

**Preventing the Bloodbath:
Could the UN Have Predicted and Prevented
The Rwandan Genocide?**

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CORNELL UNIVERSITY
PEACE STUDIES PROGRAM
OCCASIONAL PAPER #24

©November 1999

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ISSN 1075-4857

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We owe it to the [UN] Organization, to those who lived through the horrors of the genocide, and especially to those who perished in it, to make sure that the tragic sequence of events and the inadequate United Nations response to it are scrutinized, analysed and reassessed, and every effort made to prevent a possible recurrence.

— Kofi Annan, UN Secretary-General, 12 June 1996¹

INTRODUCTION

On 6 April 1994, the most intense genocide since World War II was unleashed upon an unprepared world. Starting in Kigali, the Rwanda capital, the systematic slaughter of an ethnic group, the Tutsis, spread with a ferocity that even its sinister organizers could not have hoped for. In one hundred days it consigned about 800,000 Rwandans to their deaths. The perpetrators, high within government circles, had made meticulous plans. A radio station under their control, Radio Mille Collines,² had been whipping up anti-Tutsi hysteria for months. Secret arms caches were kept ready for use by government soldiers and the party militia, the core cadre of which had been trained in the tactics of slaughter. Lists of Tutsis and their Hutu sympathizers had been compiled for targeting. Only a trigger was needed. It was provided in a fashion as unexpected as the genocide itself: the killing of the Rwandan government head under whom the *génocidaires* (genocidists) had worked. As the wave of death spread across the country, the international community stood by in a stupor, and even sought to avoid its moral and legal responsibilities to mitigate this immense human and humanitarian tragedy.

The key international leaders have admitted that they should have acted. US President Bill Clinton, Secretary of State Madeleine Albright (who was the US ambassador to the UN at the time of the genocide) and UN Secretaries-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali and Kofi Annan

¹ Statement of Kofi Anan to the First Plenary Session Meeting of the Comprehensive Seminar on Lessons Learned from UNAMIR, Plainsboro, New Jersey, 12 June 1996. At the time Kofi Annan was Under-Secretary-General for Peace-keeping. On 1 January 1997, he became UN Secretary-General.

² The full name of the station was “Radio-Télévision Libre des Mille Collines,” where “Mille Collines,” or “Thousand Hills,” is a common reference to Rwanda and its mountainous topography.

(who was under-secretary-general for peacekeeping at the time)³ have all said that early intervention could have saved many thousands of lives. On a visit to Africa in March of 1998, President Clinton admitted that the world “did not act quickly enough” and that “we did not immediately call these crimes by their rightful name—genocide.”⁴ Secretary of State Albright stated that “we—the international community—should have been more active in the early stages of the atrocities in Rwanda.”⁵ Many believe that the international community could have acted even earlier, to prevent the genocide before it started, or to nip it in the bud in the first few days. There are, however, no detailed studies on the precise measures that could have been undertaken by the international community and the international organization that bears the most responsibility for maintaining international peace and security, the United Nations.⁶

What was necessary for prevention? Three things were needed: an intelligence capability (for early warning and planning), preventive measures (i.e., a capability for intervention), and the political will to make use of these two. Tragically, it was the latter that was fundamentally lacking, since the first two were present in a nascent state. Though inadequate, they could have been further developed given more political will. There was, in fact, a UN peacekeeping force already deployed in the country, with a mandate to contribute to Rwandan security. Its commander had received secret intelligence about a genocide plot which he deemed convincing enough to begin

³ In a news conference on 4 May 1998, Secretary-General Kofi Annan said: “I agree with [UNAMIR Force Commander] General Dallaire when he says, ‘If I had had one reinforced brigade—5,000 men—well trained and well equipped, I could have saved thousands of lives’.” A transcript of the press conference is printed in “Rough Ride for S-G in Rwanda as UN Inaction on 1994 Genocide Continues to Raise Unanswered Questions,” *International Documents Review* 9, no. 15-16, pp. 1-5.

⁴ “West Played Hidden Role in Genocide,” *Irish Times* (6 April 1998): 13.

⁵ Philip Gourevitch, “The Genocide Fax: The United Nations was Warned about Rwanda. Did Anyone Care?” *New Yorker*, 11 May 1998, p. 46.

⁶ The chief exception is a recent study describing UNAMIR Force Commander Romeo Dallaire’s plans to mitigate the genocide. See Scott R. Feil, “Preventing Genocide: How the Early Use of Force Might Have Succeeded in Rwanda,” *Carnegie Commission on Preventing Deadly Conflict*, New York, Carnegie Corporation, April 1998. The study, which deals only with military measures which might have been taken after the outbreak of genocide on April 6, is outlined later in this paper.

planning for an active intervention. He was, however, restrained by his superiors at UN Headquarters in New York, who felt strongly the lack of commitment from the major powers in the Security Council, especially the United States. The atmosphere in New York, reflecting that in Washington, greatly dimmed the prospects for a greater, more pro-active UN presence in Rwanda that could have saved hundreds of thousands of human lives.

This paper will examine each of these three requirements: detailed intelligence, preventive measures and political will. It will suggest alternative policies and actions that, in hindsight, should have been followed to further develop these capabilities. It is essential that the international community not only learn, but also implement, the lessons from Rwanda. In the words of US President Clinton: “Let us challenge ourselves to build a world in which no branch of humanity . . . is again threatened with destruction . . . to strengthen our ability to prevent, and, if necessary, to stop genocide.”⁷ We hope that this paper, which proposes, in hindsight, detailed scenarios for possible genocide prediction and prevention in Rwanda, will contribute to such an effort.

BACKGROUND

Few outsiders could have anticipated that Rwanda, a tiny, mountainous nation located in the Rift Valley of south-central Africa, would provide the backdrop for an unprecedented African horror. To the casual foreign observer, Rwanda’s rustic setting along Lake Kivu, its lush hills, its agrarian economy, and its pastoral culture created a semblance of simplicity and placidity. Rwanda seemed too remote, too unsophisticated, and too docile of a nation, to produce nation-wide bloodshed and record numbers of refugees. When the UN peace-keeping mission was planned in 1993 the assumption was that this would be an easy, relatively trouble-free mission.⁸

⁷ “Text of Clinton’s Rwandan Address,” *New York Times*, 25 March 1998.

⁸ Romeo Dallaire, the designated Force Commander, spoke of the lead up to the mission: “There was absolutely no perception that anything except the very positive vibrations that were coming out of Rwanda from both sides . . . the peripheral countries, the observers at the Arusha talks, that this was going to be classic peace-keeping operation. [The mood was one of] enormous optimism; buoyant.” in “Rwanda: Autopsy of a Genocide,” CBC Prime Time News, Thursday 29 November 1994, transcript, pp. 11-12. Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, 1994. An aide to

This perception of Rwanda and the UN mission, however, was misguided. A careful examination of Rwanda's past reveals deep social tensions, a stalled agrarian economy, a history of political upheavals, and a frightening pattern of organized, mass killings in one of the most densely populated countries of the world (at 270 persons per square kilometer).⁹ A chronology of major events before and during the genocide is provided in Table 1.

Table 1. Chronology

Major Events Prior to the Genocide

1894	In Rwanda, a German colony, Tutsi (cattle-owners) are given privilege over Hutus (farmers); Tutsi monarchy recognized
1919	Rwanda placed under Belgian trusteeship by League of Nations and later by UN
1959	Hutu "social revolution" for majority rule; violent encounters and massacres; over 100,000 Tutsi refugees flee (many to Uganda)
1961	Sept. - Legislative elections held under UN supervision; large majority vote in referendum for abolition of monarchy
1962	July 1 - Rwanda gains independence from Belgium; continued ethnic fighting
1963	In massacres, between 10,000 and 14,000 Tutsis are killed; smaller number of Hutus are also killed
1973	July - Major General Juvénal Habyarimana seizes power in a coup d'état; outlaws political parties (until 1992); in 1974 establishes Mouvement Révolutionnaire National pour le Développement (MRND) and ethnic quota systems
1987	Dec. - Rwandese Patriotic Front (RPF) formed at a Congrès in Kampala
1990	Oct. 1 - RPF launches a major attack ("invasion") from neighboring Uganda
1992	July 12 - Cease-fire agreement (amended) signed
1993	Jan. 20-26 - Massacre of over 300 Tutsis in North Western Rwanda (Gisenyi)
	Feb. 8 - RPF military offensive violates cease-fire
	March - International Commission of Inquiry releases report on HR violations
	June 22 - UNOMUR established (SC res. 846) to ensure ban on military assistance; becomes operational Sept. 30; integrated into UNAMIR Dec. 20
	Aug. 4 - Arusha Accords signed by Pres. of Rwanda and Chairman of RPF
	Oct. 5 - UNAMIR established (SC res. 872);
	Oct. 21 - Burundi's Hutu president, Melchior Ndadaye, is assassinated by Tutsi soldiers

Gen. Dallaire has further complained that in the briefings at UN headquarters prior to departing for the mission, the long history of human rights abuses was not described or even highlighted.

⁹ This figure of 270 persons/sq. km for the population density of Rwanda is based on the 1991 census figure of 7.16 million and a land area of 26,340 sq km. Economist Intelligence Unit. Rwanda.

- Dec. 28 - RPF battalion escorted into Kigali by UNAMIR in Operation “Clean Corridor”
- 1994 Jan. 11 - Gen. Dallaire’s “genocide fax” includes informant’s allegations
- April 6 - Downing of President Habyarimana’s plane and launch of genocide
- July 4 - RPF takes control of Kigali.
- July 18 - RPF reaches frontiers of Rwanda and unilaterally declares a cease-fire

Detailed Chronology During the Genocide

April 6

Force Commander Romeo Dallaire goes to a meeting of the Army headquarters staff at Army headquarters. Théoneste Bagosora, the Chef de Cabinet, is chairing. He dismisses Dallaire’s proposal to turn power over to PM Uwilingiyimana or to consult with her.

April 7

Dallaire travels to the Ecole Supérieure Militaire (ESM) in Kigali, observing the bodies of killed Belgian peacekeepers on the way. At ESM he finds that battalion and unit commanders from throughout the country had been assembled, impossible at short notice, and Bagasora is giving orders. It occurs to him that a coup may have been staged.

April 12

Belgian Foreign Minister informs UN Secretary General (SG) that the Belgian contingent will withdraw from UNAMIR and recommends suspension of entire mission

April 20

Special report of the SG on UNAMIR proposes three alternatives: Force expansion (including enforcement mandate to “coerce opposing forces into a cease-fire”), reduction, or withdrawal

April 21

SC takes second option and authorizes a force reduction to 270 (SC res. 912).

May 17

- SC adopts res. 918 including an expanded mandate to UNAMIR II:
- Contribute to the security and protection of civilians and relief operations
 - Creation of secure humanitarian areas, where feasible
 - A mandatory embargo on delivery of arms and related material to Rwanda
 - Investigation of serious violations of international humanitarian law

June 22

- SC adopts res. 929, invoking Chapter VII, authorizing a
- French military intervention (“*Opération Turquoise*”)
 - “. . . to use all necessary means to achieve the humanitarian objectives” (of UNAMIR II)

July 4

- RPF takes Kigali as Rwandan government forces leave

July 18

- RPF declares a unilateral cease-fire and civil war is over

Historical Review

For the first half of the twentieth century, Rwanda was ruled by European powers, first by Germany from 1897 to 1916, and then by Belgium until 1962. Given their lack of manpower and resources, the Germans allowed the Rwandans virtually to govern themselves. Seeking political stability, they accepted the existing institution, a monarchy headed by a divine king, or *mwami*.

The king's subjects were divided into three principal social groups: the Hutu, Tutsi and Twa. The Hutu, mostly poor peasants, comprised the vast majority. The more prosperous Tutsi, including the *mwami*, owned land and cattle, the traditional indicators of wealth in Rwandan society. In 1990 they made up about 14 percent of the country's population, compared to the Hutu's 85 percent. The remaining one percent were composed of the peripheral Twa, groups of nomads and hunters who lived in forested areas. Hutus and Tutsis traditionally lived and worked together, their huts juxtaposed in villages throughout the Rwandan countryside.

The differences between these two social groups were not tribal, as they both spoke the same language, practiced the same customs, and lived under the same rulers. The primary distinctions were economic, and some would say, physical. Historically, only the minority Tutsi possessed cattle; this gave them a higher societal status and, thus, a preferred access to elite government posts. Tutsis were generally recognized by colonialists as taller and more slender with thinner noses, their counterparts shorter with wider noses and thick lips. But this was far from a hard and fast rule. Intermarrying between the two groups was common.

After World War I, Germany lost its colonial foothold in Africa, and Rwanda fell under the control of Belgium. The Belgians exploited the disparities between the two principal social classes by giving the Tutsi educational and other preferences. They instituted an identity card system (which was later to become an important tool in the hands of the genocidists) whereby the "ethnic" identity of a person and his or her family became fixed and the former movement between the Hutu and Tutsi social classes was prohibited. The Belgians believed that the more "superior," more malleable Tutsi aristocrats, now easily identified, would be better able to institute European reforms. This belief led to widespread resentment by Hutus of both the Belgian colonists for creating the favoritism, and of their Tutsi neighbors for benefitting from it.

By the end of the 1950s, popular sentiment toward Belgian colonial rule, among Hutus and Tutsis alike, had changed from tacit compliance to fervid opposition. Each group sought both the establishment of an independent Rwandan nation and total control of that nation's government. Hutu and Tutsi political parties were formed. The cause for Rwandan independence was aided by increasing distaste with the Belgian rule at the United Nations. In 1962, the Republic of Rwanda was formed, and elections brought the Hutus to power (under President Gregoire Kayibanda) for the first time in Rwandan history.

As in the neighboring Congo, Belgium had prepared its colony very poorly for independence. The underlying resentment between Hutus and Tutsis heightened. The transition to republican government was anything but peaceful and cooperative. During a two-month period in the fall of 1961, vengeful violence by Hutus led to the killings of over 100 Tutsis, the burning of over 3,000 homes, and the displacement of close to 22,000 persons. A report by the UN Trusteeship Commission concluded that "an oppressive system has been replaced by another one," and ominously predicted that "it is quite possible that some day we will witness violent reactions on the part of the Tutsi."¹⁰ Indeed, the Tutsi refugees who had settled in neighboring countries such as Tanzania, Burundi, and Uganda, began to form small, roving, armed bands—pejoratively labeled *inyenzi* or "cockroaches" by the Hutus—to engage in terrorist acts against the new Hutu regime.

The first decade of the independent Rwandan state involved repeated attempts by Tutsi rebels to overthrow the Hutu government by both subversive activities and overt military operations. In response, widespread violence was inflicted upon Tutsi citizens by the Hutus in power. As a result, by the mid-1960s over 20,000 Tutsis had been slaughtered, and more than 150,000 had been forced to flee to the nation's periphery.

In 1973, during a period of economic stagnation and anti-Tutsi sentiment, Juvénal Habyarimana, the Rwandan Minister of Defense, overthrew the shaky regime of President Kayibanda. He established an authoritarian, nepotist government dominated by his Hutu political party, the Mouvement Révolutionnaire National pour le Développement (MRND). The Habyari-

¹⁰ UN Trusteeship Commission Report of March 1961, quoted in Prunier, Gerard, "The Rwanda Crisis: History of a Genocide" (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), p. 53.

mana regime systematically worked to weaken and isolate Tutsi citizens. It required all citizens to carry cards that labeled them either Hutu or Tutsi. Through discriminatory policies, and sometimes open harassment, it weeded out Tutsis from positions in the military, civil service and local governments.

