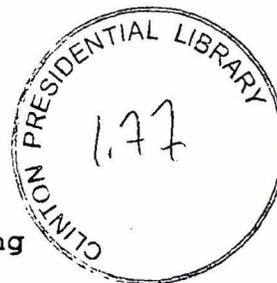


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**Ad Hoc Interagency/Deputies Committee Meeting  
on Rwandan Refugee Camps**

**PURPOSE:** To decide what steps, if any, the United States should take to resolve the Rwandan refugee crisis in an effort to achieve greater stability in the Great Lakes region.

**Background**

Mass Exodus: In July 1994, more than two million Rwandans heeded the call of the sitting Hutu-dominated government, which was responsible for the genocide of more than 500,000 Tutsis and moderate Hutus, and fled ahead of the victorious Tutsi-dominated rebel army into eastern Zaire and northwestern Tanzania. This was the largest movement of people in the shortest period ever recorded and posed an overwhelming humanitarian dilemma. The United States led Operation Support Hope in an effort to stabilize the health/food/housing situation. Today, more than 1.7 million refugees remain in Zaire and Tanzania and enjoy the highest living standards and the highest birth rate on the continent, appreciably higher for than those living inside Rwanda.

Since 1994 the United States has spent approximately \$540 million on its initial operation and subsequent measures to sustain the camps. During that same period, we have only provided approximately \$110 million to assist with the situation inside Rwanda. The current cost to the international community to maintain the camps is approximately \$1 million per day, of which the U.S. provides more than 30-percent.

Current Situation: There are numerous problems with the status quo. While at least 300,000 of the 1994 refugees have returned to Rwanda of their own volition, the remainder (one million in Zaire, 700,000 in Tanzania) live largely under the authority of the former government, its military forces (the ex-FAR) and militia (Interahamwe). Estimates are that as many as 200,000 people in the camps may have been implicated in the genocide and therefore would likely never return to Rwanda peacefully. Many of those who might repatriate voluntarily stay because they are ordered to do so by the leadership of the former government which has reconstituted itself in the camps. This former leadership tells the displaced that they will be killed by the new Tutsi-dominated government if they return home. In an unprecedented move, ten international humanitarian organizations withdrew

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services in the camps last year due to the aggressive authority of the former government leaders over the refugees. Only one American NGO continues to operate in the eastern Zaire camps.

The fear of persecution or death for most potential repatriating refugees had initially been generally accepted as plausible but is increasingly specious as time passes. The Rwandan government does have 75,000 people suspected of genocide in make-shift jails in deplorable conditions; however, at least 300,000 Hutu returnees across the country have resumed normal lives without fear of persecution (one million Tutsi refugees who fled Rwanda in 1959 have also returned to Rwanda). In fact, the situation inside Rwanda is largely stable and non-threatening except for those directly implicated in the genocide. The international community maintains efforts to promote reforms by the new Rwandan government and has met with considerable success outside of the judicial sphere. Under pressure from families of survivors, the GOR finds it extremely difficult to move forward on judicial reform until some degree of justice is meted out to the leadership of the former government which is living in camps sustained by the international community just across its borders.

Security Threat: The refugee camps also pose a significant security threat not only for the GOR, but for the countries in which they are located. Most of the 55 camps in Zaire and Tanzania are within five miles of the border with Rwanda (none is more 25 miles), with those in Zaire sitting on a strip of land 150-miles long. The ex-FAR and Interahamwe use the camps in Zaire as bases of operation from which they launch attacks into western Rwanda. The camps and their internal political/military structures appear increasingly to resemble a nascent ethnic parastate which mobilizes the Rwandan Hutu population through an ethnic nationalist creed. Inherently, the interests of this Hutu parastate are hostile to Zaire, Burundi and Rwanda.

Attacks by the ex-FAR into Rwanda have increased recently with dozens of genocide survivors (who represent potential witnesses in war crimes proceedings) being massacred on a regular basis before the fighters cross back to the safety of Zaire. The GOR has sent military reinforcements to its western border which heightens tensions, stunts the trickling level of voluntary repatriation and raises the specter of the GOR launching attacks across the border to pursue the invaders and risking a wider war with Zaire. The ex-FAR also attack Rwanda from staging points in northwestern Burundi. Credible reports indicate collaboration between the ex-FAR and extremist Burundian Hutu rebels which could explain the increased effectiveness of forces seeking to topple the fragile moderate coalition government in Bujumbura. There are significant fears that with the same ethnic composition

and explosive atmosphere, Burundi could replay events of Rwanda in 1994 if the situation further degenerates.

Eastern Zaire - A Tinder Box: The presence of one million Rwandans in eastern Zaire has also resulted in violence and tense relations with the local population they have displaced. Ethnic clashes caused by the influx of Rwandan refugees in the Masisi region of Zaire have caused 250,000 indigenous people to flee, in some cases, into Rwanda. The refugees have also caused a major ecological disaster destroying more than 20,000 acres of the now threatened Virunga National Forest. As the Zairian government moves toward national elections next year, the crisis caused by Rwandan refugees becomes an increasingly important issue.

