, Mobutu's arch political rival, have resorted to protests to oust the veteran strongman while Laurent Kabila's rebels pursue an armed campaign from the east of Zaire.

They shut down the teeming capital with a widely observed stay-at-home order Monday.

Pro-Tshisekedi protest organisers asked students to skip school and college Tuesday and to turn out in vehicles. In the past, such protests have led to turmoil as students commandeered any vehicles on the street.

Mobutu declared a state of emergency last week and named an army prime minister, General Likulia Bolongo, shunting aside Tshisekedi after less than a week in the job.

Monday's protest sparked no serious incidents but Mobutu's new information minister, Kin-Kiey Mulumba, said troops would act to keep order.

“Force must be at the service of the law,” he told a news briefing after a cabinet meeting devoted to the growing crisis.

Most streets were largely deserted Tuesday and schools and colleges were closed as students obeyed the order by the opposition to skip classes.

Commuters from the outlying suburbs said that trains from there, usually packed with city workers, were running but with most coaches practically empty.

Reut08:41 04-15-97

(15 Apr 1997 08:41 EDT)

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Document 36/06 (18.04.97)

Source: Reuters Date: 18 Apr 1997 -----

For educational use only:

Angry Zairians Block Aid for Rwandan Refugees

5:04 PM EDT

KISANGANI, Zaire (Reuter) - Hundreds of Zairians stopped aid workers reaching 80,000 Rwandan Hutu refugees on Friday and rebel authorities delayed a refugee airlift because of cholera fears.

"The authorities have delayed the operation until further notice," said Paul Stromberg, a spokesman for the U.N. refugee agency UNHCR in Kisangani, where Zairians earlier looted a U.N. warehouse.

"We will move forward the minute we have got the local authorities to act on the medical opinion that the people from Biaro camp can travel, but we don't know when that will be."

Biaro, 25 miles south of Kisangani, was the site from which UNHCR planned to take the first 80 refugee children and truck them to Kisangani for a flight to Goma city in the east.

UNHCR had planned to start the airlift Friday but late Thursday delayed it until Saturday because rebel authorities were concerned the operation might spread cholera to the city.

Zairian health workers at Kasese said 13 people died of cholera Friday, six Thursday, and 271 were being treated. Another 30,000 refugees are at Biaro and 20,000 further south.

Stromberg said authorities refused to allow the airlift to go ahead after rumors circulated cholera had spread to Biaro.

At Kasese Friday, grim refugees carried corpses of cholera victims on stretchers. One 10-year-old girl died in a medical tent while an emaciated old man vomited into a bucket.

Earlier Friday, hundreds of angry Zairians stopped aid workers from reaching two camps for 80,000 Rwandan Hutu refugees and UNHCR said it was temporarily suspending its operations.

Demonstrators prevented an aid convoy leaving a ferry over the Zaire river, attacked vehicles and threatened aid workers in a protest over the refugees and the aid they are receiving. Witnesses said some aid workers were held for over an hour.

Demonstrators told Reuters the refugees should move deeper into the jungle away from Kisangani, Zaire's third city.

"We are going to give them one week and then we will go up to camps to fight them," said Tony Manda, a trader.

UNHCR temporarily suspended its operations and told other aid workers not to visit the camps, saying it was seeking security guarantees from rebel officials in Kisangani.

Tensions were whipped up by local radio broadcasts against the refugees and unconfirmed reports in town that refugees had killed a rebel or several local Zairians.

Aid workers said they suspected Tutsi-dominated rebels were inciting, or at least did not stop, unrest to block the airlift.

Stromberg said rebel authorities in Goma city Friday requisitioned 60,000 liters of aircraft fuel due to be used for the refugee airlift. Rebel officials gave no explanation.

The U.N. World Food Program (WFP) said some 300 Zairians with machetes and clubs overpowered guards at a WFP warehouse in Kisangani Friday and looted 15 tons of food, enough to feed up to 30,000 people for one day.

A WFP spokeswoman said Zairians tried to loot a second WFP warehouse but were kept away by guards. She said two Zairian loaders were beaten by the would-be looters.

"If we cannot get security guarantees, this will effect the amount of food coming in," said the spokesman, adding refugees at Biaro had food for two more days and at Kasese for a week.

The refugees are the rump of more than two million Hutus who fled Rwanda in 1994 after the victory of Tutsi rebels in the civil war and the genocide of 800,000 Tutsis and Hutu moderates.

The refugees are in a very poor state after trekking 375 miles since last October through jungle where they survived on grubs and tree-bark. They marched westwards to flee Tutsi-dominated rebels, supported by Rwanda's government.

Document 36/07 (18.04.97)

Source: Reuters Date: 18 Apr 1997 -----

For educational use only:

Rebels Take Hard Line on Zaire Talks

NAIROBI (Reuter) - Zaire rebel leader Laurent Kabila ruled out on Friday protracted talks with President Mobutu Sese Seko, saying he would only attend a short ceremony on the transfer of power.

Kabila, head of the Alliance of Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Congo-Zaire (ADFL), told Reuters by telephone from Zaire's second largest city Lubumbashi that his forces would march on Kinshasa if Mobutu declined to give up power.

"The South African initiative is about transfer of power. When he is ready for this, I shall go and attend a short day's ceremony on the peaceful transfer of power," Kabila said.

"There will be no protracted negotiations with Mobutu, never, never. Maybe we have been misunderstood. The issue is about transfer of power otherwise we march on to Kinshasa," he added.

South African deputy foreign affairs minister Aziz Pahad told a news conference in Capre Town on Thursday that President Nelson Mandela had formally invited Mobutu to meet Kabila for talks in South Africa and these would take place without preconditions set by either side.

"The outcome we have today (is) the agreement in principle by the two parties to meet at the highest level...to discuss transitional arrangements," U.N. special envoy for Zaire Mohamed Sahnoun told the same news conference.

Mobutu's son and spokesman, Nzanga Mobutu, confirmed on Thursday that his 66-year-old father was now willing to meet Kabila but cast doubt on any prospect of Zaire's ruler of 32 years stepping aside.

Nzanga said Mobutu's departure from power would bring chaos to Zaire.

Reut08:27 04-18-97

(18 Apr 1997 08:28 EDT)

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Document 36/36 (23.04.97)

Source: Reuters Date: 23 Apr 1997 -----

For educational use only:

U.N. says refugees may have fled Zaire camps

(Updates with reports refugees fled after military operation)

By Matthew Bigg

KISANGANI, Zaire, April 23 (Reuter) - The U.N. refugee agency said on Wednesday it was checking reports that 55,000 Rwandan Hutu refugees had fled two camps in rebel-held Zaire after a military operation and attacks by local villagers.

"We have received reports that the population at the Kasese camps may have moved from the sites," said Paul Stromberg, a spokesman for the U.N. refugee agency UNHCR in Kisangani city. "We are trying to check but for the moment we have no access on the ground." "We are being told a military operation is under way in the region and are very concerned at deterioration of security," Stromberg said.

The Alliance rebels have sealed off the camps to aid agencies and journalists since Monday.

Stromberg said "presumably all" the 55,000 Hutu refugees would have moved from two camps at Kasese, 25 km (15 miles) south of Kisangani.

The Hutus fled Rwanda in 1994 and are collectively accused by minority Tutsis of genocide in Rwanda in the same year.

They arrived at their present location in mid-March after six months trekking over volcanic rock and through bush and jungle in a vain attempt to flee the Tutsi-backed rebels. Rebel leader Laurent Kabila bowed to international pressure on April 5 and agreed to an airlift to repatriate about 100,000 Rwandan refugees at Kasese and further south towards Ubundu. Since then, the airlift plan has failed to start.

"We are waiting for the governor to get back to us on the possibility of sending an evaluation mission over the Zaire river to Kasese and we also hope to do an overflight at the very least today," Stromberg added.

Angry Zaireans blocked aid workers and journalists from reaching Kasese on Monday and Tuesday and looted food aid.

Witnesses said villagers attacked the camps on Tuesday to avenge the killing of six people in nearby Kasese village on Monday. Rebels swept the area after the killings, blamed by local people on extremists among the refugees.

But a woman wounded in the same attack on Monday said she was shot by men resembling the Tutsi-dominated rebels.

"The soldiers wore uniform. They were tall and thin and I heard them speaking Kinyarwanda. They were not refugees," said Mayaza Apaijoma, 20, at Kabonda Catholic hospital after being shot in the thigh.

The testimony was the latest sign of a concerted attempt by rebel authorities to destabilise aid operations and block the U.N. airlift. Aid workers said they suspected the rebels were behind many of the problems.

Zaireans said they looted aid vehicles on Monday at the urging of rebels soldiers, who have seized half of Africa's third largest country since October in a war to topple President Mobutu Sese Seko.

In addition to the 55,000 at Kasese, 32,000 refugees were at a makeshift camp at Biaro, 42 km (25 miles) south of Kisangani. The rebel-appointed governor of Zaire's Eastern Province said on Sunday the airlift should not start until May 5 because of a cholera epidemic.

The epidemic was declared on April 13 by Dr Leonard Kinuani, a Zairean and local representative of the World Health Organisation (WHO). But in Geneva, WHO said on Tuesday the cholera outbreak was not big enough to be classed an epidemic. The refugees are the rump of more than two million Hutus who fled Rwanda in 1994 after the victory of Tutsi rebels in the civil war and the genocide of 800,000 Tutsis and Hutu moderates. The refugees have fled 600 km (375 miles) since last October to avoid the rebels, who are supported by Rwanda's government. Since they arrived south of Kisangani, more than 1,500 Hutus have died from hunger and disease at the camps. Aid officials say that Rwanda, Africa's most crowded country swamped after months of coping with Hutu returnees, does not want a large number of refugees coming home now.

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Document 37/02 (24.04.97)

Source: Reuters Date: 24 Apr 1997 -----

For educational use only:

UN Mission Finds Zaire Refugee Camp Empty

5:21 PM EDT

KASESE CAMP, Zaire (Reuter) - A U.N. team Thursday discovered up to 55,000 Rwandan Hutu refugees missing from a camp in the jungle of eastern Zaire and was blocked by rebels from a wider search.

Not a single Rwandan refugee -- dead or alive -- remained visible at Kasese camp, 25 miles south of Kisangani city. Last week bodies draped in blankets had been laid out in lines and many sick refugees were too weak to walk even one step.

"My impression was that the place was extremely sanitary for a camp where people had fled at a moment's notice," said Brenda Barton, a spokeswoman for the U.N. World Food Program (WFP).

"This the first time a large group of refugees has disappeared on (rebel) alliance territory and the alliance is responsible to explain what happened to these people," said Peter Kessler, a spokesman for the U.N. refugee agency UNHCR.

The Hutus arrived at Kasese and Biaro in mid-March after six months of trekking over volcanic rock and through thick bush and jungle in a vain attempt to flee the Tutsi-dominated rebels.

Zairian villagers said Wednesday Tutsi-dominated rebels had killed hundreds of Rwandan Hutu refugees at Kasese and a battle between rebels and refugees accompanied the slaughter.

Rwanda said Thursday it was very concerned over the plight of nearly 100,000 Rwandan Hutu refugees in makeshift camps in Zaire and urged that aid workers be allowed to reach them.

"These are Rwandans we are talking about," said Joseph Bideri, spokesman for President Pasteur Bizimungu. "We are very concerned and would like to see NGOs (non-governmental organizations) and the United Nations have access."

Rebel leader Laurent Kabila dismissed the reports as "total nonsense," saying Rwandan Hutu militiamen among the refugees attacked villagers and rebels intervened to stop the fighting.

A camp cholera hospital, which Friday had about 300 very sick patients, stood abandoned with bags for intravenous drips hanging from bamboo walls. The tents at the hospital had gone.

Overall there was very little debris when compared with other camps abandoned by the refugees in their six-month exodus.

Some shoes and personal possessions remained but plastic sheeting used to roof thousands of shelters had been taken down.

Tutsi-dominated rebels sealed off the Kasese and Biaro camps south of Kisangani from aid workers and journalists Monday, saying they were conducting a military operation.

Rebels agreed to allow the U.N. mission into the camps only after U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan said he was "shocked and appalled by the inhumanity" of their action and accused them of killing refugees by starvation.

But rebels denied the U.N. allegations of deliberate starvation and challenged Western powers to provide a means to airlift them if they were genuinely concerned.

Raphael N'genda, "information minister" of the rebel Alliance of Laurent Kabila, said the West had sent "disproportionate" numbers of men and aircraft in a contingency plan for the evacuation of foreign nationals from Zaire's capital Kinshasa.

Why couldn't they do the same for starving Africans, he challenged.

Helicopters and marines from the United States, France and Belgium are camped near Brazzaville, Congo, across the river from Kinshasa in case their governments decide to evacuate nationals threatened by Kabila's drive on the Zaire capital to topple President Mobutu Sese Seko.

N'genda said allegations that rebel forces were blocking access by aid agencies to refugees near rebel-held Kisangani were devoid of all foundation.

Asked why Annan accused the rebels of starving the refugees, he said Annan must be misinformed, possibly by "vultures and jackals of the media" who camp around the refugees to record their suffering with "disgusting delight."

