

Rwanda rebels say they encircling capital

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KIGALI, April 12 (Reuter) - Rebel officers said their forces had started encircling the Rwandan capital of Kigali ready to take it over as soon as foreign troops conducting evacuation operations had left.

At Mulindi, the Rwanda Patriotic Front (RPF) bush headquarters 70 km north of Kigali, officers told Reuters two battalions were on the outskirts of the city and were waiting to overrun the international airport once French and Belgian troops departed later in the day.

"They are expected to take the airport. They will only move once foreign soldiers have left," an RPF commander said.

Rwanda's entire cabinet, appointed last week after the death of President Juvenal Habyarimana, earlier on Tuesday fled the embattled capital, witnesses said.

The administration, led by former parliamentary speaker Venat Theodore Sindikubwabo, was swiftly rejected by the rebels as "illegitimate" soon after it took over last week.

The ambassadors of Belgium, France and Germany were also said to be leaving Kigali on Tuesday.

The entire staff of the Russian embassy in the capital, as well as representatives of the Russian airline Aeroflot and their families, were evacuated to neighbouring Burundi.

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