

France puts African-based troops on alert

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PARIS, April 7 (Reuter) - France has put soldiers in former African colonies on alert following the killing of the leaders of Rwanda and Burundi, but has no plans to send troops to the violence-racked countries, military sources said.

Rwandan President Juvenal Habyarimana and Burundi President Cyprien Ntaryamira died in a rocket attack that destroyed their plane as they flew back to Rwandan capital of Kigali from regional peace talks.

Sources said the decision to put troops in the region on alert was routine. "They are systematically put on alert when told of a crisis somewhere

in the region," an official said.

France has some 4,600 soldiers in the Central African Republic, Chad, Gabon, Ivory Coast and Senegal, the sources said. Another 4,000 are in the Red Sea port of Djibouti.

Paris, which in recent years had about 300 soldiers in Rwanda, withdrew its remaining contingents from the country last December. They were replaced by a U.N. peacekeeping force.

"There is no movement of French troops planned into Rwanda or Burundi at the present time," the military official said.

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