"The Alliance of Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Congo-Zaire ...does not have a policy which consists in making life more difficult for the refugees," he said.

Aid workers had feared that many of the 80,000 Rwandan refugees south of Kisangani had fled because of fighting in the area Tuesday between rebels, local villagers and refugees.

Automatic weapons fire and sporadic bursts of machine gun fire and grenade blasts erupted whenever journalists moved to investigate Thursday. But it appeared to be rebel fire as a warning and the rebel escorts with the U.N. convoy were calm.

There were no signs of incoming fire despite the shooting, which began as the convoy arrived and stopped as it drove off.

Rebel officers said Kasese camp was a frontline with Hutu former Rwandan troops and militiamen who led the genocide in 1994 of some 800,000 Tutsis and Hutu moderates in Rwanda.

Set back from a side road, journalists found an empty trench apparently dug with a bulldozer about 30 feet long, six feet deep and 10 feet deep.

The hole was on the road to what had been a Red Cross burial site for refugees but journalists were unable to reach it.

One rebel told reporters, rather implausibly, in English: "This is a hole they (the refugees) dug for their bodies."

"They killed many, many refugees -- hundreds. There was lots of shooting all morning. They used a mechanical digger to bury the bodies," a Zairian farmer told Reuters Wednesday.

An aid worker said he had a report 500 refugees were killed.

Aid workers accuse rebels of orchestrating attacks on aid vehicles and looting of aid since Friday after delaying until May 5 a U.N. airlift of up to 100,000 refugees in the region.

Reuters Limited

Document 37/13 (28.04.97)

Source: Reuters Date: 28 Apr 1997 -----

For educational use only:

Zaire Rebel Leader Flies to Goma for Talks

GOMA, Zaire, April 28 (Reuter) - Zairean rebel chief Laurent Kabila flew to Goma in eastern Zaire on Monday and said he would meet U.S. envoy Bill Richardson on Wednesday as part of attempts to broker a peaceful end to Zaire's civil war.

Kabila said his rebels were gaining ground against ailing President Mobutu Sese Seko at the same time as he cooperated with U.S. and South African mediation to end seven months of fighting.

"We are committed to dialogue but that doesn't stop us from making military gains," Kabila told Reuters on arrival from Kisangani for talks with commanders of the rebel Alliance of Forces for the Liberation of Congo-Zaire.

He said rebels had reached the area around Bongo, a town 300 km (185 miles) east of Gbadolite, Mobutu's northern jungle palace, and were consolidating their approach to the town of Kikwit 390 km (240 miles) east of the Zairean capital Kinshasa.

Kabila said he would meet Richardson, U.S. ambassador to the United Nations and President Bill Clinton's envoy, in Zaire's second city of Lubumbashi after the U.S. diplomat sees Mobutu in Kinshasa on Tuesday.

The White House says Richardson, a frequent troubleshooter, will urge Mobutu and Kabila to resolve their war peacefully and to launch serious negotiations on Democratic a transitional government.

Kabila said final touches were being put to a pact mediated by South Africa and both sides had almost agreed on a venue for face-to-face talks but some details had still to be worked out.

The rebel chief says he will only meet Mobutu to discuss how he will stand down as Zaire's leader after 32 years in power.

Kabila, whose rebels have seized more than half of Zaire since October, said he was committed to an independent inquiry by the United Nations into reports of killings of Rwandan Hutu refugees.

Up to 100,000 Rwandan Hutu refugees disappeared from their camps in rebel-held east Zaire last week and fled to the jungle.

But Kabila said he wanted rebel officials to sit in on the inquiry as observers and wanted it to include members of the Organisation of African Unity and representatives of neighbouring countries.

Kinshasa has accused Kabila's Tutsi-dominated rebels of being backed by troops from neighbouring Uganda, Rwanda and Burundi. All three countries deny any direct involvement in the revolt.

Kabila said he objected to some candidates U.N. officials wanted on the inquiry panel but he declined to identify them.

Kabila on Sunday ordered the repatriation within 60 days of all Rwandan Hutu refugees in eastern Zaire, an almost impossible task as some refuse to go home and many are scattered in the jungle.

Kabila has denied his forces sparked the exodus of up to 100,000 refugees by attacking their camps south of Kisangani last week. He says his forces know where the bulk of them have gone and will help U.N. agencies locate them.

8:32 AM EDT

Reuters Limited

Document 37/16 (25.04.97)

Source: Reuters Date: 28 Apr 1997 -----

For educational use only:

UN Says Soldiers Seize Hutu Children in Zaire

GENEVA (Reuter) - Men in military uniforms seized some 50 ailing Hutu refugee children from a hospital in rebel- held eastern Zaire near the Rwandan border at the weekend, the United Nations Children's Fund UNICEF said on Monday.

The children, and several adult refugees from Rwanda who were with them in the hospital, were driven off after the soldiers had beaten up three medical workers who apparently tried to intervene, the agency's Geneva office said.

Quoting a telephoned report from a UNICEF official in the region, a spokeswoman said the incident took place on Saturday at Lwiro, some 30 kilometres north of Bukavu, in territory held by the Zairean rebel Alliance of Democratic Forces.

"About 20 men in military uniforms drove up in trucks on Saturday morning and fired in the air to warn people not to leave their homes," spokeswoman Francesca Toso quoted the UNICEF official in Zaire as saying.

"They then stormed into the pediatric hospital, where the children were being treated for serious malnutrition, took them out and put them on trucks, together with some adult refugees, and drove off, warning they might come back."

The soldiers gave no indication of where they were taking the refugees, according to UNICEF.

Toso said international aid agencies in the area had started an immediate investigation, but there were no more details yet of what had happened.

The children were being treated under a malnutrition programme being run by the British-based charity Save the Children and financed by UNICEF, the spokeswoman added.

Lwiro is in an area close to vast camps where hundreds of thousands of Rwandan Hutu refugees had lived for over two years until last November when the Alliance seized control in the region and Zairean army troops fled.

Some two million Hutus fled Rwanda in the summer of 1994, fearing retribution after the country's then Hutu army and civilian militias launched a campaign of genocide against the minority Tutsis, killing up to 800,000, but were then defeated by the forces of the Tutsi-led Rwandan Patriotic Front.

It was not immediately clear where the children at the Lwiro hospital had come from. Although many refugees returned to Rwanda at the end of last year, up to 300,000 fled westward before the advance of the Tutsi-dominated rebels.

United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan has accused the Alliance -- fighting to overthrow Zaire's President Mobutu Sese Seko -- of deliberately starving some 100,000 refugees who had been in now-empty camps near the city of Kisangani.

The refugees last week fled the camps, to which aid workers and U.N. officials had been barred access for several days, after fighting in and around them, according to local people and some Hutus who were later located.

There had been earlier allegations that the rebels had killed large numbers of refugees in the area of Bukavu and Goma at the start of their uprising in November and December last year. The U.N. has set up an investigation into these charges.

Alliance leader Laurent Kabila has denied the allegations, and at the weekend fiercely rejected the U.N. chief's charges over the Kisangani refugees.

On Sunday, he said he would agree to an international inquiry into the events of the past week, but also gave the U.N. 60 days to move all the Rwandan refugees out of Zaire.

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8:32 AM EDT

Reuters Limited

Document 37/27 (28.04.97)

Source: Reuters Date: 28 Apr 1997 -----

For educational use only:

Children Feared Dead after Zaire Hospital Raid

4:34 PM EDT

GENEVA (Reuter) - Aid agency officials said Monday they feared some 50 sick Rwandan Hutu refugee children had been killed after they were seized at a hospital by soldiers in a rebel-held area of eastern Zaire over the weekend.

A spokesman for the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) described the incident, which happened Saturday at Lwiro, some 22 miles north of Bukavu near the Rwandan border, as "an act of utmost barbarism."

"Judging from what we've heard, I think it's unlikely that we're going to find these children alive," UNICEF spokesman in Geneva Patrick McCormick told Reuters.

He said that assessment was shared by a representative of the British-based charity Save the Children, running a malnutrition program at Lwiro, who had talked to the hospital's director earlier in the day.

The director had described how the children, all suffering from severe malnutrition, had been hauled out of the building and thrown or herded into trucks after some 20 uniformed men drove into the village at dawn and stormed the hospital.

Hospital staff, some of whom were beaten by the soldiers when they tried to protect the children, had recognized a man leading the operation as the commander of a rebel detachment in the nearby town of Katana, McCormick said.

The U.N. refugee agency UNHCR had delivered a protest on behalf of all relief organizations operating in the region to the local authorities put in place by the rebel Alliance of Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Congo-Zaire.

The authorities had promised they would set up a commission of inquiry, McCormick said, citing accounts from both UNICEF and Save the Children representatives. UNICEF was funding the program at the hospital.

Several adult refugees with the children, who had been picked up by aid agencies wandering lost and hungry in different parts of the region, were also taken away. But staff had managed to hide two of the youngsters.

Lwiro is in an area close to camps where hundreds of thousands of Rwandan Hutu refugees had lived for over two years until last November when the Tutsi-dominated Alliance seized control in the region and Zairian army troops fled.

Some two million Hutus fled Rwanda in the summer of 1994, fearing retribution after the country's then Hutu army and civilian militias launched a campaign of genocide against the minority Tutsis, killing up to 800,000, but were then defeated by the forces of the Tutsi-led Rwandan Patriotic Front.

Although many of the refugees returned to Rwanda at the end of last year, up to 300,000 fled westward before the advance of the Tutsi-dominated rebels.

United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan has accused the Alliance -- fighting to overthrow Zaire's President Mobutu Sese Seko -- of deliberately starving some 100,000 refugees who had been in camps near the city of Kisangani.

There were allegations earlier that the rebels had killed large numbers of refugees in the area of Bukavu and Goma at the start of their uprising in November and December last year. The U.N. has set up an investigation into these charges.

Alliance leader Laurent Kabila has denied the allegations, and at the weekend fiercely rejected the U.N. chief's charges over the Kisangani refugees, saying the rebels were the target of an international campaign of disinformation.

Document 38/03 (01.05.97)

Source: Reuters Date: 01 May 1997 -----

For educational use only:

More Rwandan Hutu Refugees in Zaire Flown Home

4:41 PM EDT

BIARO CAMP, Zaire (Reuter) - Thousands more Rwandan Hutu refugees, many with appalling injuries, streamed back to camps south of Kisangani Thursday as U.N. agencies struggled to clear a backlog of refugees waiting to be airlifted home.

Aid workers at Biaro camp, 25 miles south of Kisangani, said they could not keep up with the flood of refugees returning to the camps they fled in terror last week.

They said that at least a dozen people had died in Biaro camp overnight either from illness or from injuries.

Rebel leader Laurent Kabila Sunday gave aid agencies 60 days to repatriate all refugees back to Rwanda -- after weeks of delaying a U.N. airlift. It is a task U.N. agencies have called impossible.

There are nearly 100,000 Rwandan refugees south of Kisangani and another 250,000 unaccounted for in Zaire. Their plight has aroused international concern with reports of massacres at Biaro and Kasese refugee camps, starvation and disease.

This week aid agencies have been nearly overwhelmed by the unexpected arrival of rebel-organized trainloads of refugees. The U.N. refugee agency UNHCR said 1,512 Rwandan refugees were flown out of Kisangani on eight flights by seven planes to Rwanda's capital and the southwest town of Cyangugu, bringing the total repatriated since last Sunday to 1,802.

Many field hospitals and food stocks at Biaro were destroyed when villagers and Zairian rebels attacked the camps last week, prompting up to 100,000 refugees south of Kisangani to flee.

Officials say around 10,000 have since returned to their sites and journalists who drove three miles south of Niari saw an uninterrupted line of refugees heading back.

Many could barely walk. Emaciated children, hollow-eyed from hunger and disease, lay beside railway tracks to the camp. One man walked on while holding a machete embedded in his skull.

A UNICEF spokesman said Thursday Zairian rebels have handed over 62 Rwandan refugee children and adults following a U.N. demand to know the fate of some 110 people abducted from a pediatric hospital near Bukavu.

Patrick McCormick said the U.N. Children's Fund (UNICEF) was "crosschecking" the identity of the Rwandans against the list of those who were taken away by armed men Saturday at Lwiro, some 20 miles north of Bukavu in rebel-held territory.

Aid agencies said Monday they feared some 50 malnourished Rwandan Hutu refugee children and 60 adults, mostly family members, had been killed after they were seized at Lwiro.

"A total of 62 children and adults were handed over. The children were spending last night at the transit center in Bukavu and we understand that they they will be repatriated to Rwanda."

A rebel-organized train with more than 1,200 refugees pulled into Kisangani Wednesday night and aid workers scrambled to cram them in a transit camp near the city's largest airport.

"We need more coordination," said UNHCR spokesman Paul Stromberg. "But of course given a choice of late night surprises and no repatriation we can find common ground with the (rebel) alliance."

Asked whether rebels were trying to drown aid agencies in refugees in revenge for being internationally condemned last week for blocking access to them, he said it was hard to say.

"There is a sense that so much attention was paid to the obstacles we encountered that they are now eager to show how many people they can bring up to Kisangani," Stromberg said.