By 1990, Tutsi rebels in Uganda had organized a united, military organization dedicated to re-establishing Tutsi rule in Rwanda, the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF). On multiple occasions between 1990 and 1993 the RPF launched military incursions from Uganda into Rwanda, plunging the country into civil war. With the encouragement of international organizations such as the Organization for African Unity (OAU) and the United Nations, the RPF and the Habyarimana regime officially concluded a cease-fire in 1991, though this was broken on many occasions. In August 1993, at Arusha, Tanzania, they finally reached an agreement on a power-sharing arrangement that would return multi-party rule to Rwanda. To assist in the implementation of this agreement, the United Nations Assistance Mission in Rwanda (UNAMIR) arrived in the capital of Kigali in October of 1993, under the command of Major General Romeo Dallaire. The UN peacekeeping operation was under the political control of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG), Mr. Jacques Rogers Booh-Booh, who also had a good offices mandate to mediate between parties and facilitate the peace process.

During the first few months of UNAMIR's mission, however, the peace agreement between the Hutu and Tutsi representative institutions was far from being implemented. Then on April 6, two surface-to-air missiles brought down the plane carrying the Presidents of Rwanda and Burundi as it approached the runway at Kigali airport. Almost immediately, the systematic, well-planned, and merciless killings of Tutsis and Hutu moderates in Kigali began. In addition, ten Belgian paratroopers, part of the Belgian contingent of the UN force, were disarmed and murdered by Rwandan government troops as they sought to protect the Rwandan Prime Minister, who was assassinated. In the subsequent three months, the genocide swept across the country, as hundreds of thousands of Tutsis and political dissidents were slaughtered by the Hutu-dominated militias, the *Interahamwe*, as well as the *gendarmarie* and the Presidential Guard.¹¹ News of

¹¹ The Presidential Guard was a driving force in the genocide. As the best organized, most lethal force in the country, it was used for assassinations of senior political figures, for systematic

these atrocities sent shock waves throughout the international community and the peacekeeping office at the United Nations.

Evidence suggests that a strengthened intelligence capability among the United Nations could have unveiled the detailed plans for this genocide. Furthermore, had the UN engaged in preventive diplomacy or, later, preventive deployment of troops, it may very well have been able to prevent many senseless killings that followed. Intelligence-gathering in several areas in particular could have provided clear and sufficient clues about the genocide months in advance: illicit arms flows, insider information on the genocide plots, the training and activities of the *Interahamwe*, the activities and reputations of the plotters themselves, and a long-standing pattern of ethnically-based human rights violations. Unfortunately, the UN did not analyze or synthesize these important pieces of evidence nor did it pro-actively seek further information that could have corroborated and deepened the information at hand.

A range of possible preventive measures were also ignored by the UN. Before examining in detail these early warning signals and preventive actions, it is important to see if the UN actually had the mandate, if not the means or the initiative, to gather intelligence and to act upon it for prevention.

UN Mandate for Monitoring and Prevention

The UN peace-keeping force was first envisioned in the Arusha Accords, which were signed in Arusha on 4 August 1993 after almost three years of civil war between the government of the Rwandese Republic and the rebel forces of the Rwandese Patriotic Front (RPF). The Accords were designed to bring an end to hostilities and to pave the way for a transition to democracy, with the UN force to play a major stabilizing role.¹² The Arusha Accords envisioned a series of democratic reforms, including steps towards a broad-based transitional government

herding of populations, and to clear out pockets of resistance for the weaker but much larger *Interahamwe*.

¹² With a few exceptions, the rebel forces of the RPF were composed predominantly of Tutsis from Uganda, while the Forces Armées Rwandaises (FAR), the government army, was almost entirely Hutu.

(BBTG), national elections, the integration of the armed forces of the two main combatants, and the repatriation of refugees who had fled to neighboring countries during the civil war.

In the Arusha Accords both parties pledged to promote the security of Rwanda. They promised to uphold the Ceasefire Agreement of 16 September 1991, which included the “suspension of supplies of ammunition and weaponry to the field,” as well as a “ban on infiltration of troops and on the conveyance of troops and war material to the area occupied by each party.”¹³ These prohibitions imply that *any* type of movement of arms, including shipments from abroad, would violate the Ceasefire Agreement, and thus the Accords. Thus, by August of 1993, the two official parties to the Rwandan civil war had agreed in writing to prevent the influx of arms to Rwanda.

The UN force, according to the Accords, was to “assist in the tracking of arms caches and neutralization of armed gangs throughout the country.” Moreover, the mission was to have an even larger mandate to “assist in the recovery of all weapons distributed to, or illegally acquired

¹³ The Arusha Accords and Article II of the Ceasefire Agreement between the Government of the Rwandaise Republic and the Rwandese Patriotic Front are reproduced in the United Nations “Blue Book” Series, Volume X, *The United Nations and Rwanda, 1993-1996* on page 173. The article reads:

The cease-fire shall imply:

1. The cessation of all hostilities for the purpose of dialogue and serious negotiations between the two parties under the auspices of the Mediator or a Facilitator;
2. The suspension of supplies of ammunition and weaponry to the field;
3. The supply of non-lethal logistical needs to the military forces in the field;
4. The release of all prisoners of war; the effective release of all persons arrested because and as a result of this war within five days following the entry into force of the Cease-fire Agreement;
5. The possibility of recovering the remains of the dead;
6. The withdrawal of all foreign troops after the effective deployment of the Neutral Military Observer Group (NMOG) except for Military Officers serving in Rwanda under bilateral Cooperation Agreements;
7. A ban on infiltration of troops and on the conveyance of troops and war material to the area occupied by each party;
8. A ban on any mine-laying operations or the hindering of operations to remove the mines;
9. The establishment of the Neutral Corridor separating the areas occupied by the two respective forces. This corridor meant to facilitate the monitoring of the cease-fire by the Neutral Military Observer Group shall be determined in consideration of the front-lines of both armies. The demarcation on the field shall be established by the representatives of the two armies in the presence of the Neutral Military Observer Group.

by the civilians.”¹⁴ While the actual mandate of the force would be determined later by the UN Security Council, these proposed security missions show, among other things, that the negotiators of the Arusha Accords sought a proactive, investigative force designed to prevent the flow of arms to any sources of instability.

The mandate provided by the Security Council for the peacekeeping force was less ambitious, but it still committed the UN to lessening the militant conditions in Rwanda. Resolution 872 of 5 October 1993, which formally established the peacekeeping force, gave UNAMIR a primary function to “contribute to the security of Kigali,” including by monitoring a “weapons-secure area established by the parties in and around the city.” UNAMIR troops were also instructed to “monitor observance of the cease-fire agreement” embodied in the Arusha Accords of August 1993, as well as “other demilitarization procedures.” This force was to investigate “instances of alleged non-compliance” with the provisions of the Arusha Accords related to the integration of the armed forces. These “instances” could be either observable transgressions or hints of them. UNAMIR was also mandated to “investigate and report on incidents regarding the activities of the gendarmerie and police,” ostensibly to ensure that these groups provide security and to contribute to an abating of tensions between the Rwandan government and the rebel forces of the RPF.¹⁵ The United Nations had also planned to use UNAMIR as a complement to

¹⁴ Section B of Article 54 of the Protocol of “Agreement between the Government of Rwanda and the Rwandese Patriotic Front on the Integration of the Armed Forces of the Two Parties” can be found on page 193 of *The United Nations and Rwanda, 1993-1996*. The mandate for the UN force reads:

B. Security Missions

1. Guarantee the overall security of the country and especially verify the maintenance of law and order by the competent authorities and organs.
2. Ensure the security of the distribution of humanitarian aids.
3. Assist in catering for the security of civilians.
4. Assist in the tracking of arms caches and neutralization of armed gangs throughout the country.
5. Undertake mine clearance operations.
6. Assist in the recovery of all weapons distributed to, or illegally acquired by the civilians.
7. Monitor the observance by the two parties of modalities for the definite cessation of hostilities, provided for in the Peace Agreement.

¹⁵ A copy of this resolution is available through the United Nations, Department of Public Information, *The United Nations and the Situation in Rwanda* DPI/1484/Rev.1 April 1995, p. 43, or from the UN’s web site at: www.un.org. The quotations used are extracted from the following

the already existing peacekeeping operation, UNOMUR,¹⁶ which had been mandated to gather information about potential transgressions, chiefly the illicit flow of firearms through the border with Uganda, that might disrupt the peace process. This resolution demonstrates that in the months prior to the genocide, during which the secret preparations were taking place, the United Nations had possessed the mandate to investigate non-compliance with the accords and to promote the security of Rwanda.

Even more broadly, under Article 1 of its Charter, the UN has a responsibility “to maintain international peace and security, and to that end: to take effective collective measures for the prevention and removal of threats to the peace and for the suppression of acts of aggression or

portion of the text of Resolution 872:

3. Decides that, drawing from the Secretary-General’s recommendations, UNAMIR shall have the following mandate:

- (a) To contribute to the security of the city of Kigali *inter alia* within a weapons-secure area established by the parties in and around the city;
- (b) To monitor observance of the cease-fire agreement, which calls for the establishment of cantonment and assemble zones and the demarcation of the new demilitarized zone and other demilitarization procedures;
- (c) To monitor the security situation during the final period of the transitional government’s mandate, leading up to the elections;
- (d) To assist with mine clearance, primarily through training programmes;
- (e) To investigate at the request of the parties or on its own initiative instances of alleged non-compliance with the provision of the Arusha Peace Agreement relating to the integration of the armed forces, and pursue any such instances with the parties responsible and report thereon as appropriate to the Secretary-General;
- (f) To monitor the process of repatriation of Rwandese refugees and resettlement of displaced persons to verify that it is carried out in a safe and orderly manner;
- (g) To assist in the coordination of humanitarian assistance activities in conjunction with relief operations;
- (h) To investigate and report on incidents regarding the activities of the gendarmerie and police.

¹⁶ Four months earlier, the Security Council passed Resolution 846, which established the United Nations Observer Mission Uganda-Rwanda (UNOMUR), a contingent designed to verify that “no military assistance reaches Rwanda,” including the “transport, by roads or tracks which could accommodate vehicles, of lethal weapons and ammunition across the border, as well as any other material which could be of military use.” UNOMUR, in other words, was designed to monitor not only an arms embargo on Rwanda through the Ugandan corridor, but also to prevent the flow of any type of “assistance,” be it supplies or training, ten months before the genocide began.

other breaches of the peace.”¹⁷ According to Article 99 of the Charter, the Secretary General possesses the power to bring potential threats to the peace directly before the Security Council.¹⁸ In this way the Secretary-General can use his discretion to shine a spotlight on any matter that he feels may endanger the mission of the UN.

Furthermore, in the matter of the serious international crime of genocide, the international community has a legal as well as moral obligation to intervene. Article I of the 1948 “Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide” requires that the 128 states parties (including all five Permanent Members of the UN Security Council) consider genocide a crime “which they undertake to prevent and punish.”¹⁹ This includes “conspiracy to commit genocide,” “attempt to commit genocide,” and “direct and public incitement to commit genocide” (Article III). Thus, planning for, or the spreading propaganda for genocide are criminal acts, as the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda was later to uphold.²⁰ Article VIII of the Genocide Convention allows parties to summon the UN to take action for the “prevention and suppression of acts of genocide.” In other words, any state party could present a charge of genocide

¹⁷ These quotations are taken from the United Nations, Department of Public Information, *Charter of the United Nations and Statute of the International Court of Justice*. Chapter I, Article 1, Section 1 reads: “The Purposes of the United Nations are: 1. To maintain international peace and security, and to that end: to take effective collective measures for the prevention and removal of threats to the peace, and for the suppression of acts of aggression or other breaches of the peace, and to bring about by peaceful means, and in conformity with the principles of justice and international law, adjustment or settlement of international disputes or situations which might lead to a breach of the peace. . . .”

¹⁸ Article 99, found in Chapter XV of the Charter, reads: “The Secretary-General may bring to the attention of the Security Council any matter which in his opinion may threaten the maintenance of international peace and security.”

¹⁹ The Genocide Convention was approved and proposed for signature and ratification or accession by General Assembly resolution 260 A (III) of 9 December 1948. It entered into force on 12 January 1951. In addition to the 128 states parties, there are 42 signatories who have not ratified. The United States signed in 1948 but did not ratify until 1988. Rwanda acceded to the Convention in 1975. The text of the Convention and list of ratifications can be found in United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol. 78, p. 277.

²⁰ McKinley, J.C. Jr., “Ex-Rwandan Premier Gets Life in Prison On Charges of Genocide in ’94 Massacres,” *New York Times*, 5 September 1998.

before the UN, and call upon the body to take action. In addition, parties to the Genocide Convention are obliged to “enact, in accordance with their respective Constitutions, the necessary legislation to give effect to the provisions of the present Convention.”²¹ Thus, parties to the Convention must make their obligation “to prevent and to punish” genocide part of their national law. In summary, a firmly established treaty gave both the UN and individual countries a responsibility to prevent the destruction of one ethnic or religious group, in whole or in part, by another.

Thus the UN had a mandate for proactive investigations and some authority and means for intervention. We can now examine the indicators and evidence that could, at least in hindsight, have been used to predict the genocide and the means that might have been used to prevent it. A summary list of the early warning signals is given in Table 2.

Table 2

The Early Warning Signals Known to the UN

CInformer (“Jean-Pierre”) reports of concrete plans for genocide—January 1994
 CRwandan military officers send Dallaire a note on coming massacres—December 1993
 CPast massacres and assassinations (e.g., human rights reports)—January 1993, etc.
 CPublic media (RTL) racist propaganda—1993-94

²¹ Text of the Genocide Convention can be found in Nehemiah Robinson, *The Genocide Convention: A Commentary* (New York: Institute of Jewish Affairs, 1960), pp. 146-52.

Article I: The Contracting Parties confirm that genocide, whether committed in time of peace or in time of war, is a crime under international law which they undertake to prevent and to punish.

Article III: The following acts shall be punishable:

- (a) Genocide;
- (b) Conspiracy to commit genocide;
- (c) Direct and public incitement to commit genocide;
- (d) Attempt to commit genocide;
- (e) Complicity in genocide.

Article V: The Contracting Parties undertake to enact, in accordance with their respective Constitutions, the necessary legislation to give effect to the provisions of the present Convention and, in particular, to provide effective penalties for persons guilty of genocide or of any of the other acts enumerated in article III.

Article VIII: Any Contracting Party may call upon the competent organs of the United Nations to take such action under the Charter of the United Nations as they consider appropriate for the prevention and suppression of acts of genocide or any of the other acts enumerated in article III.

- C Political maneuver by extremists to unsettle the peace process—1993-94
- C Weapons stockpiling in violation of the peace accords—continuous
- C Militia training and complicity in massacres—since 1992

EARLY WARNING SIGNALS

Illicit Arms

The country is flooded with weapons. Two beers will get you one grenade.
— A Western Diplomat in Kigali²²

The UN peacekeeping force had a strong mandate to monitor illegal arms, but there was a major deficiency in its investigative capability. We begin by focusing on the key weapons that triggered the genocide: the Soviet missiles that brought down the Rwandan President's plane.

