

Two ex-ministers arrested over coup bid

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BUJUMBURA, April 9 (AFP) - Burundi security forces on Thursday arrested Cyprien Mbonimpa, who was foreign minister until last week, in connection with a coup bid last month, officials said here.

Also arrested on Thursday was Charles Kazatsa, who served as interior minister under former military dictator Jean-Baptiste Bagaza. Bagaza was ousted in a military coup in 1987 when Pierre Buyoya became president.

Last month's coup attempt was carried out by troops from a training camp near the capital, who failed to win support from other soldiers. Bujumbura's central prison is currently home to 164 of the mutineers.

The government said it suspected the coup was the work of Bagaza supporters and the armed, extremist Party for the Liberation of the Hutu People (Palipehutu), which has carried out attacks in the north of the country.

Mbonimpa, in government since Major Buyoya came to power, was dropped in a government reshuffle following a favourable referendum vote on a new multi-party constitution.

Most other senior ministers retained their posts, but diplomatic sources said Mbonimpa could have been considered a hardliner unfavourable to Buyoya's moves towards open politics.

In another development, bands from neighbouring Rwanda attacked army camps in northwest Burundi overnight Wednesday, throwing hand grenades and seizing civilian hostages in Cibitoke province.

It was not immediately known if there were casualties.

Generally well informed sources said Burundi has asked Rwanda to extradite those responsible for raids in north Burundi last November in which more than 500 people were massacred.

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