But Rwanda's government Thursday accused the United Nations of delaying the repatriation of the refugees and said it was ready to work directly with the AFDL to bring them back.

The government statement was in direct conflict with U.N., European Union and U.S. expressions of concern this week about the treatment of the Hutu refugees by the Tutsi-dominated rebels and complaints about a lack of cooperation with aid agencies.

The Hutu refugees fled Rwanda in 1994 and are collectively accused by minority Tutsis of genocide in Rwanda the same year.

"Due to the U.N.'s hesitation to execute the repatriation and hesitation to comply with the AFDL request to repatriate the refugees in 60 days, the government would like to seek support of all those genuinely interested in the welfare of the refugees to facilitate the evacuation," the statement said.

"The government is prepared to work in collaboration with the AFDL (Alliance of Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Congo-Zaire) to undertake the repatriation," it added.

A Rwandan Hutu refugee lobby group said however the repatriation of refugees from Zaire was the last stage in a "Final Solution" to remove any threat to Rwanda's government.

The Rally for the Return of Refugees and Democracy in Rwanda (RDR) called for an international inquiry into genocide and crimes against humanity against Rwandan Hutu refugees in Zaire.

Document 38/06 (01.05.97)

Source: Reuters Date: 01 May 1997 -----

For educational use only:

Aid Workers Try to Clear Refugees in Zaire

Thursday May 1 8:48 AM EDT

KISANGANI, Zaire (Reuter) - U.N. agencies, accused by Rwanda's government of delaying repatriation, struggled on Thursday to clear a backlog of some 2,000 Rwandan refugees waiting to be airlifted home from Zaire.

Aid officials said a train with more than 1,200 refugees pulled into Kisangani on Wednesday night and workers scrambled to cram them in a transit camp near the city's largest airport.

The train, the second to arrive on Wednesday, was organised by the Tutsi-dominated rebel Alliance of Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Congo-Zaire (AFDL). The sudden influx threatened to overwhelm U.N. facilities.

"We need more coordination," said U.N. refugee agency UNHCR spokesman Paul Stromberg. "But of course given a choice of late night surprises and no repatriation we can find common ground with the alliance."

The rebels were condemned last week for blocking access to the refugees. "There is a sense that so much attention was paid to the obstacles we encountered that they are now eager to show how many people they can bring up to Kisangani," Stromberg said.

But Rwanda's government on Thursday accused the United Nations of delaying repatriation and said it was ready to work directly with the AFDL to bring them back.

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"The government is prepared to work in collaboration with the AFDL to undertake the repatriation," it added.

Aid officials estimated the backlog in Kisangani at about 2,300 refugees on Thursday. Stromberg said agencies had so far located only 20,000 of nearly 100,000 refugees south of Kisangani and "at a certain point we will have to turn our attention to finding the others."

He said a plane with 80 refugees left Kisangani on Thursday for Cyangugu in southwestern Rwanda and an Ilyushin aircraft was about to leave for the Rwandan capital with 200 refugees.

Brenda Barton, spokeswoman for the U.N. World Food Programme (WFP), said three Ilyushins would arrive in Kisangani on Thursday and might shuttle between Zaire and Rwanda to clear the backlog rather than stopping to load food on return flights.

"We might have to give priority to moving refugees out over moving food in. Obviously the aid agencies weren't prepared for them to be moving into Kisangani at this pace," she said.

After weeks of delaying a U.N. airlift, rebels said on Sunday U.N. agencies had 60 days to repatriate all Rwandan refugees. Some 230 refugees, including 186 children, left Kisangani for Rwanda on Wednesday aboard the first flights.

The refugees are being taken by train from Biaro camp, 25 miles south of Kisangani. The camp was the scene last week of clashes between refugees, local Zaireans and rebel soldiers.

U.N. officials have said it is impossible to repatriate all 100,000 Rwandan Hutu refugees south of Kisangani and another 250,000 unaccounted for in Zaire within 60 days. But the Tusi-dominated rebels say they will be flexible on the deadline.

8:48 AM EDT

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Document 38/13 (02.05.97)

Source: Reuters Date: 02 May 1997 -----

For educational use only:

Zairean Rebel Leader on Way to Talks

Friday May 2 9:15 AM EDT

LUANDA, Angola (Reuter) - Zairian rebel leader Laurent Kabila arrived in the Angolan capital Luanda Friday on his way to his first face-to-face peace talks with President Mobutu Sese Seko, the man he wants to overthrow, U.N. sources said.

Mobutu flew out of Kinshasa Friday for the talks. The ailing president arrived at Kinshasa airport in a motorcade amid heavy security. Armoured personnel carriers escorted Mobutu's car to the tarmac and he walked a few steps to the aircraft.

Kabila flew in from his stronghold of Lubumbashi in southeast Zaire on a Ugandan plane, they said.

From Luanda, Kabila was expected to fly by helicopter to a South African navy vessel off the West African coast where the talks, chaired by South African President Nelson Mandela, were due to take place later Friday.

South African Deputy President Thabo Mbeki and U.S. and U.N. envoys who were also to take part were in Luanda waiting and were trying to meet Kabila for brief "pre-talks" there, diplomatic sources said.

Zairian government officials said they expected Mobutu and Mandela to arrive in the Congolese port of Pointe Noire at about 1000 GMT on their way to the supply ship Outeniqua.

Mandela said before leaving Pretoria that he was hopeful of success.

"Both President Mobutu and Mr Laurent Kabila are quite aware of the importance of this meeting," he told reporters.

"I am convinced personally both of them want a settlement. If I was not optimistic I wouldn't be going. I'm going because I feel the possibility of a movement forward is there."

Diplomatic sources said South African officials had worked into the early hours of Friday to try to keep on track plans to bring the two Zaireans together aboard the Outeniqua.

The South Africans were alarmed when Kabila made an unscheduled return to his headquarters in Lubumbashi Thursday night instead of heading for Luanda, where Mbeki awaited him.

Mbeki will accompany Kabila onto the ship.

Mobutu has lost control of more than half of Africa's third largest country but retains the capital Kinshasa. The leaders of the rebellion, which broke out in eastern Zaire last October, have vowed to take the city if the talks make no progress.

Confusion has abounded in the runup to the meeting, with the two sides disagreeing on the purpose.

Mobutu's camp says the talks will focus on a peaceful transition with elections open to all. Kabila insists his rival must give up power after more than three decades in office.

"The talks will just be about Mobutu and what we do with him. Our uncompromising demand is that he leaves power and we shall look after him," Kabila said in Lubumbashi.

"There can be no cease-fire or indeed elections in this country until Mobutu and all he represents is removed and thrown away."

There was no indication Mobutu, who seized power in 1965, was ready to step down, although rebel "foreign minister" Bizima Karaha said the president had agreed to discuss his departure.

9:15 AM EDT

Reuters Limited

Document 38/24 (05.05.97)

Source: Reuters Date: 05 May 1997 -----

For educational use only:

Zairean Rebels Dump Rwanda Refugees by Truck

KISANGANI, Zaire (Reuter) - The United Nations averted an attempt to move more Rwandan refugees by train Monday but Zairian rebels brought hundreds by truck and dumped them by the bodies of those killed in a stampede on the railway.

The refugees are from camps in the forests south of the Zairian city of Kisangani and the U.N. refugee agency UNHCR is keen to repatriate them by air to Rwanda.

Ninety-one of them were suffocated or crushed to death in packed railway wagons Sunday during a two-hour journey to Kisangani from Biaro camp.

U.N. officials said Monday they had to plead with the Zairian rebel authorities not to attempt immediately another evacuation of the Hutu refugees by rail.

“We were told this afternoon that the train was going to return and collect more refugees,” said Kilian Kleinschmidt, head of the UNHCR office in Kisangani.

“We didn't have to lie down on the tracks but we really had to persuade them not to go at the moment,” he added.

The rebel authorities did, however, dump six trucks containing over 500 refugees at Kisangani after bringing them from Biaro, 25 miles south of the city.

They were dropped at the ferry jetty on the Zaire river just a few feet away from dozens of corpses left from Sunday.

Kleinschmidt said he had told rebel officials that it was essential for aid agencies to get more cooperation from authorities if the repatriation of tens of thousands of refugees still in Zaire was to continue without another disaster.

“We need the cooperation of the military...They are good for crowd control. But we also have to be directly involved in deciding how many people can safely be carried,” he said.

A further 2,606 refugees flew back to Rwanda on 10 flights Monday, bringing the total since the airlift began to 7,641.

Aid officials were clearly furious that Monday's truck convoy contained too many people crammed into too few vehicles.

The UNHCR calculates a big truck can safely carry up to 60 people but the first three trucks Monday unloaded over 300.

Officials of the rebel Alliance of Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Congo-Zaire (AFDL) were hard to find in Kisangani Monday. One official, who identified himself as Bertrand Busimo, a press officer, told Reuters that no one was available or authorized to speak to reporters.

UNHCR officials were reluctant Monday to blame the AFDL in public for Sunday's tragedy. Other U.N. officials, who declined to be identified, said UNHCR should share some blame, saying both were in too much of a rush to move out refugees.

"Safeguards have to be implemented now to ensure that this sort of thing doesn't happen again," said a U.N. official.

UNHCR spokesman Paul Stromberg told Reuters that the agency did not have anyone at Biaro station when the train was loaded.

"We have been unable to establish a permanent presence at the camp and this obviously doesn't help," he said.

The Rwandan Hutu refugees delivered Monday looked shocked on seeing a pile of corpses near where they were dropped off.

Local Zaireans taunted them with bananas and young Zairian children ostentatiously gorged on fruit before the cowed group.

One Zairian woman, however, screamed at her compatriots to leave them and bought bananas and gave them to refugee children.

As she left, one Rwandan refugee woman called her an angel.

The refugees, remnants of more than a million Hutus who fled to Zaire in 1994 to escape reprisal for the genocide of Tutsis and moderate Hutus, fled deeper into the country when Zaire's Tutsi-dominated rebels launched an offensive last October.

One group of 80,000 trekked more than 300 miles through dense forest to near Kisangani, Zaire's third city, where they were overwhelmed by illness, hunger and exhaustion.

They finally seemed resigned to returning to Rwanda, but rebel authorities delayed a U.N.-planned repatriation on the grounds a cholera outbreak could spread to local villagers.

All the refugees then fled into the jungle after two days of attacks by what they said were local Zaireans and rebels.

Reut16:42 05-05-97

(05 May 1997 16:40 EDT)

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Document 38/28 (05.05.97)

Source: Reuters Date: 05 May 1997 -----

For educational use only:

US Wants No 'Bloodshed and Chaos' in Kinshasa

LUBUMBASHI, Zaire (Reuter) - U.S. envoy Bill Richardson said Monday he was trying to arrange for a "soft landing" without bloodshed by Zairian rebels when they enter the capital Kinshasa.

"The objective of my urgent mission is to prepare a soft-landing for Mr Kabila's rebels when they reach Kinshasa, a landing that avoids bloodshed and chaos," Richardson told a news conference after talks with rebel leader Laurent Kabila.

Richardson, U.S. ambassador to the United Nations, said he met Rwandan military strongman Major-General Paul Kagame on Monday morning before seeing Kabila and was about to leave for talks with Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni who is visiting Botswana.

Richardson later left rebel headquarters at Lubumbashi, Zaire's second city, for Botswana.

Rwanda and Uganda are two key supporters of the Tutsi -dominated rebels led by Kabila, who said earlier Monday his forces were ready to enter Kinshasa in two or three days and were less than 60 km (35 miles) from its international airport.

Troops from the United States, the former colonial power Belgium, France and Britain are waiting in Congo, across the river from Kinshasa, to evacuate Western nationals from the teeming capital of five million in the event of trouble.

"This is an urgent mission to see whether bloodshed can be avoided in Kinshasa. Richardson is bringing an urgent message from President (Bill) Clinton," a U.S. diplomat told Reuters shortly before he met Kabila.

Kabila met ailing President Mobutu Sese Seko on a South African navy ship Sunday but they disagreed on arrangements for Mobutu to step down but agreed to meet again within eight to 10 days.

The rebels, seven months into a military offensive from the east, now control about three quarters of Zaire. The Zairian army has put up minimal resistance and Mobutu's foreign friends have largely abandoned him.

Reut10:34 05-05-97

(05 May 1997 10:32 EDT)

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Source: Reuters Date: 05 May 1997 -----

For educational use only:

Communique from Mobutu-Kabila talks

POINTE NOIRE, Congo, May 5 (Reuter) - Here is the full text in English of the official communique issued after the first direct talks between leaders of Zaire's warring parties under the mediation of South African President Nelson Mandela: On the 4th of May 1997, President Mandela met the president of the Republic of Zaire, Mr Mobutu Sese Seko, and the president of the Alliance of Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Congo-Zaire, Mr Laurent Kabila, on board the South African Ship, the SAS Outeniqua, to discuss the crisis in Zaire.

To address the situation, President Kabila proposed that: -- The ADFLC should assume power as the transitional authority -- The ADFLC would decide who else should be part of this authority -- President Mobutu should cede power to such an authority -- Termination of hostilities would be a consequence of this process.