The French newspaper, *Le Figaro*, has alleged that the serial numbers of the two surface-to-air missiles which struck the plane match those of missiles seized from Iraq by French troops during the Gulf War of 1991. The reporter, Patrick de Saint-Exupery, cited testimony from two anonymous officers of the French military, who claimed that the SAM-16 missiles, after being confiscated from Iraqi stockpiles, were sold to Rwandan government forces between November 1993 and February 1994 as part of a covert French policy labeled "le secret défense."²³ These missiles, smuggled into Rwanda from abroad, were just a small part of a massive weapons influx that violated the Ceasefire Agreement and created tremendous insecurity. Bernard Debré, the French Minister of Development at the time of the crash, repudiated the substance of the *Le Figaro* story and, in turn, accused the American State Department of supplying the missiles. Debré claimed that the two missiles were seized by American, not French, forces in the Gulf, and soon

²² "Arming Rwanda: The Arms Trade and Human Rights Abuses in the Rwandan War," *Human Rights Watch Arms Project* 6, 1 (January 1994), p. 37.

²³ Saint-Exupery, Patrick de, "La France et le Rwanda: nouvelles revelations," *Le Figaro* 31 (March 1998): 1.

after sold to the neighboring country of Uganda.²⁴ Yet he produced no concrete proof that would shift responsibility for the missiles away from the French government. And further evidence shows that the missile affair fits a broader pattern of acts of French favoritism to the Rwandan government.

France was a principal source of arms for the Rwanda government under a policy of staunch support for the Hutu regime of Juvénal Habyarimana, the Rwandan president. According to the Human Rights Watch Arms Project, France, while regularly proclaiming to the international community its neutrality in the Rwandan conflict, supplied machine guns, artillery, armored vehicles, and six Gazelle helicopters to the Forces Armées Rwandaises (FAR), the Rwandan army, after the outbreak of fighting in 1990.²⁵ In fact, French military officials often encountered difficulty obtaining approval of the Interministerial Committee for War Material Exports for arms transfers to Rwanda because the volume of equipment was so great.²⁶ Even high-ranking Rwandan government officials admitted to having received abundant French support. For example, the Rwandan Minister of Defense in June of 1993, James Gasana, confirmed that a French bank, Crédit Lyonnais, had guaranteed a \$6 million arms deal between the Rwandan government and the government of Egypt involving the transfer of heavy artillery, mortars, and Kalashnikov (AK-47) automatic rifles. In order to help finance the deal, the Rwandan government was forced to put up much of its tea harvest for collateral.²⁷ The magnitude of the deal suggests both that elements of the Habyarimana's regime had no interest in abiding by the Ceasefire Agreement, and that the French government had made a clear policy preference of unconditional military support to one party during a time when disarmament and impartiality were crucial to ensuring peace.

²⁴ Philip Shenon, "Fateful Crash in Africa: Link to U.S. is Denied," *New York Times* (7 April 1998): A15.

²⁵ According to the "Arming Rwanda" report, France, Egypt, and South Africa were the principal sources of major arms shipments to the Rwandan army during this period.

²⁶ Gerard Prunier, *The Rwanda Crisis: History of a Genocide* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), p. 148-49.

²⁷ "Arming Rwanda," p. 14.

In the period leading up to Arusha, the Habyarimana regime played a direct role in the arming of civilians, justified as against an invasion of outsiders (Ugandan Tutsis). Its goal, according to a secret government document obtained by the Human Rights Watch Arms Project, was to distribute nearly 2,000 assault rifles to civilians loyal to the President's political party (the Mouvement Révolutionnaire National pour le Développement or MRND) under the guise of a "self-defense" force. While this civilian force had not yet engaged in human rights abuses to the extent of the *Interahamwe*, the report cautions that "it is frightening to ponder the potential for abuses by large numbers of ill-trained civilians equipped with assault rifles."²⁸ There was no slowdown in the import of military hardware to Rwanda; rather, high-ranking Rwandan officials were arming their citizens and militia, and trading tea for weapons. After Arusha, no weapons were supposed to come into the country, but that was also systematically flouted.

Arms had become plentiful in Rwanda; grenades were sold alongside mangos and avocados on fruit stands at markets around Kigali.²⁹ UNAMIR officials were aware of, but could not cope with or monitor, the extent of illicit arms transfers. They were unsuccessful, moreover, in obtaining the necessary approval to conduct searches, raids, or to confiscate weapons from civilians and militia members. UNAMIR communications in the months before April 6 show that UNAMIR officers were aware that prodigious amounts of arms and ammunition were flowing into Rwanda and were concerned about the danger it presented, but they were denied permission by UN headquarters in New York to take offensive action to confiscate weapons.

Ominous signs appeared of a motive for the stockpiling and distribution of these instruments of death. A Belgian UNAMIR lieutenant sensed they were to be used for an impending catastrophe, as he was later to recall:

We also realized something big was being prepared, but we didn't know exactly what. But we learned quickly through informants that arms were hidden in the area and distributed in anticipation of the massacres.³⁰

²⁸ "Arming Rwanda," p. 27.

²⁹ Prunier, p. 184.

³⁰ Quotation taken from the video "Chronicle of a Genocide Foretold," directed by Daniele Lacourse and Yvan Patry, and produced by Sam Grana and Yvan Patry.

The UNAMIR mandate to help establish and monitor a “weapons secure area” around Kigali was being challenged. Under the mandate, it was agreed that weapons, except personal arms, could be transported only under escort by UN military observers. But machine guns and some heavy weaponry were readily seen. At the end of January 1994, SRSG Booh-Booh griped to the press that “weapons are distributed from arms caches around Kigali and even inside town.”³¹

An informer named “Jean Pierre” declared that there were four major arms caches. He even took an African UN peacekeeper to one of them: the headquarters of the MRND. There, in the building, he showed the astonished Senegalese soldier a large stockpile of weapons, mostly AK-47s, ammunition, and grenades. (The Senegalese peacekeeper, who posed as a friendly African officer, was obviously not wearing a UN uniform, to permit passage through the sentry post at the entrance of the building.)

UNAMIR officials also directly observed French involvement in weapons transfers. Under the direction of Belgian Colonel Luc Marchal, sector commander for Kigali, UNAMIR troops even confiscated a shipment of arms from France at the Kigali airport on January 22,³² and also observed another shipment on April 9, three days *after* the commencement of the genocide. In short, violations of the Arusha Ceasefire Agreement were plentiful, highly visible, and fostered by non-Rwandan players.

To high-ranking UNAMIR officers, direct observation of the proliferation of these arms demanded rapid, preemptive action. Force Commander Romeo Dallaire had, in the first few days of January 1994, “implemented the first offensive ops [operations] planning against armed political militias and suspicious area.” The peacekeeping force was to be “focused on ensuring the

³¹ Howard Adelman, “The International Response to Conflict and Genocide: Lessons from the Rwanda Experience. Study Two, Early Warning and Conflict Management,” *Joint Evaluation of Emergency Assistance to Rwanda*, March 1996, pp. 38-39.

³² A UN military observer stationed at the Kigali airport noticed that an unscheduled flight was arriving. The pilot could present no manifest so Belgian peacekeepers surrounded the plane, and found a cargo of illegal arms and munitions, which was confiscated. Documents found in the plane gave evidence of many evasive maneuvers taken by the French and Belgian suppliers, including false end-users and circuitous routes.

Kigali weapons secure area and gathering of information regarding armed political militias and suspicious area in order to prevent escalation of tensions.”³³

UNAMIR officials believed that information-gathering on weapons distribution was vital to their mission and had planned to take offensive action. All that was needed was the physical/logistical capability and the approval from New York to carry out such operations. Since UNAMIR was considered a defensive mission, it lacked sufficient equipment, particularly armored personnel carriers, to undertake offensive, “search and seize” type operations. Even so Dallaire asked for permission to begin raids on the known arms caches. As well, UNAMIR commanders called on their superiors at UN headquarters to grant and arrange for future shipments of the necessary equipment. But neither new equipment nor the authorization to conduct searches and seizures with the capability at hand were granted.

Conscientious Informers

Late in the day of January 10 I had a visit from someone who asked to be called ‘Jean-Pierre.’ He was a leader of the MRND militia, the famous Interahamwe . . . He explained he was struggling with his conscience. He was in the process of systematically arming all cells of the capital. He’d received orders several days earlier to identify every Tutsi in each cell, and when word came, to assassinate all of them point blank. From what he told me, they were capable of killing about 1,000 Tutsi every twenty minutes, so this was an extensive organization, and that was our undoing.

— Colonel Luc Marchal, Commander of Kigali sector for UNAMIR³⁴

The most startling and explicit early warning came from human sources. High-ranking UN officials in Kigali and New York were informed in clear language and with convincing evidence of a sinister plot to sabotage the peace process and carry out genocide.

The key personality was a former security aide to President Habyarimana who was responsible for training the *Interahamwe*. Referring to himself as “Jean-Pierre,” the informer had

³³ Communication from SRSB Booh-Booh, weekly sitrep 27 December-03 January 1994, 4 January 1994.

³⁴ “Chronicle of a Genocide Foretold,” video series (3 tapes), written and directed by Danièle Lacourse and Yvan Patry, produced by Sam Grana and Yvan Patry, Alter-Ciné (Montreal) and the National Film Board of Canada (Ottawa), 1995/96.

several meetings with Dallaire and Marchal in which he disclosed a macabre plot to which, he claimed, he could not, in clear conscience, be a party. Jean-Pierre asserted that, since the arrival of the UNAMIR force, the goals of the *Interahamwe* had changed. While originally the militia served as a national force aimed to help protect the country from RPF attacks, it was evolving into a partisan strong-arm designed to wreak violence against the Tutsis. As a leader within the *Interahamwe*, Jean-Pierre had been ordered to compile lists of Tutsis in Kigali which he thought were to be used “for their extermination.” The informant said that while he supported the actions against the RPF, he could not “support the killing of innocent persons.”

The organizers of the plan, whom Jean-Pierre said included leaders of the extreme factions of Habyarimana’s political party, the MRND, sought to block the establishment of the new government, and to force UNAMIR to withdraw from Rwanda by engineering more violence. For example, Jean-Pierre had himself played a role in efforts to prevent the installation of the new members of the BBTG. In one operation planned for early January, the Rwandan opposition “deputies were to be assassinated upon entry or exit from Parliament,” and RPF forces were to be confronted in order to “provoke a civil war.” As it turns out, demonstrations by an organized mob in front of parliament were sufficient to hold up the swearing in ceremonies. The plot was not hatched on schedule, but the preparations continued.

The informant asserted that if, during the swearing-in ceremony, the “Belgian soldiers resorted to force [to prevent the assassinations] a number of them were to be killed and thus guarantee Belgian withdrawal from Rwanda.”³⁵ In addition, the informer pointed out exact locations of *Interahamwe* weapons caches in and around Kigali that were to be used in the subsequent slaughter of Tutsis. According to Marchal, “a UN officer accompanied him to MRND headquarters. In the building there was indeed a stockpile of arms and ammunition,” providing further irrefutable evidence to UN officials that arms were being improperly stored for distribution by the government.

It quickly became clear to Dallaire and Marchal that immediate action needed to be taken, as Jean-Pierre’s assertions backed up their own observations. Faxes were sent to New York around the time of their meetings with Jean-Pierre giving clear evidence of the informant’s

³⁵ Gourevitch, pp. 42-43.

credibility. As mentioned, Jean-Pierre had explained that deputies of the BBTG had been targeted on their way to and from the parliament. Confirming this, the outgoing code cable from SRSG Jacques-Roger Booh-Booh of 11 January 1994 mentions the establishment of road blocks by the Presidential Guard and the *Interahamwe* around Kigali, and that “their aim was to prevent the deputies from getting to the parliament and to prevent essential meetings at Prime Minister level and senior political levels in order to solve the impasse between the parties.” In the process, “civilian drivers were beaten.” The cable also mentions that hundreds of armed protestors loyal to the MRND “blocked the entrance to the parliament and harassed deputies,” a description of events which corroborates the informant’s story. In addition, UN officials had verified the existence of the weapons caches first-hand.

Also on January 11, Force Commander Dallaire sent an urgent fax to New York, addressed to Major General Maurice Baril, the UN Secretary-General’s military advisor, describing the informant’s revelations that there was a plan to “exterminate” the Tutsis, brutally sabotage the peace process, remove the Belgian peacekeeping contingent, and provoke a civil war through forceful confrontation (see Appendix). Within the “genocide” fax, as it has come to be called, Dallaire outlined his plan to raid arms caches promptly to prevent the contents from being used in the plots. “It is our intention to take action within the next 36 hours,” Dallaire wrote. “Recce [reconnaissance] of armed cache and detailed planning of raid to go on late tomorrow.”

Dallaire noted that Jean-Pierre would be willing to offer further information, specifically the locations of more weapons and ammunition, in exchange for a UN pledge to provide protection and asylum. “He was ready to go to the arms cache tonight,” Dallaire stated in the fax, “if we gave him the following guarantee. He requests that he and his family be placed under our protection.” Dallaire went on to urge his superiors in New York to grant Jean-Pierre’s request, but indicated that he had little background on UN policy in this area. “It is recommended the informant be granted protection and evacuated out of Rwanda,” wrote the Force Commander. “This HQ does not have previous UN experience in such matters and urgently requests guidance.”

No doubt the plots represented a major threat to the goals of the UN mission as well as to the lives of the peacekeepers themselves. The presence of secret weapons caches undermined the security of Kigali and were a violation of the Ceasefire Agreement upheld in the Arusha

Accords. Moreover, plots to provoke civil war would mean the failure of all efforts to bring peace to the war-torn country. They should have sounded alarm bells in the mind of peacekeeping officials in New York. But action was not forthcoming; guarantees for the informer were not given. Over the next few months, the ominous revelations were forgotten in the hustle and bustle of regular diplomatic and peacekeeping activity. Besides, other issues were pressing on the UN and troubling its leadership.³⁶

The informant's revelations called for a bold UNAMIR response beginning in January. As was mentioned earlier, Dallaire was ready to take preemptive measures, which he described in detail in his fax, but he was denied permission from his superiors in New York to raid the weapons caches. He was told instead to divulge the plan to the government head, President Habyarimana, whose inner circle included members of the *Akazu* (or "little house") who were developing the genocide plot.³⁷ By denying permission to provide guarantees for Jean-Pierre, by failing to act to gain more information on a continuing basis, and by vetoing proactive preventive actions, New York blundered. Perhaps in the hope that others could take initiatives where the UN did not, Dallaire was also told to inform the ambassadors of the United States, Belgium and France, which he dutifully did. Jean-Pierre broke off contact, not being willing to risk his life and the lives of his family members.

³⁶ On 11 January 1994, for example, Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali was in Paris demanding the resignation of the French Commander of the UN Force in the former Yugoslavia (UNPROFOR), who had made vociferous public complaining about the lack of resources given to him to the force to carry out its job.

³⁷ Gourevitch, on page 43, quotes from a fax from UN headquarters responding to Dallaire's expressed intent to raid the weapons caches. He writes that "New York advised Dallaire, 'You should assume that he'—Habyarimana (President of Rwanda)—'is not aware of these activities, but insist that he must immediately look into the situation'."

Nefarious Plotters

I am planning for the apocalypse.

— Theoneste Bagosora, January 1993

Plans for the genocide had been “in the works” for some time. In early 1993, when a friend asked Col. Theoneste Bagosora, a key plotter, what kind of work he was doing, he replied with the above quote. But this sinister and detailed planning needed to be done carefully, incrementally and, above all, secretly.

