

Arusha [Government and rebels called for the withdrawal of foreign troops from Rwanda]

AFP, July 14, 1992

The RPF is believed to number several thousand guerrillas, some of whom previously served in the Ugandan army.

The government and rebels, under intense diplomatic pressure from the West and neighbouring countries to reach a political settlement, called for the withdrawal of foreign troops from Rwanda.

Several hundred French troops been stationed in Rwanda to protect French nationals since the invasion in October 1990. The RPF has accused them of fighting alongside government forces, a charge denied by France and the Rwandan government.

An earlier ceasefire agreed in March collapsed within days. But diplomats attending the talks expressed greater optimism that this time the guns would fall silent.

The government, faced with a rapidly deteriorating economy, is belie-

ved to be weary of waging war against battle-hardened rebels who stepped up their attacks before the talks opened.

Uganda, believed to have supported the rebels despite official denials, has come under international pressure to bring them to the negotiating table.

In a sign of growing international concern, the Arusha talks which closed Monday were attended by observers from the tiny central African country's former colonial ruler Belgium, the United States, France, Uganda, Zaire and Burundi.

Since the surprise rebel invasion in October 1990, the RPF and government forces have pounded each other's position with mortars, gaining and losing ground in lightning guerrilla strikes.

But neither side has achieved a decisive victory, and at least 250,000 of Rwanda's 7.2 million people have

fled their homes.

Observers at the talks noted that Rwanda, with one of Africa's highest population densities and a se-

vere shortage of farmland and housing, would face problems resettling refugees.

hb/dc/nb AFP AFP SEQN-0123