President Kabila also handed over a document to President Mobutu containing the proposals of the ADFLC.

He also explained that as a gesture of goodwill he had ordered his troops to stop their advance on all fronts. They would, however, defend themselves and reciprocate if they were attacked.

For his part, President Mobutu proposed that the following steps be taken: -- A ceasefire should be agreed -- A transitional authority should be established to organise elections, including the election of a president -- That he will hand over power to such an elected president.

After a long and frank exchange of views, it was agreed that the two sides would consider each other's proposals and communicate their conclusions to President Mandela.

It was agreed that President Mandela would convene a meeting of the two sides within eight to 10 days during which period such consideration would have taken place.

Both President Mandela and the special representative of the United Nations/Organisation of African Unity, Ambassador Mohamed Sahnoun, welcomed the decisions arrived at and expressed the hope that these would open the way for a peaceful settlement of the conflict and serve as an important encouragement to the peoples of Zaire-Congo, Africa and the world.

END TEXT.

Document 38/36 (06.05.97)

Source: Reuters Date: 06 May 1997 -----

For educational use only:

Zairean Rebels Ask Troops to Surrender

LUBUMBASHI, Zaire (Reuter) - Zairian rebels appealed Tuesday for government troops in Kinshasa to surrender to their approaching forces to avert a bloody takeover of the capital.

With Laurent Kabila's rebels reported less than 50 miles from the usually teeming city of five million people and ailing Zairian President Mobutu Sese Seko refusing to step down, fear and apprehension gripped the capital.

A regional military source said government troops had gone on a rampage of looting around Mobutu's jungle palace in his ancestral village of Gbadolite near the border with Central African Republic.

There was no corroboration of the looting, which has frequently preceded the flight of soldiers in the face of advancing rebels.

The surrender appeal by the Alliance of Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Congo-Zaire said rebels had set up centres to receive government troops and would not harm those willing to turn themselves in.

The broadcast by Voice of the People radio in Lubumbashi said: "We appeal to all government soldiers in Kinshasa to leave and present themselves to Alliance commanders and troops.

"A surrender is important because it will avoid bloodshed in Kinshasa," said the statement issued in the name of the rebel military high command.

The rebels, led by Laurent Kabila, say they are closing in on the teeming capital and could be there in the next day or two. Kabila had appealed to Mobutu to give up power and prevent a bloody battle for Kinshasa.

Residents in the city were slow to venture onto the normally busy streets. In the commercial district scores of people, hungry for the latest news, clustered around newspaper vendors -- avidly reading newspapers spread on the ground.

Many Kinshasa residents openly welcome the prospect of Kabila's arrival but fear Mobutu's soldiers will again loot and pillage before fleeing.

Newspapers predicted the imminent arrival of Kabila but, with Mobutu giving no public indication of leaving office, some hinted at difficult times if he opted to fight.

However, the U.S. Cable News Network reported from Kinshasa that Mobutu will leave for Gabon's capital Libreville on Wednesday, although he intends to return.

Mobutu would leave under the pretext of attending a Great Lake regional summit, CNN said, quoting Western diplomats in Kinshasa. Mobutu reportedly intends to return Friday but the network said the trip was apparently part of a deal to allow Kabila to take power.

Anonymous pamphlets distributed in Kinshasa Monday urged support for the rebels and called on the people of the capital to wear white scarves as a sign of solidarity with them. But with Mobutu and his feared presidential guard still in the city, the once commonplace white scarves were notable by their absence Tuesday.

U.S. officials, who also said it may only be one or two days before the rebels take the capital, were trying to avert a bloodbath in Kinshasa.

U.S. envoy Bill Richardson, who said Monday he was trying to ensure a "soft landing," met Ugandan leader Yoweri Museveni and Zimbabwe President Robert Mugabe in the Botswana border town of Kasane Tuesday.

He was to fly to Cape Town later in the day to see South African Deputy President Thabo Mbeki, who is also playing a central role in diplomatic efforts to engineer a peaceful end to Mobutu's era.

8:20 AM EDT

Reuters Limited

Document 38/48 (07.05.97)

Source: Reuters Date: 07 May 1997 -----

For educational use only:

Mobutu Leaves Zaire, Speculation on Exile

KINSHASA (Reuter) - President Mobutu Sese Seko, battling cancer and rebel advances, left Zaire Wednesday for a regional summit in Gabon but many people in his capital openly speculated that he was going for good.

A Reuter correspondent saw Mobutu's plane leave Kinshasa for Libreville.

The Mobutu spokesman who announced the departure Tuesday insisted the veteran leader, who has dominated Africa's third largest nation for over three decades, would be back in his capital Friday.

There was intense security around the airport -- a declared target of the rebels -- and Mobutu left on his plane only about 10 minutes after his heavily guarded motorcade arrived.

Combat-ready troops were backed by armoured personnel carriers, heavy guns and anti-aircraft weapons to protect him as he entered the VIP lounge. Hundreds of other troops were seen in buildings near the airport.

The streets of Kinshasa were crowded as Mobutu's motorcade swept to the airport. Many residents came out to watch and openly ask if he would ever return.

In a sign of increasing tension, Air France diverted its scheduled flight from Kinshasa to Congo, on the opposite side of the Zaire river. An airline official said the plane normally stayed nine hours on the ground in Kinshasa, too long under current circumstances.

With Laurent Kabila's rebels saying they have the teeming city in their sights, newspapers speculated that Mobutu would take advantage of the meeting to slip quietly into exile.

The independent La Reference Plus described Mobutu's departure as an "organised flight" linked to the rebel advance. "Private and concordant sources suggest that the departure of Field Marshall Mobutu from Zaire could be definitive," it said.

Ordinary Zaireans, apprehensive about what will happen if Mobutu decides to stand and fight, clutched at the prospect that Mobutu might leave for good. Many, hungry for change, openly welcome the prospect of the rebels' arrival.

At the United Nations in New York, diplomats said they hoped Mobutu would "do the right thing" -- stand down.

A Mobutu aide, who asked not to be named, said it would be wrong to interpret the president's departure as a flight into exile. Mobutu, he recalled, had repeatedly ruled out fleeing.

"The president will go to Libreville Wednesday and will return Friday," spokesman Kabuya Lumuna said Tuesday.

A government statement said Mobutu would meet the presidents of Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Congo, Equatorial Guinea and Gabon in Libreville.

The talks were a follow-up to a weekend peace summit between Mobutu, Kabila and South Africa's Nelson Mandela on a South African ship in the Congolese port of Pointe Noire, it added. That meeting proved inconclusive.

Mobutu, 66, has seen his hold over Africa's third largest nation broken by a whirlwind rebel offensive. Kabila and his commanders, who took up arms in October, say they are building up for a final push against the capital.

Zaire's government says its forces have counter-attacked and are battling to retake the town of Kikwit but independent sources say the belated army counter-thrust was near Kenge, closer to Kinshasa. Rebel radio said Tuesday it had driven back the counter-attack in a "brief but heavy encounter."

Diplomatic sources say the front line is close to the strategic Kwango River bridge 125 miles from Kinshasa.

8:54 AM EDT

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Document 39/03 (09.05.97)

Source: Reuters Date: 09 May 1997 -----

For educational use only:

Zaire Rebels Denounce PowerTransition Steps

LUBUMBASHI, Zaire (Reuter) - Zairean rebels rejected on Friday as ``absolute nonsense" transition steps proposed by a summit of Central African leaders on Thursday and vowed to topple President Mobutu Sese Seko unless he resigned.

The rebels also said a second meeting on May 14 between Kabila and Mobutu would be aboard a South African navy ship, the scene of their first meeting last Sunday.

Mobutu was expected to return home later in the day from the summit with leaders of some of his French-speaking Central African allies despite speculation earlier in the week that he would stay in exile.

The summit in Libreville foresaw a key role for Zaire's parliament and urged a quick replacement of its speaker -- Mobutu's constitutional successor in the event of his death or incapacity.

Rebel ``foreign minister" Bizima Karaha accused the Central African presidents of ``playing games and trying to protect Mobutu. But we cannot be fooled."

``The proposal is absolute nonsense to us. We insist as we have always insisted that Mr Mobutu must resign and hand over power directly to 'President' Kabila," Karaha said.

``That is a choice he has. The other choice is for him to wait for our arrival in Kinshasa and we chase him away. We are determined to remove this man from power, and to remove everything that he represents," he added.

South African Deputy President Thabo Mbeki arrived in rebel-held Lubumbashi for talks with Kabila, leader of the Alliance of Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Congo-Zaire.

Mbeki's trip is part of a South African attempt to mediate a peaceful transition of power. Kabila's rebels control three quarters of the country and Mobutu has agreed in principle to step down after 32 years in power.

U.S. television network CNN reported from Kinshasa that Mbeki was carrying a new peace plan that envisaged parliament electing a speaker to whom Mobutu could hand power and who in return could hand over to another leader.

CNN said Mbeki might meet Mobutu later on Friday to discuss the plan.

Karaha said Mbeki's visit was part of South African President Nelson Mandela's ``diplomatic initiative to try and resolve the crisis in Zaire."

``Mobutu and Kabila will be meeting next week on Wednesday on a South African navy ship," he said. Mbeki was quoted on Thursday as saying it would be in Kinshasa.

``We hope this time round Mr Mobutu will sign his letter of resignation," Karaha added.

Washington earlier renewed its call for Kabila and Mobutu to work out a transitional government to put Zaire on a path to democracy and avoid a bloodbath as rebels set their sights on the capital Kinshasa.

``Mr Kabila understands what's at stake for him and his reputation in the way he handles the transfer of power," said State Department spokesman Nicholas Burns.

Burns refused to say how the United States might react if Kabila and his forces, who launched their campaign last October, stormed Kinshasa with attendant loss of life. But he said U.S. officials had told Kabila in private what Washington might do.

Mobutu, a Cold War ally of the United States, came under pressure in the early 1990s to democratise Zaire and, in public at least, stated his commitment to multi-party elections.

The transitional parliament was born out of political chaos in 1994 as a compromise to bring together supporters of Mobutu and the political opposition. Mobutu's allies have a majority in the 738-seat assembly.

A vacancy for speaker was created in 1995 when an unusual political alliance of opposition radicals and Mobutu's supporters ousted Roman Catholic Archbishop Laurent Monsengwo.

Reut08:12 05-09-97

(09 May 1997 08:10 EDT)

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Document 39/25 (13.05.97)

Source: Reuters Date: 13 May 1997 -----

For educational use only:

Armed Men in Zaire Beat, Bayonet UN Aid Staff

GENEVA (Reuter) - Armed men in rebel uniforms in eastern Zaire beat two staff members from the U.N. children's agency and stabbed them with bayonets, UNICEF officials said Tuesday.

Spokeswoman Marie Heuze said UNICEF condemned ``this act of barbarism" in the de facto rebel capital of Goma, which she said showed conditions were ``not adequate" for relief work there.

The attack also drew a sharp rebuke from U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan and other top U.N. officials.

U.N. sources said the attackers spoke Kinyarwandan, the language of neighbouring Rwanda whose rulers, mainly from the Tutsi ethnic minority, are backing the Tutsi-dominated rebels in Zaire.

Heuze said five armed men entered a UNICEF house in Goma on Monday morning and attacked the two staff and three domestics. She declined to give the nationality or names of the staff members, one woman and one man.

One needed hospital treatment.

UNICEF had no immediate plans to pull out of Goma but it may be forced to do so if security worsened, she added.

The attackers first said they were searching for weapons but later demanded money, UNICEF said.

U.N. sources said the UNICEF house was several hundred yards from rebel leader Laurent Kabila's headquarters in the lakeside town bordering Rwanda.

Heuze said rebel authorities in Goma, reacting to the daylight attack, had said it was possible the attackers wore rebel uniforms to discredit their alliance. But the uniforms were brand new, suggesting they came straight from rebel stocks, she said.

UNICEF's executive director, Carol Bellamy, condemned what she called an act of terror against her staff and urged the rebels to identify and punish the perpetrators.

A spokesman for Annan said in New York that the ``secretary general condemns this incident in the strongest possible terms" and was looking into ways to strengthen security procedures.

And Yasushi Akashi, the undersecretary-general for humanitarian affairs, called the attack ``vicious" and said it was ``inexcusable for humanitarian workers who devote their lives to assisting the vulnerable and the needy, to be subject to terror."

Reut17:04 05-13-97

(13 May 1997 17:01 EDT)

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Document 40/10 (16.05.97)

Source: Reuters Date: 16 May 1997 -----

For educational use only:

Zaire's Mobutu Leaves Capital for Gbadolite

(Updates with announcement expected on crisis)

By Douglas Hamilton

KINSHASA, May 16 (Reuter) - Zaire's President Mobutu Sese Seko left the capital Kinshasa on Friday for his stronghold of Gbadolite where he was expected to make an announcement on the Zaire crisis, political and diplomatic sources said.

His departure followed talks with army chiefs who told him they could not defend the capital against Laurent Kabila's advancing rebel forces and that he should leave for his own safety, they said.

