

Rebels active with Ugandan support: minister

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KIGALI, June 29 (AFP) - Rwandan rebel activity has increased this month in northern Rwanda, where the guerrilla Rwandan Patriotic Front (FPR) has support from neighbouring Uganda, Defence Minister James Gasana said Sunday.

Gasana refused to give casualty figures, but said the rebels were firing on army positions in the north-eastern Cyumba, Kivuye, Kiyombe, Mukarangne and districts and at Butaro in the northwestern Ruhengeri region.

Rwanda's small army has launched a major recruiting drive "not to invade any country, but to prepare to defend our own," Gasana told a press conference here.

"When it's necessary, we shall call on everybody to enlist," he said.

In all districts but Kivuye, where the FPR had pressed forward right to the administrative centre, Rwandan troops had held them back close to the Ugandan border.

Uganda was currently "complicating the situation" with support for the FPR, which had "positioned heavy artillery along ridges inside Uganda", the minister charged.

Uganda has always denied supporting the rebels, who launched their offensive from Ugandan territory in October 1990. The FPR consists largely of exiles from the Tutsi people, who before independence were long the traditional rulers of the small, densely populated highland nation.

Though fighting goes on, Rwanda's interim government and FPR representatives have this month held peace talks in Brussels, Paris and Dakar, which this week hosts the summit of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU).

Further negotiations are scheduled to take place on July 10 and 11 at Gbadolite in neighbouring Zaire.

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