Still, rumors about it were in circulation. For instance, the possible existence of “Network Zero,” a group of extremists who planned Tutsi massacres, was noted in the report of a UN Special Rapporteur in 1993. Even earlier, in October 1992, Belgian Professor Filip Reyntjens had described the notorious group as composed of Coalition pour la Defense de la République (CDR) and *Akazu* leaders, and extremist military and *Interahamwe* units dedicated to promoting their ideal of “Hutu power.” The “Zero Network” was likened to a Latin American death squad, able to roam the country slaughtering Tutsis with no censure from the government. Indeed, it must have had the tacit approval of President Habyarimana, who was negotiating, under considerable international pressure, to obtain the most favorable terms against the Tutsi rebels.³⁸

The names of the organizations and many persons responsible for the genocide are now well established. The International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR) has indicted many of the leaders. NGO groups, such as Africa Watch, have provided detailed accounts based on interviews conducted after the genocide with a wide range of Rwandans. It is more important, however, to discover if the sinister organizations and individuals were identified *prior* to the genocide. The Human Rights Watch Arms Project did produce a report in January 1994 that described an inner circle of nefarious figures around the President, but it couldn’t confirm the existence of the group.

“[A] persuasive number of non-French Western diplomats, Rwandan military officers, and civilians with a long standing personal relationship with Rwandan President Habyarimana told the Arms Project that they suspect members of the regime, and in particular the first circle or so-called ‘little house’ around the President . . . to be responsible for these terrorist attacks. These people told the

³⁸ Prunier, p. 168.

Arms Project that powerful elements in the *Akazu*, who have largely ruled Rwanda since 1973, opposed both the negotiations to end the war and the opening to opposition political parties. Nonetheless, there is no proof at this time.”³⁹

An inner circle of political figures close to President Habyarimana, the *Akazu*, served as the backbone for planning the massacres. The leaders of this group consisted of the President’s wife and extremist military officials, including Habyarimana’s brother-in-law, Col. Eli Sagatwa, and Col. Léon Mugesera. This clique opposed any compromise with the RPF and the opposition parties, both of which were to be included in the envisioned broad-based transitional government under the Arusha Accords. The *Akazu* also served as a propaganda engine for extremist elements of the MRND and the CDR, a radical party seeking a “final solution” to the ethnic conflict between Tutsis and Hutus, and later one of the main organizers of the genocide.

Force Commander Romeo Dallaire later called Col. Théoneste Bagosora the “king-pin” in the genocide plot. But Dallaire did not know this when the crisis erupted, to great detriment. Within hours after the plane crash and the death of the President, he sought and received Bagosora’s assurance that the Rwandan army troops would stay calm. Little did Dallaire know that Bagosora’s troops had been sent to assassinate the Prime Minister, Agathe Uwilingiyimana, kill the Belgian troops protecting her, and murder the leaders of opposition parties, the President of the Supreme Court, and many human rights activists.

Vile Propaganda

The only remedy is total extermination, to kill them all, totally wipe them out.
— Hutu extremist radio (RTLM) broadcast before the genocide⁴⁰

Throughout the Arusha period, extremist elements within the Rwandan government, including the plotters of the genocide, attempted to whip up public anger, hate, and vengeance against the Tutsis. Inflammatory speeches and chants were broadcast throughout the country by Radio-Télévision Libre des Mille Collines (RTLM) created precisely for that purpose. The

³⁹ “Arming Rwanda,” p. 29.

⁴⁰ “Chronicle of a Genocide Foretold,” video series (3 tapes), produced by Sam Grana and Yvan Patry, National Film Board of Canada, Ottawa.

peacekeeping force monitored several of these radio broadcasts.⁴¹ But it was hard to take them as serious, authoritative, or credible, because they were so extreme. They fully demonized the Tutsis in an incredible and unrealistic fashion, for instance by likening them to cockroaches (*inyenzi*) that needed to be exterminated.⁴² Belgians were also targets of propaganda. Unfortunately, UNAMIR and the UN did not analyze these broadcasts to determine what the specific threats and consequences could be, e.g., who might be the next targets for assassination or massacre.

The seriousness of this hate propaganda became all too evident to UNAMIR in the early stages of the genocide, when the radio station advocated the death of Belgian peacekeepers, who were accused as perpetrators of the assassination of the President:

These Belgian bandits have committed many atrocities that merit punishment. We Rwandans will never forget that these bandits killed the President we loved. The red-skinned Belgians have behaved like beasts. They should pay for their acts.⁴³

It is relevant to recall that these allegations were consistent with the sinister plan revealed some three months earlier by the informer Jean-Pierre. He had accurately foretold that Belgian paratroops would be targeted and killed to “ensure their withdrawal.” The Belgian government unilaterally withdrew its contingent from UNAMIR within ten days of the start of the genocide.

As the genocide developed, the extremists used the airwaves to justify their actions and to assign blame on the Tutsis for the nation’s shortcomings. Outrageously cruel and inhuman broadcasts filled the airwaves. Macabre lines were set to popular tunes. These chilling words, set to a charming melody, were sung on the air:

⁴¹ “UNAMIR took note on several occasions inflammatory broadcasts by Radio Mille Collines,” Report of the Secretary-General on the Situation in Rwanda, S/1994/640 of 31 May 1994 (para. 11). Included in *The UN and Rwanda*, p. 292.

⁴² “The cockroaches’ [Tutsi] cruelty is irreversible. The only remedy is total extermination, to kill them all, totally wipe them out.” RTLM broadcast replayed in part in “Chronicle of a Genocide Foretold,” part 2.

⁴³ RTLM broadcast replayed in part in “Chronicle of a Genocide Foretold,” part 2.

Where are those Tutsi who used to phone me? Ah, they must have all been exterminated. Let us sing: The Tutsi have been killed. God is always just! The criminals will be exterminated!⁴⁴

Public rallies were another means of spreading propaganda, inciting violence, and preparing the Hutu majority to condone, if not commit, the atrocities that were to occur. Venomous speeches by members of Network Zero immediately preceded several massacres of Tutsi civilians. For example, in November of 1992, the MRND-leader Dr. Léon Mugesera viciously urged a crowd to take up arms against their Tutsi neighbors. “Their home is Ethiopia,” Mugesera declared. “Let’s find them a shortcut to get back there. That’s the Nyabarongo River.” The very next day, small-scale massacres of Tutsis were reported in the Kibya region of Rwanda, and bodies were dumped in the river.⁴⁵

On April 7, 1994, the Prime Minister of the Interim Government, Jean Kambanda, rallied Hutus while holding a gun aloft: “The enemy uses his gun, you must fire back! Go behind the front line, find their accomplices. Shoot to kill! Everyone must have his own gun, don’t be afraid to use it.” Fortunately, this speech was videotaped and later used against Mr. Kambanda in his trial before the International Tribunal. (He was sentenced to life in prison on 4 September 1998 after having pleaded guilty to genocide charges.⁴⁶)

Macabre Militia

All parties in Rwanda and all over the world have young people as members. That is what we have. But we do not have militias.

— Matthieu Ndirumpatse, chairman of the MRND, 27 April 1994⁴⁷

⁴⁴ RTLM broadcast replayed in part in “Chronicle of a Genocide Foretold,” part 2.

⁴⁵ Quotation extracted from the video “Hand of God, Hand of the Devil,” directed by Yvan Patry, produced by Sam Grana and Yvan Patry, Montreal, 1996.

⁴⁶ “Ex-Rwandan Premier Gets Life in Prison On Charges of Genocide in ’94 Massacres,” *New York Times*, Saturday 5 September 1998.

⁴⁷ “Rwanda: Death, Despair and Defiance,” *African Rights*, London, August 1995, p. 62. Ndirumpatse boldly disputes the belief among Rwandans, including members of his own party, that the militia serve as a “youth wing” of the MRND after the commencement of the genocide: “It is propaganda to say that the Interahamwe are militias of the MRND. We do not have groups

We know that they [MRND] gave them weapons and trained them militarily up to one thousand and seven hundred . . . We have the army, we have the police force to protect the country, what are the others for?

— Parti Social Démocrate (PSD) spokesman Felicien Gatabazi⁴⁸

The Interahamwe are well trained military killers.

— article in the Rwandan press, 17 March 1992⁴⁹

The origins of the militia in Rwanda date back to the period following the signing of the initial Ceasefire Agreement between the Rwandan Armed Forces (Forces Armées Rwandaises or FAR) and the RPF at N'Sele on 29 March 1991. Given the invasions by RPF forces, the Habyarimana regime wanted to use civilians to boost the defense of Rwanda.⁵⁰ It sought to strengthen defense forces without violating the spirit of demobilisation and disarmament embodied in the Ceasefire Agreement. By arming civilians, the regime believed it could accomplish these goals. This defensive concept of the militia in Rwanda is confirmed by the informant, Jean-Pierre, who tells Dallaire in the fax of January 11, 1994 that the main objective of the militia “*in the past* was to protect Kigali from the RPF” [emphasis added]. One meaning of the word *Interahamwe* is “those who have the same goal” (or “those who fight together”), and the *Interahamwe*, on the surface, appeared to be a patriotic organization dedicated to helping repel RPF advances. Yet the motives of its suppliers and its leaders, and the way in which the *Interahamwe* was trained, demonstrate that, at its roots, the organization was more of an engine for killing civilians that would eventually carry out most of the genocide.

of youth registered as such. We don't have any such registration with the Ministry of the Interior of the Ministry of Justice. We could not because the law controlling [the establishment of] political parties prohibits the organization of militias. All parties in Rwanda and all over the world have young people as members. That is what we have. But we do not have militias.”

⁴⁸ Quotation extracted from a speech made by Gatabazi shortly before his murder in 1994, taken from “Rwanda: Death, Despair and Defiance,” p. 57.

⁴⁹ “Interahamwe, the source of Hutu refugees,” *Umuranga Mubangutsi* 9, 17 March 1992, extracted from “Rwanda: Death, Despair and Defiance,” *African Rights*, London, August 1995: 55.

⁵⁰ “Rwanda: Death, Despair and Defiance,” *African Rights*, p. 54. The author quotes a portion of a broadcast from Radio Rwanda, extracted from BBC, *Summary of World Broadcasts*, ME/1060 B/4, 1 May 1991, announcing that “the government is also studying how to involve all the able people into defence, especially those living along the border.”

Several frightening characteristics of the *Interahamwe* should have sounded alarm bells in the minds of UNAMIR officials in Kigali and New York. For example, extremist individuals played a role not only in supplying the *Interahamwe* with arms, but also training its members in combat tactics. Extremist government officials within the CDR and the ruling party, the MRND, were also instrumental in providing support to the *Interahamwe*. During the Arusha period, these groups exploited foreign resources to indoctrinate militia members. For example, the Rwandan College was a sectarian institution for Rwandan youths established and assisted by the government of Canada since the 1960s. Soon after the emergence of the *Interahamwe* the head of the college, Father François Cardinal, complained that Canadian funds were being diverted from the school and used by high-ranking government officials, probably to equip the militia. Cardinal accused Colonel Léon Mugesera, a member of the *Akazu*, of being responsible for this act of corruption. Henceforth Canada withdrew aid for the College.⁵¹ It became increasingly apparent that Habyarimana's public explanation for the foundation of the militia was not accurate; the *Interahamwe* acted less like a national security force and more like an instrument of the ruling party.

As arms poured into Rwanda and tensions escalated during the post civil-war period, it became clear to members of the local media that the *Interahamwe* was not merely a "youth movement," as Habyarimana had once labeled it. In March of 1992 an article in the Rwanda press portrayed the *Interahamwe* as "military killers." Leaders of the *Interahamwe* trained their subordinates not to defend territory, but rather "in commando tactics such as the use of knives, machetes, rope trapping and binding of victims and silent guns so as to kill people." The article pointed out that the militia had become more ideological and apocalyptic in its doctrine. Members were trained to believe not only that the RPF was the enemy, but that rival political parties "will jointly kill members of the MRND."⁵² Moderate government officials were aware that the training of the *Interahamwe* could lead to more killing. The Minister of Finance at the time, Marc Rugenera, stated after the genocide that "the military training given to the militias of

⁵¹ "Hand of God, Hand of the Devil." Father Cardinal was expelled, soon after registering his complaint, from the Rwandan College by Eli Sagatwa. He was later assassinated.

⁵² "Interahamwe, the source of Hutu refugees," *Umuranga Mubangutsi*, 17 March 1992, p. 9.

MRND and CDR is part of the evidence that the killings were planned and prepared long in advance.”⁵³

Some elements of the Rwandan media held that the newly trained and equipped militia were responsible for civilian massacres, and even predicted, months before the commencement of the genocide, that massive killings would take place. On December 17, 1993 the journal *Le Flambeau* mentioned that plotters within the MRND and CDR were seeking a “final solution” comparable to that of Hitler. It stated that “political adversaries and defenseless populations” would be targeted and slaughtered. The journal also announced that “about 8,000 *Interahamwe* sufficiently trained and equipped by the French army await the signal to begin the assassinations among the residents of the city of Kigali and its surroundings.”⁵⁴ Such an ominous prediction, however, passed without a response from UNAMIR.

UNAMIR possessed neither sufficient mandate nor personnel to monitor the training of the Rwandan militia. UNAMIR officials came to understand from informants and arms monitoring—not through direct observation or oversight of the training of its members—that the militia posed a danger to the peace process. For example, Dallaire’s fax of 11 January 1994 states that the informant did mention the existence of 1,700 *Interahamwe* members trained in “discipline, weapons, explosives, close combat and tactics.” Yet even the fax failed to take into account the extremist, apocalyptic rhetoric and tactics of slaughter included in their training program. Similarly, while patrolling UNAMIR units did observe movements of arms in the country by the *Interahamwe*, they did not directly observe the training or uncover the doctrine at the militia camps.

UNAMIR did possess a mandate to “investigate and report on incidents regarding the activities of the gendarmerie and police.”⁵⁵ The gendarmerie included “communal policemen” of the countryside who, according to African Rights, “were among the very worst killers.” While the gendarmerie is a separate organization from the *Interahamwe*, African Rights reported that

⁵³ “Rwanda: Death, Despair and Defiance,” p. 56.

⁵⁴ “The Fatal Day,” communiqué No. 005, *Journal Le Flambeau*, 17 December, 1993. Quoted in “Rwanda: Death, Despair and Defiance.”

⁵⁵ See the text of Security Council Resolution 872 above.

“the *Interahamwe* would not have had the force they did if it were not for the weapons and physical support they obtained from the communal policemen.”⁵⁶ To carry out its mandate to monitor the gendarmerie and police, UNAMIR established a civilian police contingent (CIVPOL) of sixty personnel in December of 1993. This unit sought to monitor, among other areas, the training school for the gendarmerie. While CIVPOL reported 54 instances of “serious crimes, complaints and allegations of human rights violations” as of the end of March 1994, it made no claim that the gendarmerie and police were in any way complicit in planning the massacres of Tutsis or moderate Hutus. Later, the two organizations were to become an integral part of the killing machine. Nevertheless, the progress report of CIVPOL of March 30, 1994, did determine that the “security situation in Rwanda and, especially in Kigali, has seriously deteriorated” and pointed to “the availability of weapons” and “ethnic and politically motivated crimes” as principal causes.⁵⁷

While the training methods of the *Interahamwe* alone could have served as a warning signal to peacekeepers, the history of atrocities committed by the militant organization provided even more concrete evidence of wrong-doing and a portent of things to come. Parts of this militia collaborated with extremist elements of the Presidential Guard in “Network Zero,” which sponsored death squads and compiled lists of Tutsis and moderate Hutus to be killed. In mid-March of 1992, between 60 and 300 Tutsis were killed and over 10,000 were displaced in Bugesera. Similarly, 300 Tutsis were butchered in Gisenyi during one week in January of 1993, almost immediately after the early agreement on power-sharing had been announced.⁵⁸

Immediately prior to and during the Arusha period, the number of massacres appears to have decreased, perhaps due to international pressure and the UN presence. The killings became more selective. The targets for assassination were mostly moderate government officials and human rights leaders, many of whom were Hutu. The Network Zero, using *Interahamwe* forces,

⁵⁶ “Rwanda: Death, Despair and Defiance,” p. 52.