Earlier, the U.S.-based television network CNN reported from Kinshasa:

"A close associate of President Mobutu told us that the Zairean leader is headed to the northern Zairean town of Gbadolite where he will remain while, the aide says, the Zairean government and the rebels continue to discuss a South African peace proposal for a peaceful transition here in Zaire."

A close Mobutu family member told Reuters that members of Mobutu's entourage were told on Thursday night to pack their bags and be ready to leave Kinshasa by dawn on Friday morning.

Kabila flew home to Lubumbashi from South Africa on Friday after agreeing in talks with South African President Nelson Mandela to give Mobutu until Monday to study peace proposals.

Officials said Kabila, whose rebel alliance controls three quarters of Zaire and is nearing the capital Kinshasa, was flown from Cape Town to Lubumbashi in a South African government jet.

Presidential spokesman Parks Mankahlana said Mandela would move from Cape Town to Johannesburg on Friday and would keep in touch from there with all parties involved in efforts to avert a battle for control of the Zairean capital.

Mandela has consulted regularly with African leaders and the British, U.S. and French governments in his efforts to avert a military showdown in Kinshasa between Mobutu's government forces and Kabila's rebel army.

Mobutu has agreed to hand over to an elected successor, but Kabila insists on an immediate transfer of power to his alliance.

"The president is going to continue to keep in touch with everyone, but the main interaction is going to be with President Mobutu now. He is going to be the person to speak to between now and Monday," Mankahlana said.

"The president spoke to Kabila last night. The logical thing to do now will be to speak to President Mobutu," he said.

Kabila refused at the last moment to attend talks with Mobutu in Congo on Wednesday, but flew to Cape Town on Thursday to be briefed by Mandela on meetings the South African negotiators had with the ailing Zairean president.

Mandela said after Thursday's late-night meeting that Kabila had agreed to give Mobutu four days to study undisclosed peace proposals now on the table.

"We are confident we are making progress. Matters are going to plan," he said.

Kabila told the news conference: "We shall wait until Monday to receive another answer from the Mobutu side." Asked if he would halt his rebel advance on the capital Kinshasa, Kabila said: "I have nothing to say about it."

Mankahlana said the two-page peace plan that Mandela took to Congo for Wednesday's aborted meeting with Mobutu and Kabila was still part of the peace process.

South African public radio said the proposal included a commitment by Mobutu to resign after 32 years in power within 24 hours of signing the accord.

It also called for a transitional authority to rule Zaire, Africa's third largest country, until democratic elections can be organised.

"There is an exchange of views under way. That document is being looked at. It is one of the contributions on the table. Everything is being considered, including the views of Mobutu and Kabila," he said.

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Document 40/16 (18.05.97)

Source: Reuters Date: 18 May 1997 -----

For educational use only:

Pressure Builds on Kabila to Share Power

KINSHASA (Reuter) - Laurent Kabila's victory in Zaire's civil war unleashed an outpouring of joy in the streets of the capital Sunday with citizens hungry for change celebrating the end of three decades of Mobutu Sese Seko rule.

But Zaire's one-time Western friends are more cautious -- saying they want to see Kabila share power with other political forces and steer Africa's third largest nation toward democratic elections.

Mobutu, who is suffering from cancer and fled his capital on Friday as Kabila's rebels marched on the city, is turning into something of an international pariah -- with at least one country saying he is not be welcome there.

"This is an historic opportunity to shape the future of the country," State Department spokesman Nicholas Burns said in Washington, welcoming the surprisingly smooth fall of Kinshasa.

"We call on the new leadership to establish an inclusive transitional government leading to elections, and to ensure full respect for human rights throughout the country," he said.

A State Department spokeswoman, Sharon Bowman, said U.S. relations with the new authorities depended on its actions. "The nature of our relationship with the new authorities will depend upon their commitment to democratic reforms, public accountability and respect for human rights," she said.

U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan, speaking in Moscow, had a similar message for Kabila, urging him Saturday to respect the "choice and the voice" of the Zairian people.

South Africa, which has growing economic ties with Zaire, has yet to respond. Its President, Nelson Mandela, has been trying to broker a peaceful transition.

Western governments, particularly Washington, supported Mobutu during the Cold War as a bastion against the spread of Soviet communism. They finally broke with him over corruption, human rights abuse and delays with democratic reform.

France, which long supported Mobutu and is in the grip of a parliamentary election campaign, expressed regret that there had been no negotiated end to the war.

"We will closely monitor the new authorities' moves. We will define our relations with them according to their acts," its foreign ministry said.

French Foreign Minister Herve de Charette called Sunday for elections in Zaire.

As for Mobutu, he was reported by a Moroccan official to be in a hotel south of Rabat. But other sources said he was still at his Gbadolite jungle palace in northern Zaire.

Tiny Liechtenstein, responding to French press suggestions that he might head there, quickly said he would not be welcome.

Switzerland, where he had prostate cancer surgery in August, has frozen his and his family's assets in its territory and said Saturday it would most likely not issue him with a visa.

France, where he has a villa, says it has no indication yet of whether he might seek exile there.

Pope John Paul appealed for all Zaireans to work together in reconciliation to lead the country peacefully into a future of freedom and hope.

He told worshippers in St Peter's Square that he dedicated an "ardent prayer...in particular to the population of Kinshasa, which is witnessing the end of a long and tormented crisis in the country."

Document 40/17 (19.05.97)

Source: Reuters Date: 19 May 1997 -----

For educational use only:

Rebels Consolidate Hold on Zairean Capital

KINSHASA, Zaire (Reuter) - Laurent Kabila's rebels consolidated their hold on Zaire's capital Kinshasa Sunday, mopping up sporadic resistance from diehard loyalists of ousted president Mobutu Sese Seko.

With world powers calling for a broad-based government and respect for human rights, South Africa sent a strong diplomatic signal by recognizing Kabila as head of state of the renamed Democratic Republic of the Congo.

The United States kept up pressure on Kabila to share power and move toward democracy.

"We have urged him to form a government that is inclusive, and ultimately, to move toward democracy," President Clinton's national security adviser, Samuel Berger, told CNN. "We have urged him to respect human rights."

Red Cross workers scoured the streets of Kinshasa collecting bodies from shootouts which began during the night. They gave a provisional death toll of at least 200.

Witnesses reported the summary execution by rebels of an officer from Mobutu's once-feared presidential guard. In Matete suburb, a mob burned four ex-soldiers to death, saying they were looting.

The whereabouts of Mobutu, 66 and suffering from prostate cancer, remained uncertain after he fled the capital Friday ostensibly for his Gbadolite jungle palace in northern Zaire.

A security official in Morocco said he had arrived there but in Paris a family friend said Mobutu was still in Gdabolite.

Togolese state television reported that Mobutu had escaped a rebel attack on Gbadolite but had come under fire as he and members of his entourage fled by cargo plane.

It said the plane carrying Mobutu had made a technical stop in Togo Sunday before flying on, most likely to Morocco.

The television said a government statement quoted sources close to Mobutu for its account of the circumstances of his departure. It said rebel forces had tried to take the airport at Gbadolite.

A spokesman in France for Kabila's rebel Alliance of Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Congo (AFDL) vowed the rebels would hunt Mobutu and his clan wherever they went.

"We regard them as criminals who must be detained and taken to trial by a people's court," N'Zamba Afri Ku-Nyeng said.

An angry N'Zamba, speaking later after police stopped him and supporters taking over Zaire's embassy in Paris, threatened "bombings" if France let Mobutu live in exile there.

Liechtenstein, responding to French news reports that Mobutu might travel there, said he would not be welcome. Neighboring Switzerland, where Mobutu had cancer surgery in August, said Saturday it would most likely reject any visa request from him.

Fugitive members of Mobutu's clan, including his soldier son Kongolo, took refuge across the river from Kinshasa as reluctant host Congo tried to find countries to take them.

South Africa's deputy president Thabo Mbeki became the first foreign dignitary to meet Kabila, one day after he proclaimed himself head of state, promised a government by Tuesday and a constituent assembly to work out a transitional constitution.

"We support the positions that were enunciated in the communique issued yesterday and one of the elements in that was that President Kabila takes over immediately as head of state," Mbeki said after the talks at rebel headquarters in Lubumbashi.

Kabila, 56, sent a delegation to Kinshasa from the southern mining city. "I am going to contact all my compatriots without exception. There are parties, civil organizations, everyone," Deogratius Bugera, Secretary-General of the Alliance, said.

Bugera would not say when Kabila would visit Kinshasa.

Kabila's forces, who took up arms in October, marched into the government and diplomatic quarters Sunday, after a night of sporadic shooting in areas not then under their control.

The United States and Britain, among Western nations with troops on standby in Congo to evacuate foreigners, said they were scaling back their operation as peace returned to Kinshasa.

In their first broadcast over national radio in Kinshasa, the rebels had ordered government troops to report by Sunday and warned looters they would be severely punished.

The United States, former colonial power Belgium, France, one of Mobutu's last friends, and Germany reacted to Kabila's victory by calling for a broad-based government and elections.

U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan, speaking in Moscow, echoed that message and urged Kabila to respect the "choice and voice" of the Zairian people.

The Organization of African Unity urged reconciliation. "The people of Congo-Zaire have great expectations. So does Africa," it said. Kenya, Tanzania and Rwanda, said they would work with a new government under Kabila.

Pope John Paul called for the plight of Rwandan Hutu refugees not to be overlooked. France, a long-time Mobutu ally, acknowledged Zaire's shift of power and urged the Alliance to allow a U.N. probe of reports that rebels massacred refugees.

A U.N. airlift of the Hutus home to Rwanda passed the 30,000 mark Sunday but aid officials said refugees were still dying in their dozens both in Zaire and Rwanda.

In Kinshasa, national television, under new management, rang the changes by denouncing Mobutu as a dictator.

Document 40/32 (20.05.97)

Source: Reuters Date: 20 May 1997 -----

For educational use only:

Kabila Set to Unveil New Zaire Government

KINSHASA, Zaire (Reuter) - Self-proclaimed president Laurent Kabila was expected to unveil a transitional government Tuesday, marking the end of decades of dictatorship in Zaire, the country he has renamed the Democratic Republic of Congo.

But a top official of Kabila's alliance said Kabila would not travel to Kinshasa from the southern city of Lubumbashi on Tuesday as expected. Acting security minister Paul Kabongo told Reuters in Kinshasa that Kabila would travel there at an "opportune time."

"When's he coming, everyone will know about it," he said.

Kabila's guerrillas swept across the country the size of Western Europe in seven months, meeting little resistance from Mobutu Sese Seko's outclassed and discredited army until they captured the capital Saturday.

Under pressure to form a broad-based government, the guerrilla leadership said their priority was political re-education from peasant collectives upwards before national elections could be held. Mobutu ruled for 32 years.

"We must reawaken the population politically. It is our first duty," Kabila aide Deogratias Bugera told a news conference in Kinshasa Monday.

"The aim is to avoid the possibility in the future that any one man can confiscate power," he said, accusing Mobutu of plundering what is potentially one of Africa's richest nations.

South Africa, which led last-ditch mediation to avert bloodshed in Kinshasa, voiced satisfaction with Kabila's plans to form a broad government leading to elections.

The United States, another key broker in the country that was once a key Cold War ally in Africa, voiced cautious and conditional support for Kabila.

"We have hopes, but we are watching very carefully" the actions of Kabila, Secretary of State Madeline Albright told a dockside news conference during a visit to the port of Wilmington, Delaware.

"We are making it very clear that it is important for the new government to be inclusive, to be concerned and do a lot about democratic practices and human rights," Albright said.

"We are going to continue to make that clear and make it also evident that large-scale support by the international community will depend on the way that those three criteria are met," she added.

Other world powers voiced cautious support for Kabila, also generally linking this to progress toward democratic rule. They included Germany, Japan and Italy following similar pledges by France, Italy and former colonial ruler Belgium.

South Africa, Libya, Rwanda, Uganda, Kenya, Zambia, Burundi and Botswana have announced outright recognition.

The euphoria over the weekend overthrow of Mobutu was mixed with continuing violence in the capital of five million people.

The local Red Cross said it retrieved 22 bodies across the city Monday, taking the death toll during the rebel takeover to 222. The dead were a mix of diehard Mobutu soldiers killed by Kabila's forces and irate civilians or looters shot by rebels.

Kabila's planning and development adviser Babi Mbai was bombarded with questions about security when he met business leaders in Kinshasa Monday.

"It is planned that within a short period we will have 10,000 to 20,000 troops in Kinshasa to solve the problem of security," Mbai told his audience, mostly local businessmen.

The United States judged the security situation sufficiently manageable to withdraw the first batch of its marine force stationed in nearby Congo to evacuate foreigners from Kinshasa if necessary. Britain, France and Portugal had also sent troops.

Britain has already scaled down its own force and Belgium plans a similar move.

Mobutu rested in Togo's capital Lome after leaving his jungle palace in his ancestral home region of Gbadolite on Zaire's northern border, a security source in Togo said.

8:22 AM EDT

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Source: Reuters

Date: 05 Jun 1997

US Envoy Richardson to Leave For Congo

WASHINGTON (Reuters) - The U.S. ambassador to the United Nations, Bill Richardson, will leave Thursday night for the Democratic Republic of Congo for talks with President Laurent Kabila, the State Department said.

