

U.S. criticizes editors for endangering reporters

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WASHINGTON, April 14 (Reuter) - The State Department Thursday sharply criticised U.S. and other media organisations for sending reporters into mortal danger in Rwanda.

Spokesman Mike McCurry said the State Department had been in touch with several news organisations about 12 journalists, including seven Americans, who stayed in Kigali to report on the bloody fighting in the Rwandan capital.

“I think it takes extraordinary courage for these journalists to remain in Kagali and continue their reports from there,” said McCurry.

“And it takes extraordinary courage to be an editor in a news organisation that would ask an employee to go to a place where it’s clear there is mortal danger and where it’s clear the United States government ordered Americans not to travel,” he added.

“I think that they need to pursue the truth as they see fit, but they have put their employees in extraordinary danger,” McCurry said.

He praised rescue efforts by Belgian troops, who tried three times to reach the reporters Thursday, after they turned down the chance to leave Kigali Wednesday.

In Brussels, a Belgian armed forces spokesman said 11 U.S. journalists had been rescued and brought to the airport at Kigali for evacuation.

The journalists refused to leave the Hotel Mille Collines when urged to do so Wednesday by Belgian paratroopers on a rescue mission in central Kigali. They changed their minds Thursday and decided to quit the city.

Belgian army spokesman Colonel Gilbert Hertoghe said the the troops were initially unable to reach the journalists because of fighting around the hotel and also on the road from the airport to the city.

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