

Burundi guard kills French soldier

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BUJUMBURA, June 17 (AFP) - A French soldier was shot dead overnight by a guard on duty in front of the former royal palace here, Burundian military sources said Friday.

The death of the unidentified non-commissioned officer, who was killed overnight Thursday, was confirmed Friday by the French defence attache's office here.

The office said a probe had been opened. It refused to give details of the shooting but stressed it had been "neither a political nor an anti-French act."

The Burundian sources said the soldier was a training advisor for the Burundian presidential guard and had been killed after failing to heed warnings from guards as he headed towards the palace in a drunken state.

Burundi has the same Tutsi-Hutu ethnic composition as its neighbour Rwanda, where ten weeks of bloodshed have claimed up to 500,000 lives.

Burundi witnessed several days of armed conflicts and bloody fighting earlier this week, but UN officials said Thursday that fears that the ethnic carnage would spread across the border had eased.

Burundi and Rwanda both have majority Hutu populations. In Burundi, the Tutsis dominate the army and government, whereas in Rwanda they have now been largely excluded.

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