Spokesman Nicholas Burns said Richardson would make clear the United States and its allies would give the sprawling, impoverished state financial help if Kabila sticks to his promises of democratic government.

Burns told reporters Richardson would put before Kabila, "the clear understanding that the United States, the international development institutions and other countries are going to be ready to help the Congo."

But, Burns added, "we need to see the establishment of some of these broad-based, democratic, economic goals that are very important. We don't want to put money into a country that will go backwards. We want to put money into a country that's going to go forward on a democratic basis."

Richardson will meet with Kabila in Lubumbashi on Saturday.

Burns said Richardson and his delegation, drawn from different U.S. government agencies and including Democratic Rep. Cynthia McKinney of Georgia, had an open-ended schedule and may visit other countries in the region.

Asked for an assessment of Kabila's performance since he took over from deposed President Mobutu Sese Seko last month, Burns said: "The one good thing I can point to is that he has taken into his government some members of other political parties who are not part of the rebel alliance."

But he added: "On the negative side, as you know, he has not allowed expressions of...different political views to be made public. He has shut down the ability of some of the opposition parties to demonstrate."

"I don't believe one can say there is freedom of the media in the Congo. And these are important criteria that we have to measure him by," Burns said.

Burns said Washington wanted to see the former Zaire develop as a democratic state with an open economy that puts human rights high on its agenda.

Reut17:06 06-05-97

(05 Jun 1997 17:05 EDT)

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Source: Reuters

Date: 06 Jun 1997

U.S. Envoy in Congo Amid Anti-Kabila Protest

By Matthew Tostevin

KINSHASA, Congo (Reuter) - A U.S. envoy arrived in the Democratic Republic of Congo Friday to discuss American aid soon after more than 1,000 people marched peacefully through the streets to protest against new President Laurent Kabila.

U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations Bill Richardson said in Kinshasa, capital of the former Zaire, that the level of U.S. assistance for Kabila depended on his respect for refugees, human rights, democracy and free market economic policies.

Kabila and his government, which took office last month after the overthrow of Western-installed President Mobutu Sese Seko, held a cabinet meeting in the southern mining city of Lubumbashi, 1,000 miles from the capital, officials said.

The West, except for France, turned against Mobutu in the last years of his dictatorship, saying the end of the Cold War made his excesses intolerable.

Richardson said he would fly to Lubumbashi Saturday to discuss with Kabila assistance to the new government and U.S. concerns, including the reported massacres of Rwandan Hutu refugees.

"We want to see access to the investigation by the U.N. team. We want reports of those massacres investigated. We want those involved in those massacres to be punished if that is the case," he told a news conference in the capital.

Kabila has in principle agreed to an investigation.

The refugees are the remnants of over one million Hutus who fled Rwanda in 1994 to escape reprisals for the genocide by Hutu extremists of over 800,000 minority Tutsis and moderate Hutus.

In Kinshasa troops kept a close eye on a banned protest march and allowed it to pass through the city center. Witnesses said that as marchers reached the home of veteran opposition leader Etienne Tshisekedi, two soldiers fired in the air for unknown reasons and were disarmed by the crowd.

Protesters loyal to Tshisekedi, who has been excluded from Kabila's government, carried flags and banners which read "No to dictatorship" and "Kabila must go."

They also called for the departure of ethnic Tutsi Rwandan troops who helped ensure Kabila's success in a seven-month bush war to topple Mobutu. Mobutu dominated Africa's third largest country for three decades.

"We have marched today against dictatorship, to say no to a single party state and no to the suspension of political parties," Adrien Phongo, secretary-general of Tshisekedi's Union for Democracy and Social Progress party told the marchers. "We must struggle as one man before it is too late."

Last week troops opened fire to disperse anti-Kabila protesters.

One of the first acts of Kabila's government was to ban political activity and demonstrations, while promising to hold elections in April 1999.

Richardson welcomed the election date, but suggested Kabila could broaden his government.

"Inclusive government is important to us. Steps have been taken in that direction and we want to see some additional steps," he said.

"Democratization is very important to us, human rights, the importance of a market economy, private sector investment, a market economy is critical for us," he added.

Lubumbashi, in Kabila's home province of Katanga, is the center of Congo's copper and cobalt mining region, which many business analysts see as the key to relaunching an economy ruined by years of political chaos and corruption.

Earlier Friday a gang of around 100 youths, who did not claim links with either Tshisekedi or Kabila, rampaged in the center of Kinshasa, smashing windows and throwing stones, to protest against a drop in the value of the local currency.

Kabila's government, whose arrival strengthened the new zaire, says it will follow a strict monetary policy and will at an unspecified date introduce a new currency, the Congolese franc.

Reut17:38 06-06-97

(06 Jun 1997 17:37 EDT)

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Source: Reuters

Date: 27 June 1997

For educational use only:

Congo Protests after Kabila Arrests Rival

By Richard Meares

KINSHASA, Zaire (Reuter) - Laurent Kabila's soldiers fired into the air Friday to disperse crowds protesting the overnight detention of revered Congolese opposition leader Etienne Tshisekedi, witnesses said.

Dozens of rioters threw stones, set vehicles alight and chanted anti-Kabila slogans in parts of the capital Kinshasa.

"It is their way of breathing. Liberty is like fresh air and someone is trying to stop them breathing," Tshisekedi's aide Marcel Mbaya told Reuters.

The protests abated in the afternoon, but Mbaya said many supporters had been arrested.

Soldiers detained Tshisekedi, a thorn in the side of ousted dictator Mobutu Sese Seko and now of Kabila, after he defied a ban to address a political gathering Thursday.

He was released after questioning Friday along with members of his family and associates who had also been held.

"They asked him to stop his political activity and all sorts of things, but he did not answer one question. It was a kind of intimidation," Mbaya said.

A government spokesman said the detention was a "non-event" and that only Tshisekedi could say why he had been hauled in.

Tshisekedi, head of the Union for Democracy and Social Progress, was the main domestic opponent to Mobutu, whom Kabila and his Alliance of Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Congo toppled in May after a seven-month civil war.

Named premier by a national democracy conference but fired by Mobutu, he never accepted his dismissal and his supporters still refer to him as the prime minister.

Kabila has banned political parties and gatherings and has alienated opposition followers by excluding Tshisekedi from his new government. The ban has undermined support for Kabila, who was seen as a hero for ending Mobutu's 32-year corrupt rule.

An angry mob of around 100 people armed with stones marched in the center of the capital Kinshasa, some hurling their projectiles at bystanders who refused to join in.

In Limete suburb where Tshisekedi lives, supporters torched vehicles, vandalized a gasoline station and burnt tires.

"The armed forces came -- they fired into the air to disperse the crowd," said one man beside a smoldering vehicle.

Next-door neighbors said Tshisekedi and his wife returned home but soldiers were still stationed outside.

The veteran opposition leader and one-time Zairian premier was taken from his home hours after addressing thousands of students in defiance of a government ban on political activity.

Ironically, Tshisekedi's address at Kinshasa university had been full of conciliatory messages.

He announced he had held talks with Kabila's Alliance that could lead to a new transitional government until elections promised for 1999, and that he could soon meet Kabila for the first time.

4:52 PM EDT

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Source: Reuters

Date: 03 July 1997

For educational use only:

Zaire Firm on Probe, UN Hints at Flexibility

By Arthur Malu-Malu

KINSHASA, Congo (Reuter) - The new Congolese government said Thursday= U.N.investigators must agree to basic conditions if they want to launch a= probeinto alleged massacres of Hutu refugees as planned on July 7.

President Laurent Kabila's National Reconstruction and Emergency= PlanningMinister Etienne Richard Mbaya told a news conference the probe could= onlybegin on time if he received an appropriate response from an advance= U.N.team in the capital Kinshasa.

In Geneva, U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan told reporters the goal= was toget at the facts of what happened and that he was prepared to be= flexibleand pragmatic if that was what was needed to achieve that.

"The most important thing is for us to get to the facts," he said. "Thealleged mass killings ought to be investigated."

The probe follows allegations that Kabila's Tutsi-backed rebels or= theirRwandan or Ugandan allies killed Rwandan Hutu refugees as their forcesmarched across former Zaire between October and May and toppled veterandictator Mobutu Sese Seko.

The conditions outlined by Kabila's government concern the period= coveredby the investigation and the leader of the probe. "A serious delegationmust accept them," Mbaya said.

Kabila's government refuses to accept Chilean lawyer Roberto Garreton,= U.N.rapporteur or special investigator for the area since 1994, as a member= ofthe mission. "Garreton produced a report full of lies," Mbaya said.= "TheU.N. has other personalities."

In April, Garreton accused the rebels of massacring Rwandan refugees= duringtheir push across the region in 1996.

"We are not the ones holding things up. It (the advance team) is not in= aposition to reach agreement with us on the minimum conditions that weinsist on for this inquiry," Mbaya said. "Our sovereignty is important= tous."

The advance team, including Argentine forensic experts who would excavate sites suspected to contain mass graves in former Zaire, has been in Kinshasa for two weeks seeking accord on the terms for the full investigation due to start on July 7.

Annan, asked whether he had dropped Garreton from the team, told reporters in Geneva: "I think we all have to be realistic and practical.

"We have a team led by Garreton. Ideally, we would want them to continue. If that doesn't happen we are not going to let them (the government) use that to prevent us from getting to the facts.

"The rule of law and primacy of law does not mean one has to be rigid and inflexible. In our own countries it is not unusual sometimes for the accused to request a change of judge, a change of venue or other things.

"I think we should not let our desire for purity get in the way of doing the right thing and getting to the facts. And we will get to the facts."

Annan recalled a pledge by Kabila in June to allow the probe to proceed and determine whether his troops had massacred Rwandan Hutus.

"I would hope that he will give us the support, the access and the cooperation of the government that we need to do a credible investigation," Annan said.

Kinshasa also wants the team to investigate atrocities against refugees as far back as 1994 and the aftermath of the genocide in Rwanda of minority Tutsis by Hutu hardliners.

"Violations were denounced to the U.N. while Mobutu was in power (in Zaire)," Mbaya said.

Most of the Hutu refugees flooded out of Rwanda in 1994 fearing reprisals after armed Tutsis exiles returned and drove out the Hutu hardliners responsible for the genocide. Others fled from the Tutsi-dominated army in neighboring Burundi.

Security Council members Monday urged Kinshasa to cooperate with the U.N. investigators.

"The members expressed their concern (and) the need for the Democratic Republic of the Congo authorities to fully cooperate with the investigation team," said Council President Sergei Lavrov of Russia after a closed-door meeting.

5:33 PM EDT

=A9 Reuters Limited=

Source: Reuters

Date: 08 Sep 1997

Ousted Mobutu of Zaire Dies in Exile

By John Baggaley

RABAT (Reuter) - Mobutu Sese Seko, ousted as president of Zaire in May after three decades of near absolute power, has died in exile in Morocco after losing a long battle with prostate cancer.

The official Moroccan news agency MAP said the 66-year-old ex-president died at 9.30 p.m. (2130 GMT) on Sunday at Mohamed V military hospital in Rabat "after a long illness."

A diplomatic source said that Mobutu, a Roman Catholic, was expected to be buried in Rabat's Christian cemetery.

However, a minister in President Laurent Kabila's government in Kinshasa, capital of what is now called the Democratic Republic of the Congo, did not rule out burial for Mobutu in his home country.

"Why shouldn't the body be repatriated?" asked Information Minister Raphael Ghenda, adding: "While he was alive we said we were happy for him to return."

A source close to the Mobutu family in Rabat said all of his relatives had gone to the hospital from their new home in a residential area of the Moroccan capital.

Access to the military hospital is carefully controlled and a news blackout has been imposed since Mobutu was moved there on July 1.

Just days earlier he had undergone an operation for "serious bleeding complications" in the civilian Avicennes hospital in Agdal suburb of Rabat.

King Hassan allowed him into Morocco on humanitarian grounds after Mobutu had rapidly found after his overthrow that an ex-president with a dictator's reputation rapidly loses friends.

Following the ex-president arrival in Morocco on May 23, diplomatic sources said several attempts were made to find him another host country.

A change of government in France, where Mobutu has property and where he had earlier convalesced from treatment in Switzerland for his cancer, saw the door there close against him.

Diplomatic sources spoke of his going possibly to Portugal or South Africa but as his illness worsened it became increasingly clear he would not leave Morocco.

As cancer and a growing rebellion took hold in Zaire, Mobutu lost his grip on power which he had held virtually unchallenged for three decades.

Mobutu was one of Africa's longest-serving strongmen who used the Cold War to cement his hold on power, as the West and Soviet Union vied for influence in Africa and control of Zaire's uranium and other minerals.

He enjoyed virtually absolute power since a 1965 coup, riding the tidal wave of popular support for multi-party democracy that swept around the world with the collapse of Soviet-style communism in the late 1980s.

He consistently put off, and then accepted for 1997, multi-party presidential and parliamentary elections.

"I am perhaps the only dictator in the world who is calling for such elections," he once told a television interviewer.