⁵⁷ The report entitled “Second progress report of the Secretary-General on UNAMIR for the period from 30 December to 30 March 1994” can be found in The United Nations Blue Book Series, Volume X, *The United Nations and Rwanda, 1993-1996*, p. 249.

⁵⁸ FIDH 1993, Human Rights Watch (1993, 1994) quoted from Howard Adelman, 30.

orchestrated grenade attacks against leaders of parties in opposition to the MRND, parties who would have obtained greater power under the envisioned BBTG.⁵⁹ Network Zero was responsible for the killing of Samuel Gapyisi, leader of the Mouvement Démocratique Républicain (MDR), the most prominent rival of the MRND, in May 1993. Felicien Gatabazi, head of the Parti Social Démocrate, the second-largest opposition party, was murdered in February 1994, apparently because he was a moderate who appealed to Hutus.

Horrendous Human Rights Violations

History paints a long-standing dark backdrop to the sinister genocide. Rwanda had suffered widespread killings and long-standing human rights abuses for several years. It was not, however, always easy to tell who did the killings, whether the government's army (FAR), the RPF, the *Interahamwe*, local gangs or even individuals. What was needed was an analysis of the killings to reveal patterns and causal links. The UN force did not do this kind of analysis, nor did UN headquarters. Most of our information on human rights violations, both then and now, comes from human rights organizations.

NGOs in Rwanda had documented a history of human rights abuses that indicated clearly the propensity for violence, if not genocide. These violations, which are summarized in Table 3, had been occurring since independence, but escalated immediately after the RPF attack on Rwanda in 1990. From October 1990 to April 1991 the Government arrested over 10,000 people, of whom three-quarters were Tutsi. Most were released without charge by April 1991. In the Northwest prefecture of Gisenyi local officials incited Hutu attacks on Tutsi civilians. The mobs killed over 300 Tutsis, burned over 500 houses, and caused thousands to flee their homes. This pattern of sporadic massacres of the Tutsi population, seemingly in response to both RPF attacks, cease-fire agreements, and international interference, included the massacre of the Babogwe people in January and February 1991, Tutsi massacres in the Kibuye area in August 1992, and the Bugesera massacres of Tutsi in March 1992. During the visit of the International Commission of Inquiry in January 1993, burgomasters (mayors) in the Northwest warned that violence would flare up when the commission left. RGF Captain Pascal Simbikangwa, in full view of the

⁵⁹ "Rwanda: Death, Despair and Defiance," *African Rights*, London, August 1995, pp. 64-66.

Commission, threatened the executive director of the Rwandan Association for the Defence of Human Rights and Public Liberties with death. After the Commission's departure MRND and CDR militias led attacks on Tutsi across the country, leading to the death of over 300 civilians. International human rights reports continuously stressed the involvement of government officials and, by 1992, the role taken by the MRND and CDR militias in leading the attacks. Following the massacres, road blocks were put in place to prevent victims from fleeing the area, and the UN Special Rapporteur noted during the 1993 massacres the "phone system had suddenly 'broken down' (in the areas involved) . . . and had curiously become operational again without any needs for repairs."

Table 3
Major Reported Human Rights Abuses

Date	Location	Human Rights Abuse	Note
<u>1990</u> October 1	Ugandan border	RPF invades Rwanda	Government of Rwanda stages a mock RPF attack on Kigali
October	Kigali (majority)	Arbitrary arrests and detention of citizens; 75% were Tutsi. By April Government acknowledge arrest of over 8,000 people	Most released without charge by April 1991, but abused while in prison
October	Kibilira commune, prefecture of Gisenyi	Local officials incited Hutu attack on Tutsi, over 300 killed, thousands fled their homes and over 500 houses burned	Occurred right after the invasion, government dismissed and jailed the local officials but they were soon release
<u>1991</u> January-February	Bugogwe and NW of Rwanda	Massacre of over 300, possibly 1000 civilians of Tutsi subgroup known as Bagogwe people, done by police, military, civilian officials and civilians	Followed major RPF offensive in area, when RPF gained town of Ruhengeri (one night) and released all prisoners
November	Murambi	Around 500 primarily Tutsi civilians forced to flee, one woman killed, girls raped and many beaten and injured	Followed series of savage attacks with local officials participating, victims insulted for being Tutsi
<u>1992</u> August	Kibuye Area	"ethnic" massacres, 85 dead and 200 wounded, 500 houses burned and over 5,000 people displaced	Four days after agreement on pluralistic transitional government between RPF and government, arrested killers mostly MRND(D) or affiliates

Date	Location	Human Rights Abuse	Note
March	Bugesera	Hundreds of Tutsis massacred	Followed incitements from an official radio broadcast made by Ferdinand Nahimana
end of year	NW communes	Local government officials, on orders from army, organized attacks on Tutsis called “clear the bush” thousands forced to flee homes	Government identified Tutsi as RPF accomplices providing “cover” for invaders, used this excuse kill approx. 2,000 Tutsi from 1990-92
<u>1993</u> January		International Commission on Human Rights allege serious and widespread abuses	Visited with ten experts, report published in March 1993
January	NW Rwanda	Over approx. six days more than 300 killed and thousands driven from homes, attacks led by militia of MRND and CDR not local officials	International Commission warned that upon its departure government to launch new violence, and it did
late January		Group of Rwandan soldiers called <i>amasasu</i> threatened to detect and destroy government opponents	This group stated that they felt they were above the law
February		Rwandan soldier vengeance on Tutsi civilians and opponents, at least 147 killed, some soldiers acted alone others with mobs of civilians, military also distributed arms to civilians supporting government	February 8: RPF violated cease-fire and pushed further south
April 8-17		Special Rapporteur on Extrajudicial, Summary or Arbitrary Executions visits Rwanda	Report released on August 11, 1993 after the peace treaty signed
August 4	Arusha	President of Rwanda and Chairman of RPF sign a Peace Agreement	
<u>1994</u> April 6	Kigali	Presidents of Burundi and Rwanda killed in a plane crash	Beginning of widespread massacres (genocide) first in Kigali and later across all of Rwanda

As mentioned, in January 1994, three months before the genocide, the Human Rights Watch Arms Project report pointed out (somewhat inconclusively) many human rights violations. It surmised that, since the commencement of hostilities between the FAR and RPF in October of 1990, approximately 2,000 civilians had been killed at the hand of the militias. The report stated that “most of the victims were Tutsi, and they were killed for the sole reason that

they were Tutsi.” Moreover, it warned that the armed bands are well dispersed throughout the countryside, and that “they remain in place and ready to move when ordered.”⁶⁰

Human Rights Organizations: Did They Do Better?

Human rights violations in Rwanda were monitored extensively by international human rights organizations from the onset of the conflict in 1990.⁶¹ Native Rwandan human rights groups considerably aided their international counterparts in investigating and uncovering human rights violations.⁶² For example, it was at the request of Rwandan NGOs that an International Commission of Inquiry, consisting of 10 human rights experts, visited Rwanda in January 1993, releasing a hundred page report in March. Given the extensive coverage by international human rights organizations, it is reasonable to ask if these NGO groups provided the international community with explicit early warnings of the genocide. If not, could the information they gathered have played a role in early warning?

A summary of the main allegations included in the major reports published by international human rights organizations on Rwanda is presented in Table 4. A summary of the reports is provided in Table 5. The reports provided unequivocal evidence of major and on-going human rights violations, as confirmed by successive reports by different groups. The reports pointed to

⁶⁰ “Arming Rwanda,” p. 11.

⁶¹ The RPF was formed in Uganda prior to 1990, but its first major attack on the Rwandan government occurred on October 1, 1990, from Uganda. The RPF was formed by past refugees and the children of past refugees who had fled Rwanda after 1959 when the majority Hutus staged a “social revolution.” From 1961 to the 1970s the Tutsi refugees staged a number of armed returns to Rwanda.

⁶² The Rwandan Association for the Defense of Human Rights was formed on September 30, 1990. The Rwandan Association for the Defense of Human Rights and Public Liberties, the Association of Volunteers of Peace, the Christian League for the Defense of Human Rights in Rwanda, Society and Prospective, and Kanyarwanda were developed in late 1991, Africa Watch, “Rwanda: Talking Peace and Waging War, Human Rights since the October 1990 Invasion,” 4, 3 (February 1992), p. 26. Gerard Prunier states that these organizations were strong “and well organised . . . and their militants were taking personal risks in gathering what were soon to become very precise and damning reports on the situation in the country.” Gerard Prunier, *The Rwandan Crisis: History of a Genocide* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), p. 131.

violations by all levels of people, from civilians to government officials and by both the RPF and FAR.⁶³

Table 4.

Summary list of the types of abuses, violations,
and other indicators reported by human rights groups.

- (1) massacres that were ethnically motivated and arrests far from areas of hostility
- (2) attempts to eliminate political opposition through death threats and assassinations
- (3) military and local official involvement in leading and inciting the massacres, plus greater security force involvement to repress information after they had occurred
- (4) the incitement to violence by the government-run radio, Radio Rwanda and the CDR station, Radio Mille Collines
- (5) high-level government involvement in arms distributions and the granting of immunity to human rights violators
- (6) high-level government duplicity in its rhetoric on the suppression of human rights abuses
- (7) militias of the MRND and CDR taking a leading role in the violence during 1992, heightening political tension
- (8) the existence of Network Zero, death squads, the *Interahamwe* and *Inpuzamugambi*, including the possibility of involvement by heads of state and the President
- (9) the existence of a second power alongside the government, bent on violence to preserve its dominance and control, and undermine any attempts at peace
- (10) the severe gravity of the situation after the peace agreement and the real possibility of a crisis and renewed conflict

Yet the reports of the international groups fall far short of predicting future atrocities. The published reports, upon careful review, do *not* provide explicit early warning of the 1994 genocide. None state or surmise that a genocide, or even large massacres, are being planned for the future. The closest the reports came to making predictions is the alleged existence of sinister groups with nefarious but unconfirmed aims. The UN special rapporteur, in August 1993 (before the Arusha Accords were signed), comes the closest by calling attention to a “second power that

⁶³ This refers to the published reports of Amnesty International, Africa Watch/Human Rights Watch, and the International Commission of Inquiry. Janice Stein and Bruce Jones, in their article “NGOs and Early Warning: The Case of Rwanda,” further cover OXFAM, the Catholic Relief Services, CARE and the ICRC. These organizations had long standing involvement in Rwanda even prior to October 1990. In 1993 the RPF offensive caused “the largest, fastest displacement [of people] the humanitarian agencies had ever seen.” Stein and Jones state that these NGOs put on hold all of their regular programs to rush to the aid of these displaced people and, hence, were no longer in a position to report on signals of the impending genocide, which originated in Kigali.

exists alongside that of official authorities.” He expresses alarm at the widespread proliferation of weapons and notes that “one spark is all that is needed to cause the situation to degenerate,” but does not point to actual plans or machinery to propagate genocide. The Human Rights Watch Arms Project notes in January 1994 that “the possibility of renewed fighting is very real,” but this refers to the FAR/RPF conflict and not to any massive genocide campaign by the Rwandan government.

This analysis confirms that, in general, international human rights organizations, including the UN Commission on Human Rights, do not act directly as early warning systems. As was the case in Rwanda, they publish reports documenting violations up to the time of publication, but rarely try to directly predict future ones. The reports often describe the events that have taken place, the locations, the people involved and the possible perpetrators of all forms of human rights violations (while seeking to maintain the confidentiality of those at risk). Typically, the organizations then make recommendations both to bring past violators to trial and to end the continuation of abuses. They also actively lobby governments, both foreign and national, to stop the violations. Finally, they actively promote, through the media, public awareness of human rights violations. But human rights organizations generally do not possess the systematic methods for scenario building or threat assessment needed to make predictions of future events.

This does not mean that human rights monitoring is not a valuable source of information for early warning or that human rights organizations cannot, in the future, create early warning systems themselves. The information and evidence uncovered by human rights organizations in Rwanda could easily have helped confirm the existence, activities, and plans of “Network Zero.” NGOs did demonstrate the continuous involvement of government elements in past massacres of the Tutsi minority and Hutu moderates. By reporting on-going violations throughout the Arusha Peace process, their information helped foreign officials gain a better understanding of the instability of the situation and the possibility of future obstacles to the peace by both the parties and extremist groups operating outside of the peace talks.

In particular, Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch/Africa Watch have provided regular and detailed reports since the outbreak of violence in October 1990. The reports describe continuous human rights abuses, the arms trade and the gap between the rhetoric of the

Table 5
International human rights reports on Rwanda published prior to the genocide.

Date	Title	Organization/ Author	Relevant Information Provided
October 1990	A Spate of Detentions and Trials in 1990 to Suppress Fundamental Rights (AFR 47/07/90)	Amnesty International	Expresses concern that the spate of political trials over 1990 “indicate a government policy to suppress the right to freedom of expression” and lists the arrest of two named journalists for showing sympathy to the return of Rwandan refugees.
February 1992	Rwanda: Talking Peace and Waging War, Human Rights since the October 1990 Invasion	Africa Watch	Describes the arrest of close to 10,000 “suspected” rebel sympathizers, 75% of which were Tutsi and several hundred Ugandans. Documents the Kibirira and Bagogwe massacres, stating that the victims were Tutsi and “police, military, civilian officials and ordinary people” were involved. Documents the attack at Murambi, where “they insulted the victims for being Tutsi” and the councillor led the attacks. Africa Watch states that there is a “pattern of cooperation between military and local government authorities.” For example, no one was brought to trial for any of the attacks. Also states that most leading activists believe the government has compiled lists of people to assassinate when circumstances require. Finally, Africa Watch states that even though the government has said it will protect human rights and has ratified several international conventions “its actions belie the rhetoric.”
May 1992	Rwanda: Persecution of the Tutsi minority and repression of government critics, 1990-1992 AFR 47/02/92	Amnesty International	Also discusses the spate of arrests and detentions stating that most were members of the Tutsi ethnic group and “seem to have been arrested because of their ethnic origin.” States that no official investigation was conducted into the Bagogwe massacres and that local and security officials attempted to stop transmission of information about the killings out of the area. Amnesty states that the Bagogwe clan “was targeted for elimination.” Describes an internal report which “showed that anti-Tutsi sentiment is felt even at the highest levels” and also discusses radio broadcasts used “as a pretext to attack Tutsi.”

Date	Title	Organization/ Author	Relevant Information Provided
March 1993	Report of the International Commission of Inquiry of Human Rights Violations in Rwanda Since October 1, 1990	International Commission of Inquiry	Findings include: the Rwandan Government killed or caused the death of about 2,000 of its citizens from 1990 to 1993; the majority of the victims were Tutsi and killed for the sole reason that they were Tutsi; authorities at the highest level, including the President, consented to the abuses and that the President and Government had tolerated and encouraged the activities of armed militia attached to political parties. By late 1992 militias had taken the lead role in violence against Tutsi and members of the political opposition.
April 1993	Statement of the Government of Rwanda concerning the final report of the independent International Commission of Inquiry	Office of the President of the Republic	Firmly states that the "Rwandese Government has never had the intention of exterminating any ethnic group whatsoever." Attacks the report (above) for linking the Government to criminal acts perpetrated by "death squads" which it views as criminal organizations. Claims the Government will protect all Rwandese from human rights abuses, prosecute individuals engaging in alleged militia activities and the political organizations which support them, and agrees to ratify numerous human rights instruments and to withdraw reservations.
June 1993	Beyond the Rhetoric: Continuing Human Rights Abuses in Rwanda	Africa Watch	Documents new massacres in the Northwest, where burgomasters had predicted that violence would flare up once the International Commission leaves. In five days over 300 Tutsi were killed at the hands of crowds led by MRND and CDR militia. Hints at the existence of an "official list" of accomplices compiled by the military on orders of the general staff. Continues to document promises of judicial crack downs on undisciplined troops by the President yet the complete lack of action after these speeches. States that arms have been distributed to civilians and warns that it "is impossible to exaggerate the danger of providing firearms to civilians . . . (especially in regions where residents) have slaughtered their neighbors." States that false information broadcast on the national radio again served to stir up hatred. States the government has not taken any steps to implement promises made in its report (above) and that the President bears "special responsibility for the (recent) killings" which he could have stopped but refrained from condemning them until a full week after they had begun.

Date	Title	Organization/ Author	Relevant Information Provided
August 1993	Report on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions (UNDoc. E/CN.4/1994/Add.1)	Waly Bacre Ndiaye, UN Special Rapporteur	States that the substance of the allegations made by the International Commission could “be regarded as established.” States that “there is a certain elite which, in order to cling to power, is continuing to fuel ethnic hatred, for instance by spreading rumours prejudicial to the Tutsi.” Also that “time and time again” government officials were involved in civilian massacres and those committing the violations “have been manipulated or directed by some higher authority.” States the FAR and the militias are guilty of incitement to ethnic violence, massacres and assassinations and act “with complete impunity.” Mentions “Network Zero” and the accusations of high level government involvement. Also reports that such groups want to discredit democratic reforms and the peace process. He concludes “that a second power exists alongside that of official authorities.” Calls for immediate dismantling of these organizations, the prosecution of their members whatever their rank and the immediate confiscation of all weapons in public hands since “ one spark is all that is needed to cause the situation to degenerate. ” Describes propaganda spread by Radio Rwanda, notes that it is under direct control of the President, and “has played a pernicious role in instigating several massacres.” Finally, he discusses the application of the term “genocide” in regard to past massacres and feels that the Tutsi “have been targeted solely because of their membership of a certain ethnic group.”
January 1994	Arming Rwanda: The Arms Trade and Human Rights Abuses in the Rwandan War	Human Rights Watch Arms Project	Warns that violence by Tutsis against Hutus in neighboring Burundi has inflamed fear and hatred and the “ possibility of renewed fighting is very real. ” Describes secret documents showing that the government had formed paramilitary “self-defense” groups where human rights abuses occurred. Again states that the Tutsi were killed for the sole reason that they were Tutsi and that even the President consented to the abuses. Describes the MRND and CDR militias (<i>Interahamwe</i> and <i>Impuzamugambi</i>) who by late 1992 had taken the lead in violence against Tutsi and political opposition.

Rwandan Government and its actions.⁶⁴ Africa Watch/Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International continually linked human rights abuses to the ethnic origins of the victims, and local officials and the military to the massacres of Tutsi civilians and government opposition. In reports released in February and May 1992 Africa Watch and Amnesty described the massive arrests and detentions of the civilian population. The reports document cooperation between the military and local officials, and also highlight the impunity with which these acts were committed. Africa Watch documents the massacres of Tutsis at Kibirira, the Bagogwe massacres, and the attacks on Tutsi families at Murambi in November 1991. At Murambi the Hutus “began saying, ‘it’s time to finish the work of Kibirira’.”⁶⁵ These themes continue in the 1992 Amnesty International report, which opens with the statement that “Rwandan government officials and members of the security forces, most of whom come from the majority Hutu ethnic group, continue to commit and condone human rights violations with impunity.”⁶⁶ The report also describes the use of radio broadcasts to incite violence.

In late 1992, at the insistence of indigenous Rwandan human rights organizations, the International Commission of Inquiry was created to investigate human rights abuses in Rwanda. Experts from four different International NGOs⁶⁷ stated that authorities at the highest levels con

⁶⁴ Amnesty International, *The Republic of Rwanda. A Spate of Detentions and Trials in 1990 to Suppress Fundamental Rights*, October 1990. Africa Watch, *Talking Peace and Waging War. Human Rights since the October 1990 Invasion*, 27 February 1992. Africa Watch, *Outbreak of Violence Follows Human Rights Investigations in Rwanda*, 27 January 1993. Africa Watch, *Beyond the Rhetoric. Continuing Human Rights Abuses in Rwanda* 5, No. 7, June 1993. Human Rights Watch Arms Project, *Arming Rwanda. The Arms Trade and Human Rights Abuses in the Rwandan War*, New York, Washington 6, No. 1, January 1994.

⁶⁵ Africa Watch, “Rwanda: Talking Peace and Waging War. Human Rights Since the October 1990 Invasion,” 4, 3 (February 1992), p. 14.

⁶⁶ Amnesty International, “Rwanda: Persecution of the Tutsi Minority and Repression of Government Critics, 1990-1992,” May 1992 (summary), AFR 47/02/92: 1.

⁶⁷ These NGOs were the International Federation of Human Rights (Paris), Africa Watch (New York), the Union interafricaine des droits de l’homme et des peuples (Ouagadougou) and the International Centre for Human Rights and Democratic Development (Montreal). The report is entitled *Report of the International Commission of Investigation of Human Rights Violations in Rwanda Since October 1, 1990 (January 7-21, 1993)*, Paris/Washington, released in March of

doned and even consented to the abuses, while the Tutsi victims were attacked for the sole reason that they were Tutsis. By the end of 1992, the Commission also discovered that the militias of the MRND and CDR had taken a leading role in the violence, “privatizing” human rights violations (by moving responsibility away from the government) and expanding the scope of the victims to members of the political opposition.⁶⁸ Furthermore, the Commission uncovered mass grave sites and heard testimony to the effect that the President of the Republic chaired a “death squad” meeting prior to the Bagogwe massacres.⁶⁹ The Rwandan Government responded to the allegations (see the summary of its report in Table 5), but human rights groups discovered that following these pledges no action was taken by the governments to end the abuses.

By the middle of 1993 human rights reports become more insistent that abuses must be stopped. Africa Watch reports the existence of “official lists” of accomplices and the distribution of arms to civilians supporting the President.⁷⁰ The UN special rapporteur for extrajudicial, summary, or arbitrary executions visited Rwanda from April 7 to 18, 1993. His report was the most damning on the Rwandan situation. He supported the substance of the report from the International Inquiry, and went on to report on massacres, death threats, and political assassinations, impunity for the killers, propaganda on Radio Rwanda, and the distributions of arms to civilians. Furthermore, he stated that FAR were “accused of incitement to murder and of giving logistic support to the killers.”⁷¹ Most important, he discussed the existence of “death squads” with high level government involvement in a clandestine organization known as “Network Zero,” a

1993.

⁶⁸ Africa Watch, “Beyond the Rhetoric: Continuing Human Rights Abuses in Rwanda,” 5, no. 7 (June 1993), p. 4.

⁶⁹ Rwandese Republic, Office of the President of the Republic, “Statement by the Government of Rwanda Concerning the Final Report of the International Commission of Inquiry on Human Rights Violations since 1 October 1990,” Kigali, 7 April 1993: II para. 4.

⁷⁰ Africa Watch, “Beyond the Rhetoric: Continuing Human Rights Abuses in Rwanda,” 5, no. 7 (June 1993).

⁷¹ Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions, released 11 August 1993 E/CN.4/1994/7/Add.1: para. 35. Subsequent quotes in the three sentences that follow are from paragraphs 41, 74, and 78-80. Emphasis (*italics*) added.

“second power” actively attempting to discredit the peace process through the creation of “a climate of terror and instability.” Finally, he called for the *immediate* dismantling of all violent organizations and the *prosecution* of all members “whatever their rank,” and he offered a statement to the effect that the past massacres *could be considered genocide* due to their ethnic motivation. His report came out after the signing of the Arusha Peace Accords, and in face of the hopes engendered by the Accords, the report caused little stir, as many hopes were pinned on the new peace process. Yet the Human Rights Arms Project reported in January 1994 that the “possibility of renewed fighting is very real.”⁷² This report discussed secret documents implicating the government in the formation of paramilitary “self defense” groups and even discussed the *Interahamwe* and *Inpuzamugambi* militias who had taken a lead role in the violence. By March of 1994 several indigenous human rights activists in Kigali had sent their children out of Kigali due to increasing tension. Human Rights Watch later claimed that by this point the preparations for the slaughter were well known to NGOs and diplomats, and that “[r]epeated warnings by human rights activists . . . sent a clear signal that a crisis was imminent.”⁷³ They do not state when or to whom these warnings were communicated or their substance.

The Joint Evaluation of Emergency Assistance to Rwanda (known as the “Donor Nation Study”), in a report issued in March 1996 entitled “Early Warning and Conflict Management,” discusses the retrospective correlation between civil violence and the Arusha and previous peace processes. “[At] every major juncture and setback for the government, Tutsi were murdered,” with some seeing the violence “as an attempt to derail the entire peace process.”⁷⁴ These massacres were reported on by various human rights organizations and international studies, but to no effect.

⁷² Human Rights Watch Arms Project, “Arming Rwanda: The Arms Trade and Human Rights Abuses in the Rwandan War,” 6, 1 (January 1994), p. 5.

⁷³ Human Rights Watch, *Human Rights Watch World Report: 1995* (documents the events of 1994), pp. 40-44.

⁷⁴ Howard Adelman and Astri Suhrke, “Study 2: Early Warning and Conflict Management” (Odense: Steering Committee of the Joint Evaluation of Emergency Assistance to Rwanda, March 1996), p. 29.

To recap, international human rights monitoring provided important indications (as listed in Tables 4 and 5) of continuing human rights violations but did not give early warnings of a future large-scale and systematic genocide. It did provide proof of the insincerity of the government in its reforms and alleged actions against human rights abuses. The human rights reports also provided continuous links between high level government actors and past massacres of the Tutsi minority and Hutu opposition.

To qualify as precise early warnings of genocide, the reports would have had to specifically link government activities to a planned extermination of the Tutsi minority, in whole or in part, for example, through speculation on the potential proliferation of “death squads.” No doubt, human rights reporting *should* have been analyzed much more effectively prior to the genocide of 1994. Along with other information received by various diplomats and UN officials, including the 11 January 1994 fax from Force Commander Romeo Dallaire, human rights reports help to collaborate evidence which could have signaled an early warning of greater violence to come. Furthermore, they help to elaborate on the prevailing climate of hatred that still existed in Rwanda after the Peace Agreement, and the possibility of militant and government-controlled extremist groups actively working from positions of power to derail any attempt at peace. Therefore, even though international NGO monitoring of human rights violations did not constitute early warning of the genocide on its own, the experience demonstrates the great utility of human rights reporting in early warning.

PREVENTIVE ACTION

*Peux ce que veux. Allons-y.*⁷⁵ [*Where there's a will there's a way. Let's go.*]
 — Major General Romeo Dallaire, Force Commander of UNAMIR, 11 January 1994

Early warning of the Rwandan genocide was clearly possible for the UN, given the large number and types of signals—of which human rights violations was only one—described above. What, then, about prevention of the genocide? Senior political leaders in both the UN and gov-

⁷⁵ This is how Dallaire concludes his January 11 fax to UN Headquarters which asked for approval to undergo raids of weapons caches disclosed by a Rwandan informant.

ernments have already stated that the genocide could have been prevented or at least mitigated. But neither the politicians nor the practitioners (nor the academics for that matter) have described precise measures and detailed scenarios to demonstrate the possible means of genocide prevention.

Most commentators on the UN's failure in Rwanda merely state that UN troops could and should have been deployed to stop the spread of the genocidal fire once it had been started on April 7. This possibility is examined in detail later in this section. But in conflict, as in medicine, prevention is better than cure, even if the cure can be rapidly found. Particularly in this brutal and senseless slaughter, it would have been much harder to stop the machinery of genocide once it had been set into motion than before it started. Therefore, it is especially important to look at the early preventive measures that could have been taken before the plane crash in which the President of Rwanda died, i.e., during the period between January and 6 April 1994. These measures may not have guaranteed success, but they may very well have helped prevent or mitigate the tragedy. At the very least, they are worth exploring in hindsight.

Preventive Measures Before April 6

While any preventive measures after April 6 would have required the strong application of armed force on the part of the UN to stop the spread of genocide, preventive efforts prior to April 6 would have involved a creative array of more subtle actions: preventive diplomacy, demonstrations of resolve, political lobbying, and moderate shows of force. The main tool would have been information as opposed to weapons, and the main forum would have been the office room and not the battleground. The 2,000 or more UN troops present, plus others that could have been added, would be essential to providing credibility to the force at this time, but the main role for prevention would rest with the SRSG and his political affairs officers, UN civilian police (CIVPOL, of which there were about 60), human rights observers (which were only introduced by UNAMIR later), and a proposed information/intelligence unit in the field under the SRSG. The goal would be to cause the genocidists to reconsider, delay, or even abandon their plans, and to have them removed from power or isolated, or in the very least, frustrated in their planning.

For each effort of the genocidists to prepare for the holocaust, producing early warning signals (see Table 2 above), the UN could possibly have provided a response aimed at de-escala-

tion. In response to illicit weapons flowing into Kigali, a more forceful policy of insistence on the embargo, monitoring, and confiscation might have been applied by the peace-keeping forces and governments in accordance with the agreements. Where a network of senior Rwandan officials was being trained to carry out genocide, a few selected individuals in the chain of command could have been influenced by their foreign trainers (e.g., French officers), UN contacts (officials working with the SRSG and the UN force), and conscientious colleagues (e.g., like the informer Jean-Pierre) to provide inside information and refuse, avoid, or minimize their participation in the planning and execution of genocide. The loyalties in the Rwandan government were not strong, the number of people willing to talk (even confess) was high, and, as discovered by UN and aid personnel, the degree of general respect for international personnel was unusually high. Diversions of international aid funds, which was suspected in *Interahamwe* training, could have been exposed by UN officials, based on the investigations of rumors and reports. The genocide leaders could have been identified and isolated or perhaps dismissed through the application of political influence on the political system, or more specifically on the Rwandan president, who was eager not to displease the international community. Additional pressure could have been applied to reduce the level of threatening propaganda and, if necessary, to have the extremists' radio station closed down. These and other measures, which would have engendered hostile responses, will be examined in some more detail.

In broad overview, the UN preventive actions could involve dealing with people (both plotters and resisters), the genocide structures (networks), and the tools (i.e., weapons) of the genocide. In all three categories, the key would have been a good information-gathering and analysis system. It was vital to identify who the genocidists were, uncover their plans, and locate the weapons that were to be used. In the plans for UNAMIR I, unfortunately, the UN did not provide for an intelligence capability, though UNAMIR II, created after the genocide, possessed considerable intelligence expertise. Even without a dedicated intelligence unit in UNAMIR I, more information could have been gathered and analyzed by political affairs officers with the SRSG and at headquarters, working closely with the Belgian contingent and the UN civilian police.

To identify the plotters, it would have been necessary to gather more information from the informer Jean-Pierre and others. It was a serious mistake for the UN representatives to go to

the Rwandan President in early January and reveal their information before the connection between the President and the plotters was determined. It would have been wise to gather more information about the nature of the “extermination” plots and to evaluate the degree of support for the plotters. Later, if the UN had come across information that the President himself was to be targeted, that information could have been extremely useful in convincing the Rwandan head of state to take forceful action against the plotters. It is likely that the President would have dismissed key plotters had he learned that his own life was at stake.