But his cancer and a Tutsi-dominated revolt backed by neighbouring Rwanda, Burundi, Uganda and Angola combined against him and his rapacious, demoralised and divided armed forces crumbled before a determined rebel advance.

On May 16, 1997, he fled his capital Kinshasa, one day before Kabila's Alliance of Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Congo marched in to claim victory after a seven-month civil war.

He went first to Togo and then arrived in Morocco where initially he stayed in a hotel south of the capital before moving to a resort near Tangier in June.

He was taken to the Moroccan capital at the end of that month, admitted to Avicennes civilian hospital and underwent an operation for "serious bleeding complications," doctors said.

He was then moved to the military hospital on July 1 where he died on Sunday night. The brief official announcement gave no details of any funeral arrangements.

5:35 AM EDT

Reuters Limited

Source: Reuters

Date: 08 Sep 1997

Troubled UN Mission in Congo Still Waiting

By William Wallis

KINSHASA (Reuter) - U.N. sources in Kinshasa said on Monday the investigation into alleged massacres in the former Zaire is still faced with major obstacles despite a written go-ahead from President Laurent Kabila.

The sources said Kabila's letter to the United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan, while confirming the probe can proceed in principle, had imposed more constraints which would alter the mandate of the mission.

"The letter did not mention the last set of obstacles imposed by the government, nor did it indicate specifically they had been withdrawn or maintained," a U.N. source told Reuters.

"But it did mention two new conditions, that the investigation be confined in both space and time, to the east of the country, and to events leading up to but not beyond May 17th this year," the source added.

The new demands made further wrangling likely before the team could begin fieldwork, the source said.

The U.N. mission was originally mandated to probe charges of massacres of Rwandan refugees across the country.

Some of the most recent reports of mass killings were in the far north-west, near the town of Mbandaka on May 13, an area that would not be investigated under the new provisions demanded by Kabila.

Annan said Monday the team, originally intended to be 23-strong, now only 18, had been given the green light by Kabila and would soon be heading east.

The U.S. ambassador to the United Nations said earlier on Monday he found Kabila's letter troubling even though it agreed that the probe proceed.

Bill Richardson spoke after Annan, during a visit to Berne, Switzerland, welcomed the letter from Kabila "confirming his commitment... that the team can proceed with its work, that the government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo commits itself to protecting them."

"I was disappointed in the tone of the letter but nonetheless the team is permitted to go in," Richardson said.

Richardson's comments reflected private apprehensions among some U.N. and Security Council envoys that the Kinshasa government would again raise obstacles to the delayed probe into alleged massacres of Rwandan refugees.

The present mission, appointed by Annan after he agreed to Kabila's demands about the composition of a previous team led by Chilean Roberto Garreton, arrived in Kinshasa two weeks ago.

Three days after they began work Kabila's officials imposed fresh conditions for the probe, whose prospects already were curtailed by months of Zairian obstruction, diplomatic wrangling and U.N. bureaucracy.

Aid officials say thousands of Rwandan Hutus were massacred by Kabila's troops and their Rwandan Tutsi backers during their successful seven-month revolt to topple the former Zaire's veteran dictator Mobutu Sese Seko.

Kabila, who seized power in May, denies the killings.

Large numbers of Hutus, including soldiers and militia responsible for massacring more than 500,000 Rwandan Tutsis and moderate Hutus in 1994, fled to Zaire in fear of revenge.

5:33 PM EDT

Reuters Limited

Source: Reuters

Date: 11 Sep 1997

Bujumbura-Burundi refugees flee fighting in Kabila's Congo

By Todd Pitman

BUJUMBURA, Sept 11 (Reuter) - Fighting in the east of the Democratic Republic of the Congo is driving home around 100 Burundian refugees a day, the U.N. refugee agency said on Thursday. So far 2,500 Burundian Hutu refugees have fled fighting near Fizi, a Lake Tanganyika town south of Uvira, for a transit centre at Gatumba on Burundi's border with Congo, formerly Zaire, the UNHCR said.

The returning refugees are the remnant of more than 30,000 Burundian Hutus unaccounted for after they were scattered last October at the start of a rebellion that brought Laurent Kabila to power.

"We used to have 140,000 in the region of Uvira. About 110,000 have come back, so theoretically there are still 30,000 left," Hitoshi Mise, UNHCR representative in Burundi told Reuters.

"What's happened to the remainder? We don't know. Maybe they died."

Fighting south of Uvira involves two groups based in the area, the Babembe tribe and the government army which includes a strong component of ethnic Tutsi Banyamulenge.

Aid officials say the Babembe's fighting force has recently formed a loose alliance with Burundian Hutu fighters who oppose their country's military-appointed government, thus increasing their capacity to launch attacks.

"Approximately a month ago there was fighting in Fizi...between the Babembe and the Congolese army. I think there was a general fear among the refugees," Mise said to explain the exodus.

Burundian refugees fled into the former Zaire after the murder by Tutsi troops of Burundi's first elected Hutu president, Melchior Ndadaye, in October 1993, which sparked massacres of ethnic Tutsis and army repression.

In a related development, the UNHCR repatriated by air on Tuesday 165 Burundian refugees from western Congo and 164 refugees by air from Shabunda, south Kivu, on Wednesday.

The move came despite an announcement by U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees Sadako Ogata on Tuesday that the agency was suspending work in Congo because of that government's forced repatriation of Rwandan refugees last week. Around 100 refugees would arrive from Bukavu, South Kivu, on Friday despite the suspension.

Source: Reuters

Date: 11 Sep 1997

Bonino slams Congo over UN refugee agency pullout

BRUSSELS, Sept 11 (Reuter) - European Humanitarian Aid Commissioner Emma Bonino on Thursday accused governments in Africa's Great Lakes region of sabotaging international efforts to help Rwandan and Burundian refugees stranded in the former Zaire.

"The saddening reality (is) that there is no longer a humanitarian space in the Great Lakes Region because of the abuses perpetrated by local governments," Bonino said in a statement. The United Nations refugee agency UNHCR announced on Tuesday it was suspending operations in the former Zaire, renamed Democratic Republic of Congo, citing the forced repatriation of Rwandan refugees by the government of President Laurent Kabila. Bonino said she was "disheartened, but not surprised" by the "dismissive" attitude of Kabila, who on Wednesday welcomed the UNHCR pull-out as "a relief".

A spokesman for the Italian Commissioner said the UNHCR departure could trigger the withdrawal of many of the aid agencies and international bodies--including the European Union's humanitarian unit ECHO -- which have been operating under its umbrella throughout the central African refugee crisis.

"The suspension of HCR activities will have an inevitable impact on other agencies and non-governmental organisations, among which obviously are the ones financed by ECHO," spokesman Filippo di Robilant told a news briefing. Di Robilant said there were still refugees in the area who needed help, including groups from Angola, where a fragile 1994 peace deal that ended two decades of civil war is now threatening to collapse.

Those agencies who decided to stay in the region would now be working "under very difficult conditions," di Robilant said. Bonino said "the credibility of the U.N. system as a whole" was being seriously challenged by the developments in the Great Lakes Region. The UNHCR said on Tuesday it could not protect refugees "if the host governments do not abide by the principles and standards of law". Congo expelled 800 Rwandan and Burundian refugees last week in a move which angered the UNHCR. But Kabila said that by sending the refugees back home he was complying with the request of the agency, which he accused of conspiracy. Kabila's government and authorities in Rwanda who backed his overthrow in May of Zaire's late President Mobutu Sese Seko, have been critical of the U.N. over the refugee issue.

They accuse the world body of being slow to react to massacres in Rwanda but swift to show concern over the plight of the refugees. More than a million Rwandan Hutus streamed into the former Zaire in 1994, fearing reprisals for the genocide of minority Tutsis by militant Hutus.

Some were responsible for the genocide, while others were innocent civilians. A U.N. mission sent to investigate alleged massacres of Rwandan Hutu refugees by Kabila's forces has been blocked in Kinshasa for more than two weeks. Kabila's government wants the U.N. to accept its own conditions for the probe.

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Source: Reuters

Date: 12 Sep 1997

Uvira - ethnic fighting spreads in east of Kabila's Congo

By Mark Dodd

UVIRA, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Sept 12 (Reuter) - Armed conflict in the east of Laurent Kabila's Congo is on the rise with members of a local tribe constantly attacking Kabila's Rwandan Tutsi allies, aid workers say.

Aid workers say the semi-derelict town of Fizi, south of Uvira, is a scene of intermittent clashes between the Babembe, former comrade-in-arms of Kabila, and the Rwandan army.

Sources in Uvira, a port town on Lake Tanganyika bordering Burundi, say the Babembe resent the dominance of Tutsi soldiers active in Congo. To further its aims they have enlisted the support of armed Hutu rebels from Burundi and soldiers from the former Rwandan and Zairean government armies. "Fizi is a growing security problem -- it's basically Congolese versus Rwandese, Babembe versus Banyamulenge," an aid worker in Uvira told Reuters. Banyamulenge have been in Congo for the past 200 years but for many Congolese they remain Tutsis from Rwanda and are treated as foreigners. "All key security and administrative positions (in East Congo) are occupied by the Rwandese, especially anything military," the aid worker said, adding this was a source of considerable friction with the Babembe who spurned participation in Kabila's rebel alliance.

Kabila, who took power in May with Rwandan help after a campaign to oust late President Mobutu Sese Seko, has formed a 32-strong committee to investigate renewed ethnic violence in the east of the former Zaire.

Kabila has always used Babembe in his long struggle against Mobutu but they refused to help him when he accepted and incorporated Banyamulenge and members of the Rwandan army into his fighting force.

A second U.N. official said Rwanda had last week withdrawn all its soldiers from Fizi but the reasons were unclear.

He said there were three possibilities. One involved repeated but unconfirmed claims that a Rwandan commander and his troops had escaped with the monthly salaries for the Congolese soldiers and had looted Congolese military stores. A second reason was that Rwandan troops were needed to reinforce a counter-insurgency campaign in North Kivu, which extremist Hutu soldiers and Interahamwe militia have been using as a springboard for attacks into western

Rwanda. The pullout could also be an attempt to calm Fizi at the start of a mass voluntary repatriation from Tanzania of 74,000 Congolese refugees, of which 80 percent are Babembe, the U.N. officials said. Given the animosity of the Babembe for Rwandese Tutsis and their Banyamulenge allies, the return of the refugees is like "pouring petrol on a fire", said another senior aid worker with close knowledge of eastern Congo.

In April in Uvira, a Babembe protest against the Rwandese and Banyamulenge was bloodily suppressed, killing 36 protestors and injuring scores. Among the injured was Uvira's Territorial Administrator (district commissioner), Bazire Kushebna, accidentally shot in the foot by one of his own soldiers. Kushebna was still on crutches when he welcomed 548 Congolese refugees home on Tuesday. Aid workers say Mai-Mai traditional warriors, backed by soldiers from the defeated Rwandan and former Zairean armies, are also reported to be playing a central role in a fresh outbreak of insecurity in the Masisi region of North Kivu.

Looting is also becoming commonplace in Goma, North Kivu, and guerrilla activity is increasing in nearby border areas, aid workers say. People in Goma, North Kivu's provincial capital, have endured years of insecurity with gun law ruling, but U.N. officials said troop movements and widespread ethnic unrest in the region had again heightened tensions.

"The provincial security committee is very concerned and under pressure from locals who are literally not sleeping because there are too many shots," one senior U.N. official in the region told Reuters. "Almost nightly, units of the national police are finding soldiers breaking into shops and there's been a lot of gunfights. The police are often under-paid and under-equipped to deal with the situation." A U.N. report released on Wednesday said towns of Goma and Bukavu were "very tense" with gunfire at night and reinforcements of strategic points by government troops.

The report said Bunyakiri, about 80 km (50 miles) north of Bukavu, was occupied by rebels at the end of last week and attacks were also reported in towns of Sake and Minova. The U.N. report said the government had moved heavy artillery to Tshibanda, some 35 km from the town on the Bukavu-Bunyakiri axis.

Source: Reuters

Date: 25 Sep 1997

Post UN Thwarted Action to Avert Rwandan Genocide

WASHINGTON (Reuter) - A Belgian commission has gathered strong evidence that U.N. peacekeepers could have prevented the 1994 genocide of hundreds of thousands of Rwandans but were thwarted by higher-ups at U.N. headquarters in New York, the Washington Post reported Thursday.

A key document in the investigation is an urgent fax sent by the head of the U.N. peacekeeping force in Rwanda at the time, Canadian Maj. Gen. Romeo Dallaire, the Post said.

It went to his chief in New York, Maj. Gen. Maurice Baril, also a Canadian, the Post said, quoting a Belgian senator on the legislation panel, the newspaper reported.

In the fax, dated Jan. 11, 1994, Dallaire reported that a highly placed Rwandan informant had given the U.N. force details of a plan by the Hutu extremist government to exterminate thousands of civilians, most of them members of the Tutsi tribal minority.

The informant also gave peacekeepers the locations of arms caches established to equip the government-backed Hutu militiamen who were to carry out the killing, the newspaper quoted the fax as saying.