As it turns out, General Dallaire appeared to be completely in the dark about the plot and plotters on the day of the plane crash. He went to Col. Bagosora, who had effectively taken control of the military, to plead for restraint and the immediate installation of the moderate Prime Minister as acting president. Dallaire received a polite, reassuring, and totally disingenuous reply on the deployment of troops, and a negative response on the question of installing the Prime Minister, who was dismissed as “incompetent.” Bagosora had already sent soldiers to assassinate the Prime Minister and Belgian peacekeepers. Thus ignorance was very costly to Dallaire and the UN.

To engage effectively in the subtle art of preventive diplomacy, the UN peacekeepers and peacemakers (such as the Special Representative of the Secretary General, or SSRG) would have had to identify and understand many characteristics of the plotters: what the power base was; who might oppose them; their relationships to the President, the Cabinet, the army, police, *Inter-ahamwe*, and the political parties; and their ties to other nations. Armed with such information, the SSRG could carefully develop a political strategy, beginning with moderate political leaders, to oppose and expose the genocidists. In a discreet, intelligent fashion, the SSRG could inform others of the genocidists’ actions and intentions. At some point, he could even let them know in a subtle fashion that they were under suspicion and their activities being questioned. If momentum built, he could insist on their dismissal. While such influence may be hard to build, past UN mediators have been able to exert considerable authority on conflicting parties, whether it be in the Middle East, Asia, or Central America.⁷⁶

⁷⁶ More directly applicable are the excellent preventive efforts in Burundi of Ahmedou Ould-Abdallah, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General in Burundi. Burundi also lost its

It would have been desirable and easy to identify potential resisters of genocidal plots. The obvious contacts for any UN intelligence-gathering effort would be human rights groups and moderate political leaders, including the Prime Minister, as well as prominent Tutsis. Such links could be forged, not only as a means to get more information, but also to apply pressure on and isolate the plotters. Rwandan military officers could have been subtly encouraged to share information. Instead, the courageous informer Jean Pierre was given the cold shoulder by the UN at an early stage—though fortunately he managed to survive.

The institutions preparing for the genocide, such as the *Interahamwe*, the Presidential Guard, “Network Zero,” and Radio Mille Collines, could have been brought under pressure, especially as evidence of their complicity in genocide plots mounted. These organizations, like many in Rwanda, relied on some measure of foreign support. More exact accounting for funds and materials could be insisted upon, any diversion of funds could be exposed by investigators (using tips, of which there were many), and the perpetrators identified and, if possible, punished. The radio station, which was broadcasting extremist and incredible messages of hatred, could be brought under stronger pressure and closer supervision in the interests of peace and moderation. Had repeated UN warnings gone unheeded, the UN peacekeepers could have temporarily halted radio broadcasts, jammed them, or even closed down the radio station, as was done in Bosnia to the radical Serb radio station.

Finally, there were the weapons themselves. General Dallaire had prepared plans to raid illegal arms caches in and around Kigali, but this was vetoed by UN headquarters. Such raids could have been valuable from both the practical and the psychological point of view. Col. Marchand provides this useful insight:

Jean-Pierre located various arms caches throughout Kigali. A UN officer accompanied him to MRND headquarters. In the basement there was indeed a stockpile of arms and ammunition, so we immediately sent a request to the NY office to carry out search operations. The response was negative. We weren’t able to proceed with this type of operation because NY said this wasn’t UNAMIR’s man-

head of state (President Cyprien Ntaryamira) in the plane crash of April 6, but widespread escalation of conflict did not result—only smaller-scale and sporadic violence occurred. Mr. Abdallah, said by some to be an unsung hero, worked around the clock to get the parties to stay calm and keep up a dialogue.

date. Consequently, we weren't allowed to touch the arms caches, and UNAMIR lost a great deal of credibility in the field. Around the time people began to make fun of UNAMIR. They distorted its French acronym "MINUAR" to "MINUA," which as far as I know means "moving the mouth" in the Kinyarwanda language, which meant that UNAMIR talked big, but didn't act.⁷⁷

Because UNAMIR did not take action on the known weapons caches, which were blatant violations of the Arusha Accords and its terms of reference, UNAMIR lost a large measure of support and the confidence of the population. At the very least, had the issue of weapons locations been pursued, UNAMIR would have been in a better position to make access to them more difficult once the genocide began.

In general, had the UN applied a number of the above measures to bring fear into the minds of the genocide plotters, the fate of the Rwandan people might have been very different. If these measures were not effective, then the UN would, at least, have been more experienced and knowledgeable about the plotters and their means, so that when the genocide did begin in earnest on April 7, the UN would have been better prepared to recognize it and counteract it with force.

Preventive Measures After April 6

The quick involvement of 400 excellent paratroopers may have saved the situation.
— Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali, November 1994⁷⁸

It is widely accepted that the United Nations could have taken steps soon after the genocide began on April 6 to prevent much of the senseless mass killing that followed. But, again, high-ranking officials of both the UN and member-states, particularly the United States, failed to recognize and publicly declare the genocide even as tens of thousands were being slaughtered. Early recognition would have focused more international attention on the horrors in Rwanda, increased pressure by NGOs and an outraged public to stop the killings immediately, and caused the Security Council to strengthen UNAMIR at an early stage. Instead, the systematic killing of Tutsis was inaccurately described as "ethnic violence," the inevitable consequence of the civil

⁷⁷ "Chronicle of a Genocide Foretold" (video), Montreal, 1996.

⁷⁸ Boutros Boutros-Ghali, quoted from "Prime Time News," CBC Transcript, 29 November 1994, p. 16.

war between the RPF and the FAR. On April 21, two weeks after the triggering of the genocide, the Security Council, in UN Resolution 912, altered the mandate of UNAMIR not to stop the genocide, but to “act as an intermediary between the parties in an attempt to secure their agreement to a cease-fire.” The genocide in Rwanda was portrayed as random outbreaks of violence between Hutus and Tutsis, when in fact the violence was centrally orchestrated, and directed by the extremists primarily against Tutsis.

As the harsh facts about the Rwandan situation reached the desks in foreign ministries and UN Headquarters, high-ranking officials were still hesitant to apply the term “genocide” to the catastrophe. Their public acknowledgment of a genocide would have compelled member-states to intervene under the Genocide Convention. As a result, policymakers scrambled to simultaneously handle the situation and avoid using the term “genocide,” which would have required immediate intervention. When pressed before the media, embarrassed spokespersons struggled with their terminology. As late as mid-June, American State Department spokeswoman Christine Shelly still denied that a full-blown genocide was taking place, maintaining that “Although there have been *acts of genocide* in Rwanda, *all* the murders cannot be put into that category.”⁷⁹

Likewise, the UN Security Council publicly sidestepped an acknowledgment of genocide. In a statement issued on April 30, the Security Council President started moving in that direction when he declared that “killing members of an ethnic group with the intention of destroying such a group in whole or in part constitutes a crime punishable under international law.” Still, the President refused to apply the term “genocide” to Rwanda, only going so far as to condemn the “massacres and wanton killing.”⁸⁰

⁷⁹ Christine Shelly, quoted in the *International Herald Tribune* of June 13, 1994, extracted from Prunier, p. 274.

⁸⁰ Statement by the President, S/PRST/1994/21, 30 April 1994, obtained from the UN Department of Public Information, New York.

As the terminology charade continued, so did the genocide. Not until the last week of May did UN Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali concede publicly that genocide had been committed.⁸¹ By that time, hundreds of thousands of Tutsis had been slaughtered.

If, in the first few weeks of April, UN officials in New York had publicly announced that a systematic plan to wipe out a section of Africans had commenced in Rwanda, it is reasonable to believe that an international consensus would have demanded a swift, aggressive reaction against the genocidists, perhaps facilitating the implementation of Dallaire's later proposal for intervention. This expression of will could have limited the extent of the killings, if not squashed the genocide as a whole. It could have, as the UN Lessons Learned Unit wrote in December of 1996, "sent a message of international resolve to those who were organizing the killings."⁸²

From a better awareness of the Rwandan genocide, concrete actions could have been taken. Though specific scenarios have scarcely been examined, evidence does suggest that quick, offensive action during the first crucial weeks of April by an intervening force could have saved thousands of lives. To do so, such a force would need the proper mandate and political backing, sufficient manpower and resources (equipment and logistical support), expert training, and a clearly-defined mission.

General Dallaire, Commander of UNAMIR, has argued that the UN force, with the proper personnel and political will, could have prevented the genocide in its first weeks. He had even developed a proposal in May 1994 while still in the field, which he described in a report of the Carnegie Commission on Preventing Deadly Conflict in January 1997. An intervention force of 5,000, deployed between April 7 and April 21 of 1994, would, he argued, have been sufficient to halt the slaughter.⁸³ Dallaire's plan called for a new Security Council mandate under Chapter VII of the UN Charter, which would have permitted UN soldiers to use force to reestablish peace and

⁸¹ Boutros Boutros-Ghali, quoted in *Le Monde*, 27 May 1994, extracted from Prunier, p. 277.

⁸² "Comprehensive Report on Lessons Learned from UNAMIR, October 1993-April 1996," *Lessons Learned Unit: Department of Peacekeeping Operations*, December 1996, p. 32.

⁸³ Scott R. Feil, "Preventing Genocide: How the Early Use of Force Might Have Succeeded in Rwanda," *Carnegie Commission on Preventing Deadly Conflict*, New York, Carnegie Corporation, April 1998, p. 3.

security.⁸⁴ Such a force would have possessed a mandate to “stop the genocide,” as well as to “conduct peace enforcement,” “assist in the return of refugee and displaced persons,” “ensure the successful delivery of humanitarian aid,” and to “assist in a cessation of hostilities.” Dallaire envisioned this force to be more assertive than UNAMIR. It would have used “offensive action, including the use of deadly force, to prevent continued genocidal killing.” In addition, he emphasized the importance of gathering information on the perpetrators of the genocide for later use in criminal tribunals.⁸⁵

Dallaire divided the mission of his envisioned force into several phases. It began with ensuring the security of the Kigali sector, and the shutting down of extremist radio transmissions. It is suggested that he add the establishment of a UN radio station (as used effectively in Cambodia, and by UNAMIR itself when it returned to Rwanda after the genocide) to mount a counter-propaganda campaign to convince Rwandans not to follow the irrational orders to commit genocide. Then, Dallaire envisioned that battalions would move outward to secure provinces in the northwest and southwest. In the process, “safe sites, smaller and more easily defended community groupings” would be created to protect civilian victims. Finally, once the genocide had been halted, the force would push back both the RPF and FAR as far as possible to their positions antebellum. It would then scale back both its mandate and personnel size and begin to implement a cease-fire.⁸⁶

Some have argued that an even smaller force could have intervened to prevent genocide. The UN Secretary-General at the time, Boutros Boutros-Ghali, affirmed his belief in November of 1994 that as few as 400 troops could have “saved the situation.” Boutros-Ghali emphasized

⁸⁴ Article 42 of Chapter VII of the UN Charter can be found in “Charter of the United Nations and Statute of the International Court of Justice,” *United Nations Department of Public Information*, New York, p. 28. It reads:

Should the Security Council consider the measures provided for in Article 41 would be inadequate or have proved to be inadequate, it may take such action by air, sea, or land forces as may be necessary to maintain or restore international peace and security. Such actions may include demonstrations, blockade, and other operations by air, sea, or land force of Members of the United Nations.

⁸⁵ Feil, pp. 8-9.

⁸⁶ Feil, pp. 9-14.

the “quick involvement” of those troops as a precondition for their success.⁸⁷ The Secretary-General’s remark suggests that the killers in Rwanda were so lightly armed and poorly trained that even the most skeletal of intervening forces, with an offensive mandate, could have easily overwhelmed them.

However, the encouraging forecasts about the use of force after April 6 must be tempered by the obstacles such a mission would have encountered. First, while the Carnegie report does mention the reluctance of countries like the United States to provide support for this kind of offensive force after the Somalia fiasco,⁸⁸ it neglects to project casualty levels and their political impact on involved countries. One must remember the Belgian reaction to the deaths of ten of its soldiers. It is impossible to believe that an intervening force, other than a massive one, could have secured the deadly, chaotic Kigali sector without at least a few soldiers killed, regardless of an edge in firepower. It is doubtful whether nations providing troops would be willing to tolerate significant losses in their own troops, though in Bosnia some such commitment was shown (where over 250 perished over four years). In any case, one can be certain that a great many Rwandan lives could have been saved, in addition to the twenty thousand or so that UNAMIR can claim to have protected with its meager resources of only 450 troops.

Second, an intervening force with a more aggressive mandate like the one proposed by Dallaire would undoubtedly be forced to inflict casualties in order to stop the genocide. Mistakes could be made; innocent civilians could be killed. With major loss of life, the United Nations could be accused by the international community of committing aggression, not promoting security. This is hardly the image of a United Nations dedicated to promoting international peace. Still, if the losses were accidental and minimal compared to the genocide, the UN could sustain its operations despite criticisms.

Third, one must consider the political repercussions in Rwanda. No doubt, the genocidists who held power would have opposed a more active UN presence that was designed to foil their plans. They would not have given consent to an offensive-minded peacekeeping force on

⁸⁷ Boutros-Ghali, p. 16.

⁸⁸ US Marines were ambushed in Mogadishu, Somalia in mid-1993, prompting the withdrawal of the American force by President Bill Clinton.

Rwandan soil. This anticipated opposition raises questions about the UN's legal authority and legitimacy in conflicts in which the consent of one or more parties is missing. It would have required the invocation of Chapter VII, which permits the UN to use force against the will of a party, even of a member state. This has been done at least a dozen times since the end of the Cold War and so it is feasible, if the political will exists.

Thus, in spite of the difficulties inherent in foiling a premeditated, systematic plan for genocide, the potential for large numbers of casualties, and the likely negative reaction of the party involved in the killings, a preventive deployment force with some offensive (Chapter VII) capability can, with hindsight, be advocated. Quick, decisive action by the UN might have isolated the genocide to the Kigali sector before it spread into the countryside. This could have made it easier to establish safe zones in the countryside for fleeing refugees to enter under protection of the United Nations. Yet the United Nations failed to provide timely intervention. What was provided, rather, was a unilateral French force, under *Opération Turquoise*, which, while considered successful in saving lives, did too little, too late, and too selectively.

On 22 June 1994, the Security Council authorized the French government to conduct *Opération Turquoise*, a unilateral military operation under Chapter VII whose stated purpose was to protect refugees in some areas and secure humanitarian aid. With a force of 2,500 soldiers, complete with armored carriers, helicopters, and fighter planes, this seemed to be the type of offensive force envisioned by Dallaire. *Turquoise* did prevent the loss of lives, mostly of Hutus fleeing the RPF (including many of the genocide planners and perpetrators). But while the force did have armored cars at its disposal, it lacked trucks necessary to transport fleeing victims to safety. As a result, many Tutsis who were distant from the "safe humanitarian zone," which was set up by France at the beginning of July, continued to be slaughtered by genocidists.⁸⁹ *Turquoise* was a qualified success in that it helped curb the flow of refugees to Zaire and other neighboring states. It also created a safe, humanitarian zone in the southwest corner of the country. Yet it failed to prevent the killings of Tutsis and extremist propaganda in other areas of the country. *Turquoise* was not the right kind of intervening force, for it did not have the mandate to

⁸⁹ Prunier, p. 293.

actively stop the genocide. It began too late, essentially after the Tutsi genocide was over. It unwittingly aided principally those who perpetrated the genocide.⁹⁰

Another option was available to UN officials after April 6. The Security Council could have authorized a mission to establish small safe havens in strategic locations in Kigali and the Rwandan countryside. Such a mission, if deployed in a timely fashion, would have limited the scope of the killings, though not prevented them. In fact, the UN supervised three protected areas in Kigali at the Milles Collines Hotel, the King Faisal Hospital, and the city's main Stadium. Some 15,000 refugees (mostly Tutsis) were protected at the Hospital, thanks to the efforts of the Bangladeshi and later Ghanian soldiers who guarded it. In the first two weeks of the genocide alone, UNAMIR was able to remove from immediate danger over 4,000 persons, including groups of orphans.⁹¹ Fortunately Dallaire never reached the low level of 270 troops that headquarters had determined to be sufficient (on decision of the Security Council). Some 450 troops were able to man these posts, as well as the airport, throughout the worst phase of the genocide.