Dallaire asked Baril for authorization to confiscate the arms caches within 36 hours and grant asylum to the informant and his family.

But unnamed officials at the U.N. peacekeeping directorate refused to authorize the operation, Belgian Sen. Alain Destexhe told the paper in an interview.

Less than three months after the fax, president Juvenal Habyarimana of Rwanda and Cyprien Ntaryamira of Burundi -- both Hutus -- were killed in an unexplained plane crash and militiamen began a bloody rampage, killing 20,000 Tutsis and moderate Hutus in just a few days.

As many as half a million Rwandans were killed in the ensuing 10 weeks.

The Belgian commission is investigating the killings because Belgium was once the colonial power there and because 10 Belgian peacekeeping troops were tortured and killed by Hutu militiamen.

Reut10:38 09-25-97

(25 Sep 1997 10:35 EDT)

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Source: Reuters

Date: 30 Sep 1997

Kabila wants U.N. probe out of new Congo

01:35 PM

LUSAKA, Sept 30 (Reuter) - Democratic Republic of the Congo President Laurent Kabila on Tuesday asked for the immediate withdrawal of a United Nations team investigating alleged massacres in the former Zaire.

"We request (U.N. Secretary-General) Kofi Annan to ask them to leave," Kabila told reporters at Lusaka airport shortly before heading home after a visit to Zambia.

He said the U.N. investigators had failed to establish that any massacres had occurred and that they were misleading the international community.

"These investigators are just issuing statements from posh hotels in Kinshasa. They have failed to go to these areas to prove that the massacres took place," he said.

Kabila ended a three-day visit to Zambia ahead of schedule on Tuesday afternoon, as a second day of shelling from the Congo Republic capital of Brazzaville killed three children in Kinshasa.

His visit had begun on Monday as part of efforts to reach closer ties with his southern neighbour.

Kabila's government has repeatedly denounced the U.N. mission which is now in its sixth week in Kinshasa.

The team was set up to investigate allegations by relief workers and other witnesses that Kabila's forces or his Rwandan Tutsi allies massacred Rwandan Hutu refugees during the seven-month campaign that brought him to power in May.

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Source: Reuters

Date: 19 Sep 1997

Congo Official says U.N. Probe Can Proceed

BERNE (Reuter) - Congo's foreign minister said on Friday a stalled U.N. probe into alleged massacres of Rwandan Hutu refugees could move ahead as long as the panel did not interfere in the country's politics.

"The U.N. commission may do its work in our country but we do not wish any political interference," Bizima Karaha told reporters during a working visit to Switzerland.

At issue is a mandated investigation into reports that thousands of Rwandan Hutu refugees were massacred by forces loyal to Laurent Kabila, who ousted President Mobutu Sese Seko from power in the former Zaire in May and changed the name of the country to the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

The team has been blocked from going to the west of the country and has been prohibited from probing any killings after May 17, when Kabila took office as president.

It has been asked to take along 24 Congolese security personnel at the expense of the United Nations, according to reports from Kinshasa.

The Kinshasa government has sent mixed signals about the investigation, but Karaha has said in the past that the probe could proceed.

U.S. Ambassador Bill Richards said on Thursday after speaking to Kabila that there was "slight progress" on beginning the investigation by the U.N. human rights team.

The U.N. human rights group of 23 mainly forensic experts had demanded entry into Mbandaka, a port on the Congo river in the northwest of the country.

Priests, civil servants and Red Cross workers have told Reuters that Kabila's forces, in taking the town on May 13, gunned down more than 200 unarmed Rwandan refugees.

Mingled with civilian refugees were former Rwandan soldiers and militia, who had already been disarmed.

The Hutus fled Rwanda in 1994 in fear of reprisals for a genocide of more than half a million Tutsis, who then took power in Kigali and helped Kabila to power.

On other subjects, Karaha hailed Berne's readiness to help track down assets Mobutu may have had in Switzerland.

"We are very satisfied with what Switzerland has done about Mobutu's wealth and its blockage," he said.

Switzerland froze the late strongman's assets, including a 30-room, \$5.5 million villa near Lausanne, after he was toppled. But a search of banks turned up only a few million dollars.

Swiss press reports have said Mobutu once kept \$4 billion in Switzerland, but bankers doubt much is left in the country and some experts believe the money has long been exhausted.

8:59 AM EDT

Reuters Limited

Source: Reuters

Date: 09 Oct 1997

Rwanda Says It Retakes Villages After Fighting

NAIROBI, Kenya (Reuter) - Rwandan troops killed 80 Hutu rebels and recaptured villages around the northwestern town of Gisenyi after heavy fighting, a government official said on Thursday.

Defense ministry spokesman Richard Sezibera told Reuters by telephone from the Rwandan capital Kigali that the army was mopping up areas around the border town after Wednesday's fighting.

"We were attacked yesterday in areas around Gisenyi and Gisenyi airport by a sizeable fighting force. But we repulsed them after heavy fighting and killed 80 of them," he said.

Sezibera said the combat culminated a week of intermittent clashes with former Rwandan Hutu soldiers and elements of the Interahamwe militia blamed for Rwanda's 1994 genocide of an estimated 800,000 Tutsis and moderate Hutus.

Rwandan Vice President Paul Kagame confirmed on Wednesday that fighting had broken out around Gisenyi, close to the border with the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC).

"Gisenyi is a problem area. There have been these armed groups attacking civilians, schools, so this morning there was fighting. Some armed groups were seen and they engaged our forces which repulsed them and did damage to them," Kagame told reporters when he left Kinshasa, the DRC capital, after a three-day visit.

8:42 AM EDT

Reuters Limited

Source: Reuters

Date: 09 Oct 1997

Kinshasa Tense After Artillery Duels

Thursday October 9 8:41 AM EDT

By William Wallis

KINSHASA, Zaire (Reuter) - The Democratic Republic of the Congo capital Kinshasa was calm on Thursday after a day of rocket and artillery exchanges with neighboring Congo Brazzaville killed two guards at President Laurent Kabila's office.

Kinshasa residents went about their business as usual but there was an air of nervousness on the streets after the latest upsurge in violence linked to a four-month power struggle across the river in Brazzaville.

The latest exchanges subsided late on Wednesday night. It was not immediately clear who had opened fire on the capital of the former Zaire from the opposite bank of the Congo River.

"This is a declaration of war. We cannot see it otherwise," Kabila's junior interior minister Faustin Munene said on television, standing by one of the rockets at the presidency.

The Kinshasa government has previously said rockets fired from Brazzaville were deliberately launched by former soldiers of the late president of the former Zaire, Mobutu Sese Seko, who was toppled by Kabila in May.

The spokesman for Kabila's government, Raphael Ghenda, condemned renewed artillery attacks from Brazzaville and criticised the United Nations for failing to intervene in the Congo Republic.

He confirmed two soldiers were killed when a projectile exploded outside Kabila's office, known as the National Palace.

"We have been proposing that the international community put together an intervention force but they've failed to move. Is the U.N. waiting for the whole region to explode?" Ghenda said.

The conflict in Brazzaville pits forces backing President Pascal Lissouba against the private militia of his arch-rival and former military ruler, Denis Sassou Nguesso.

Fighting erupted on June 5 after troops loyal to Lissouba surrounded Sassou's residence in an

attempt to seize illegal weapons prior to presidential elections. The voting scheduled for July 27 was derailed by the conflict.

Lissouba, on a visit to Namibia, would meet President Sam Nujoma on Thursday a diplomatic source said. He would then leave for Uganda to further seek a solution to end the Congo war.

The diplomatic source dismissed speculation in Kinshasa that Lissouba had flown to Windhoek to seek asylum, saying he had visited several other African states to drum up support for an end to the fighting.

After shelling last week killed at least 21 people, Kinshasa sent several hundred troops across the river as a "contingent" of military observers to prevent further attacks. Senior officials suggested it could join an African-led peace force.

Ghenda said the troops were "observing" in Brazzaville but were unable to silence the guns. "Simply being on the ground cannot quieten the cannon. It's up to the United Nations to do its work. It's already four months since the war started," he added.

"We always hoped for a peaceful solution but at a certain moment more muscular intervention is necessary," he said, hinting that Kinshasa might adopt a harder line.

8:41 AM EDT

Reuters Limited

Source: Reuters

Date: 08 Dec 1997

UN Experts Set Off on Massacre Probe in Ex-Zaire

By William Wallis

KINSHASA (Reuters) - U.N. investigators hunting for evidence of massacres of Rwandan Hutu refugees left Kinshasa on Monday on their first field trip to the interior of the former Zaire.

A Hercules transport plane with 17 forensic scientists, human rights experts and logistics officers on board left for Mbandaka nearly four months after they first arrived in Kinshasa, capital of the now renamed Democratic Republic of the Congo.

``We are just taking off," Jose Diaz, the mission's spokesman told Reuters by cellular phone from Kinshasa airport.

The team, which includes some of the world's top forensic experts, arrived in Kinshasa in late August. Their work has been blocked during months of haggling with the government over the terms and scope of the investigation.

The United Nations set up the team to investigate allegations from aid workers that President Laurent Kabila's forces or his Rwandan Tutsi allies killed thousands of Rwandan Hutus during the seven-month campaign that brought him to power in May. Kabila denies the charge.

A total of 27 members of the team, including local staff, have been deployed to investigate massacres alleged to have taken place in and around Mbandaka when Kabila's forces took the northwestern town on May 13.

Local witnesses and aid workers there told Reuters in June that several hundred refugees were killed by Kabila's troops at Mbandaka port on the River Congo, and at the village of Wenge 20 miles away.

Most of the bodies of the victims, they alleged, were thrown into river, making it unlikely investigators would find mass graves there.

The mission's deputy chief, Zimbabwean Andrew Chigovera, led the expedition to Mbandaka. The overall chief of mission, Atsu-Koffi Amega of Togo, remained in Kinshasa to prepare for a later trip to the east of the country.

An advance team of logistics and security officers reached Mbandaka last week. At the weekend equipment and further personnel were sent to set up a campsite where the team will stay.

REUTERS@ Reut17:18 12-08-97

(08 Dec 1997 17:17 EST)

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Source: Reuters

Date: 11 Dec 1997

At Least 231 Dead, 227 Hurt in Rwanda Attack

By David Fox

KIGALI, Rwanda (Reuters) - The United Nations refugee agency UNHCR said Thursday at least 231 people were killed and an estimated 227 others wounded in an attack on a camp in northwest Rwanda housing ethnic Tutsi Congolese refugees.

The attack at Mudende, about 80 miles northwest of Kigali, came on the eve of a visit by U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright.

Albright arrived in Kinshasa, capital of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Thursday night, three hours late after her plane was diverted to Angola because of bad weather.

UNHCR spokeswoman in Geneva, Switzerland, Judith Kumin told Reuters that 90 percent of the camp's refugees, who fled ethnic violence in neighboring Democratic Republic of the Congo, had been killed with machetes.

Rwandan state radio and aid officials in Kigali had earlier put the death toll at 200 and said the attackers were rebels of Rwanda's Hutu majority.

But Rwandan radio, citing local aid agency sources, later reported up to 1,000 may have been killed and another 1,000 wounded, but it said the figure could not be confirmed.

"There has been another horrible massacre at Mudende refugee camp, in Mutura, in the northwestern Gisenyi Province," the radio said Thursday.

Aid officials in the Rwandan capital earlier described the victims as Rwandan refugees returning from Congo.

Albright, apparently unaware of Wednesday's attack, condemned at a news conference in Kigali Thursday morning the upsurge of violence in Rwanda and a senior U.S. diplomat called it "the continuation of genocide."

"There is clearly room for improvement in the human rights record for Rwanda," she said after meeting President Pasteur Bizimungu and Vice President Paul Kagame.

"Given the history of the genocide...we understand how difficult it must be for them," she

said. "A lot has been done already (to improve human rights) but they have a long way to go."

Albright, speaking on the third leg of a seven-nation Africa tour, said the United States was determined to help Rwanda come to terms with the aftermath of the 1994 genocide.

An estimated 800,000 Tutsis and some moderate Hutus died in Rwanda in 1994 during a genocide conducted by extremistHutu militia and members of the former government and army. Rwanda's government fought its way to power during thegenocide.

Kumin said the death toll was based on a first count of the victims and there were not yet any fuller details.

All 17,000 refugees at Mudende, less than 15 miles from the northwestern border town of Gisenyi, fled the camp after the raid,which took place at around 2 a.m. (local time), she said.

UNHCR staff were not present in the camp at the time, she said.

"The camp is now empty. Nobody seems to be left on the site," she said. The attackers burnt down some 150 tents beforeleaving but there were no immediate details on the circumstances surrounding the raid or their identities, Kumin said.

It was the second attack on Mudende since the killing of 148 people, mostly ethnic Zairian Tutsi refugees, by suspected Hutu rebel gangs in August.

Northwestern Rwanda has become increasingly insecure in recent months following the return of hundreds of thousands ofHutu refugees from Congo. As a result, aid work in the area has been severely restricted.

Among the refugees, who fled Rwanda to escape reprisals for the 1994 genocide, were many of the hardcore of extremistsresponsible for the slaughter.

4:37 PM EST

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