With increased resources and pursuing a policy of containment, new safe areas could have been stationed in places where genocide had not yet spread. Rather than actively confront the genocidists through force, peacekeepers in this kind of operation would have focused on setting up areas to which victims could flee, and digging in fortifications from which to protect them. This limited, defensive option clearly poses less risk to peacekeepers. In contrast to the safe areas and protected areas set up in Bosnia, some of which ultimately failed dismally to secure the lives of victims, the Rwandan safe areas would have been much easier to defend. The perpetrators of the genocide were poorly armed (mostly with machetes), less organized, and less professional than the Serb forces. Yet by itself, the safe haven concept could not be expected to

⁹⁰ For a summary of the mixed results of *Operation Turquoise*, see Adelman, 54-57.

⁹¹ The Humanitarian Assistance Cell of UNAMIR helped coordinate transport for evacuees and escorts for NGO/Red Cross convoys. In May and June, when operations were intentionally inhibited by the militias and Rwandese Government Forces (RGF), UNAMIR provided safe passage for another 4,000 displaced persons. In July, when Hutu forces had retreated mostly to the Southern and Eastern frontier, UNAMIR provided safe passage to Kigali for some 6,500 people (mostly Tutsis). UNAMIR also helped conduct regular POW and refugee exchanges between the RPF and the RGF during and after the fighting. (Information provided by Maj. Luc Racine, who served with UNAMIR from mid-April 1994, Nova Scotia, October 12, 1999.)

prevent entirely the genocide. It would not have stopped the *Interahamwe* from house-to-house killing sprees in Kigali and villages around the country that were not UN protected; it would not have removed weapons from the hands of the genocidists. Without a stronger mandate, peacekeepers would be forced to stand guard over their protective areas and watch while other unlucky civilians were being slaughtered in the hills not far away, or on their way to the safe areas. In short, safe-havens alone could not have stopped senseless killing in Rwanda. A more aggressive UN force immediately deployed after April 6, having created carefully selected safe zones, could have begun to send patrols to halt the killings elsewhere. This may very well have stopped or slowed the genocide before it reached its peak frenzy across the traumatized nation.

POLITICAL WILL

What is involved here is, as I have said, a bitter failure, not only for the United Nations, but for the international community as a whole. We are all responsible for this failure, whoever we may be—international organizations, the great Powers and non-governmental organizations, as well as the African countries themselves.

— Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali, 13 June 1994.⁹²

From the previous sections, it should be clear that the UN could have developed a better information system and could have taken a range of preventive measures to forestall or at least mitigate the genocide. What, then, prevented the UN from doing so? The simple answer is a lack of political will. In the words of the current Secretary-General, Kofi Annan, the Rwandan experience highlighted “the crucial importance of swift intervention in a conflict and, above all, of political will to act in the face of a catastrophe.”⁹³

The lack of willingness at the time to consider swift and bold measures was shared by almost all the players at the UN, including Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali (and presumably his Under-Secretary General for Peace-Keeping, Kofi Annan), and the political leaders

⁹² United Nations, “Blue Book” Series, Volume X, *The United Nations and Rwanda, 1993-1996*, p. 52.

⁹³ Report of the Secretary-General, “The Causes of Conflict and Promotion of Durable Peace and Sustainable Development in Africa,” UN Doc. A/52/871-S/1998/318 of 13 April 1998, para. 32.

in the capitals of major member states. The main reason for this broad lack of resolve was that the leading and dominant member of the UN, the United States, was viewing UN peace-keeping cautiously, in an introverted manner, and with fear of over-involvement. Without US leadership and support, other states were hesitant to commit themselves politically or militarily. And no nation was willing to step forward to take the place of the United States, even on high moral grounds or in an emergency. To make matters worse, some states, like Belgium, lobbied for a cowardly withdrawal of the entire peace-keeping mission, even as the mission was providing protection to thousands of Rwandans. The Council acted in this spirit by ordering a force reduction to 250 shortly after the genocide had begun.

The lack of US commitment was the result of several factors. First, in Somalia the previous year the United States had to withdraw from a disastrous mission after several US soldiers had been killed and the UN/US objective of apprehending one of the clan leaders (Mohammed Aided) had failed. As a result of that experience, Washington officials were developing a new, less friendly approach to UN peace-keeping. This was enunciated in Presidential Decision Directive (PDD) 25, which was finalized in April 1994, at the worst possible time for any progressive peace-keeping actions. The Directive, which President Clinton signed on 3 May 1994 while the Rwandan genocide was in full swing, proposed “increasingly rigorous standards of review for U.S. support and participation” in UN peace-keeping.⁹⁴ Supporting was normally to be provided only to those UN missions with clear time-bound objectives which “advance US interests,” where the means are available and little risk need be taken by the United States. To make matters worse, the doctrine of “overwhelming force” was popular in US government circles at the time. But moving large US forces to a remote, land-locked African country was far beyond what the United States was willing to do for strictly humanitarian reasons. As stated in PDD 25, the United States cannot be the “world’s policeman.”

France, another permanent member of the Security Council, was not politically disposed to prevention of this genocide. It had long-standing links to the Hutu regime, links that existed

⁹⁴ “Clinton Administration Policy on Reforming Multilateral Peace Operations (PDD 25),” U.S. Department of State Publication Number 10161, released by the Bureau of International Organization Affairs, May 1994.

on a personal as well as institutional level. France had turned a blind eye to government atrocities committed in the past. It had even helped provide abundant arms to the future *genocidaires*. Only after the genocide had run almost its full course, and the Hutu regime had fallen, did France intervene with troops, mostly to protect and assist the fleeing Hutus. This was not necessarily a wrong act, but it shows that the willingness to act was based strongly on favoritism. The United Kingdom, another European member of the Security Council, was not inclined, as it seldom is, to take the lead or a contrary position on matters in Francophone Africa. Furthermore, neither Russia nor China take a leadership role in human rights, having their own share of internal abuses and external accusations to defend.

In the UN Secretariat, officials were cautious to move, knowing that Security Council members, to whom they felt ultimately responsible, were not in the mood to adopt bold measures. Kofi Annan writes: “the consequences of the retreat from Somalia and the reluctance to again commit international resources and political capital soon became evident as the international community agonized over how to respond to the tragedy that began to unfold in Rwanda.”⁹⁵

What, then, is necessary for political will to be developed to prevent future atrocities like Rwanda? Primarily it is a matter of fostering a sense of enlightened self-interest among all nations, especially the major powers, linking human welfare around the globe with one’s own. It means recognizing that human security is indivisible. When crimes against one section of humanity are committed, no matter where, it is a crime against all of humanity. This kind of moral imperative to help alleviate human tragedy and maintain peace should bind the world to action. This imperative was recognized in the post-Rwanda rhetoric of President Clinton: “[l]et us challenge ourselves to build a world in which no branch of humanity . . . is again threatened with destruction. . . . Let us work together as a community of civilized nations to strengthen our ability to prevent, and, if necessary, to stop genocide.”⁹⁶

⁹⁵ Report of the Secretary-General, “The Causes of Conflict and Promotion of Durable Peace,” para. 32.

⁹⁶ “Text of Clinton’s Rwandan Address,” *New York Times* 25 March 1998. This address was made in Kigali as part of an African tour.

If enlightened self-interest is not enough to spur leaders to take risks on behalf of peace, then the fear of inaction should also be a motivating force. If they fail to take preventive action, leading nations should be held to task. Both within states and across states, there needs to be a growing movement of peoples and organizations to promote national and international commitment to the prevention of crimes against humanity. These constituencies of concerned citizens should be strong enough that leaders of major powers feel obliged to meet the higher standards that these people set.

A further motivating force can be the force of law, international law. The imperative to action need not simply be moral, it can also be legal. It has been already stated that under the Genocide Convention, states are obliged to prevent this crime against humanity. Beyond this general directive, however, the Convention's proposal for action is weak and vague: it only mentions that states "may call upon the competent organs of the United Nations to take such action under the Charter of the United Nations as they consider appropriate" (Article VIII). The Convention, which was negotiated at the beginning of the Cold War, can be strengthened considerably. Mechanisms for early warning, preventive action, military intervention and criminal prosecution can be elaborated by the Security Council and in future human rights treaties. In so doing, the international community would help raise the legal standard for action, which is inextricably linked with the moral responsibility for action. By holding leaders responsible to higher legal as well as moral standards, the degree of political will can be increased.

CONCLUSION

The Rwandan genocide could definitely have been foreseen and could possibly have been prevented. At the very least, it could have been greatly mitigated by the UN. This conclusion takes into account the information and resources which were available to the UN, its mandate and its potential and previously demonstrated ability to adapt to difficult conflict situations. The UN peacekeeping mission could undoubtedly have expanded its activities and efforts (diplomatic, humanitarian and military) at an early stage, given the clear warnings available to it. What was absent was the political will, in the Secretariat and in the Security Council, to make bold decisions and to develop the means to create new information and prevention measures. The lesson of Rwanda is clear: we must build the international political will, as well as an enhanced

UN capability, for prevention. The UN should develop its ability for gathering and analyzing information, for making early warnings, and for rapid reaction through deployment of peacekeeping troops, as well as diplomatic creative initiatives. The world community owes it to the hundreds of thousands of human beings who were slaughtered during the Rwandan genocide to try to predict and prevent future genocides. The redemption of the UN from its failures in Rwanda can occur only when the organization and its member states strive anew to achieve the goals set out in the opening words of the Charter: “to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war . . . to reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights . . . to ensure, by the acceptance of principles and the institution of methods, that armed force shall not be used, save in the common interest.”

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Many people helped us in the development of this paper. Karl Michelazzi and David Bell of the University of Toronto did preliminary research in 1994/95. The input of Prof. Howard Adelman (York University) was of great help. We much appreciate the comments of those who reviewed drafts of the paper: Professors Matthew Evangelista, Robin Williams, Judith Reppy, and Henry Shue of Cornell University, André Sirors (formerly with the ICTR), and Dr. David Harries of the Pearson Peacekeeping Centre. We thank Sandra Kisner for formatting and copy-editing of this occasional paper. The input, comments, and criticisms of those who participated in the Rwanda mission, both at UN headquarters and in the field, who prefer to remain anonymous, are also much appreciated.

LIST OF ACRONYMS

BBTG - Broad-Based Transitional Government

CIVPOL - Civilian Police in UNAMIR

CDR - Coalition pour la Defense de la République

FAR - Forces Armées Rwandaise

ICTR - International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda

MDR - Mouvement Démocratique Républicain

MRND - Mouvement Révolutionnaire National pour le Développement

NGO - Non-Governmental Organization

NMOG - Neutral Military Observer Group

OAU - Organization of African Unity

PSD - Parti Social Démocrate

RGF - Rwandese Government Forces

RTLTM - Radio-Télévision Libre des Mille Collines (also called Radio Mille Collines)

RPF- Rwandese Patriot Front

SRSG - Special Representative of the [UN] Secretary-General

UNAMIR - United Nations Assistance Mission for Rwanda

UNOMUR- United Nations Observer Mission Uganda-Rwanda

UNPROFOR - United Nations Protection Force (in the former Yugoslavia)

APPENDIX

The "Genocide Fax": Cable From UNAMIR Force Commander Romeo Dallaire to UN Headquarters.

DATE: 11 JANUARY 1994

TO: BARIL\DPKO\UNATIONS\NEW YORK

FROM: DALLAIRE\UNAMIR\KIGALI

FAX NO: MOST IMMEDIATE--CODE CABLE

SUBJECT: REQUEST FOR PROTECTION FOR INFORMANT

ATTN: MGEN BARIL

ROOM NO. 2052

TOTAL NUMBER OF TRANSMITTED PAGES INCLUDING THIS ONE: 2

1. Force commander put in contact with informant by very very important government politician. Informant is a top level trainer in the cadre of Interahamwe-armed militia of MRND.

2. He informed us he was in charge of last Saturdays demonstrations which aims were to target deputies of opposition parties coming to ceremonies and Belgian soldiers. They hoped to provoke the RPF BN to engage (being fired upon) the demonstrators and provoke a civil war. Deputies were to be assassinated upon entry or exit from parliament. Belgian troops were to be provoked and if Belgian soldiers resorted to force a number of them were to be killed and thus guarantee Belgian withdrawal from Rwanda.

3. Informant confirmed 48 RGF Para Cdo and a few members of the gendarmerie participated in demonstrations in plain clothes. Also at least one minister of the MRND and the Sous-Prefect of Kigali were in the demonstration. RGF and Interahamwe provided radio communications.

4. Informant is a former security member of the President. He also stated he is paid RF150,000 per month by MRND party to train Interahamwe. Direct link is to chief of staff RGF and President of the MRND for financial and material support.

5. Interahamwe has trained 1700 men in RGF military corps outside the capital. The 1700 are scattered in groups of 40 throughout Kigali. Since UNAMIR deployed he has trained 300 personnel in 3 week sessions at RGF camps. Training

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focus was discipline, weapons, explosives, close combat and tactics.

6. Principal aim of Interahamwe in the past was to protect Kigali from RPF. Since UNAMIR mandate he has been ordered to register all Tutsis in Kigali. He suspects it is for their extermination. Example he gave was that in 20 minutes his personnel could kill up to 1,000 Tutsis.

7. Informant states that he disagrees with anti-Tutsi extermination. He supports opposition to RPF but cannot support killing of innocent persons. He also states that he believes the President does not have full control over all elements of his own party/faction.

8. Informant is prepared to provide location of major weapons cache with at least 135 weapons. He already has distributed 110 weapons including 35 with ammunition and can give us

details of their location. Type of weapons are G3 and AK47 provided by RGF. He was ready to go to the arms cache tonight-if we gave him the following guarantee. He requests that he and his family (his wife and four children) be placed under our protection.

9. It is our intention to take action within the next 36 hours with a possible H hour of Wednesday at dawn (local). Informant states that hostilities may commence again if political deadlock ends. Violence could take place day of the ceremonies or the day after. Therefore Wednesday will give greatest chance of success and also be most timely to provide significant input to on-going political negotiations.

10. It is recommended the informant be granted protection and evacuated out of Rwanda. This HQ does not have previous UN experience in such matters and urgently requests guidance. No contact has yet been made to any embassy in order to inquire if they are prepared to protect him for a period of time by granting diplomatic immunity in their embassy in Kigali before moving him and his family out of the country.

11. FC will be meeting with the very very important political person tomorrow morning in order to ensure that this individual is conscious of all parameters of his involvement. FC does have certain reservations on the suddenness of the change of heart of the informant to come clean with this information. Recce of armed cache and detailed planning of raid to go on late tomorrow. Possibility of a trap not fully excluded, as this may be a set-up against the very very important political person. FC to inform SRSB first thing in morning to ensure his support.

12. Peux ce que veux. Allons-y.