International Efforts to Date: There have been numerous efforts since 1994 to end the refugee crisis. UNHCR has promoted cross border visits by refugee elders to assess the situation in Rwanda, and trips to the camps by GOR officials attempting to convince refugees they would be safe upon returning home. In addition, the UNHCR has operated a daily mass information campaign since March encouraging voluntary repatriation with virtually no impact. Former President Carter produced a videotape shown regularly in the camps of himself and various regional heads of state, including President Bizimungu of Rwanda and President Mobutu of Zaire, urging voluntary repatriation. The Government of Zaire attempted refoulement initiatives last year which were initially effective, but eventually stalled in the face of international opposition. Leaders of the former government in the camps quickly applied pressure to prevent mass repatriation by the refugees and a stalemate resumed.

Since Rwanda/Burundi Special Coordinator Ambassador Richard Bogosian first broached the concept of selected camp closure during the June Rwanda Operational Support Group Meeting in Geneva, our allies have been awaiting a formal proposal from us. Embassy Geneva is requesting policy-level approval and a strategy urgently to lead discussions toward developing a common approach to this issue. It is important that any refugee strategy be agreed upon by major donors, those international organizations involved with Rwandan refugees and regional governments.

### Key Assumptions

- The camps pose a significant and growing threat to regional peace and security because they have displaced local populations, serve as a base for ex-FAR and Interahamwe collaboration with extremist Burundian Hutu rebels and attacks against Rwanda, and invite cross border retaliatory raids by the government of Rwanda.

- Many Rwandans (perhaps as many as 200,000) will never return to Rwanda because of their involvement in genocide, or to a lesser extent, their fears of being accused of such involvement.
- The remainder are unable to return primarily because extremist camp leaders do not permit them to do so.
- The situation in Rwanda can be improved still further with international help and could enhance the attractiveness of return to refugees. The GOR has the capacity to cope with refugees in a steady stream but not all en masse.
- The cost to the international community of maintaining the camps is unsustainable over the long term.
- Unless the international community takes direct and prompt action to deal with the refugee problem, the regional security situation will steadily worsen.

#### Issues for Decision

**A) Should the United States try to lead an international effort to stimulate voluntary repatriation and relocate remaining displaced persons?**

It is important that as many refugees as possible return to their homes in Rwanda and reintegrate into the society. Those remaining should be withdrawn from the border and away from bases operated by the ex-FAR and Interahamwe. This will be constructive for regional security, decrease prospects of retaliatory raids by the GOR into Zaire, calm tensions in Masisi and diminish ties between the ex-FAR and extremist Burundi Hutu rebels.

An internationally coordinated effort to stimulate repatriation and refugee relocation could include an agreement by all donor nations and the UNHCR that food, medical and other supplies to the existing camps near the border would end within a specific time period. Countries currently hosting the camps would also have to agree to relocation of a smaller number of camps several hundred kilometers away from the Rwandan border. Residents of the camps would be given the choice of repatriating or relocating. The international community would agree to a corresponding shift of resources to within Rwanda to assist in the resettlement of returnees.

Analysis: Maintaining current assistance levels of \$1 million per day to the camps upholds a two-year old approach coordinated with European and other donors. It also deflects potential criticisms from human rights groups, refugee advocates and others who may claim that terminating assistance violates international agreements on refugee treatment. Moving people risks the possibility of resistance or conflict from ex-FAR and Interahamwe elements in the camps who, some analysts believe, would use civilians as a human shield to occupy western Rwanda if forced to return. Any new strategy will be dependent on the Rwandan government's ability to honor their commitments to welcome these refugees home and the commitment of Great Lakes leaders to provide security and land to those who want to be relocated. Strictly voluntary, not stimulated repatriation remains the humanitarian/refugee community's preferred durable solution to the Rwandan refugee situation.

The alternative is to encourage refugees to return to Rwanda or move them to camps a significant distance from the border. Noting the control of former government officials, the ex-FAR and Interahamwe over the population and a standard of living higher than in Rwanda itself, there is virtually no likelihood that an end to the status quo will materialize unless provoked.

Continued international support to the refugee camps has diverted scarce resources from efforts to provide adequate levels of assistance inside Rwanda where it is most needed and has the greatest impact. It also raises the moral question of providing for the care and feeding of possibly 200,000 genocide perpetrators and other active combatants who have no intention of returning except through force. Those within the camps, with the exception of genocide perpetrators and their families, have little ground to suspect persecution if they return to Rwanda. Those who did participate in the murder of at least 500,000 people over a three month period in 1994 would in all likelihood be excluded from all protections contained in the Refugee Conventions. Our allies and UNHCR Mrs. Ogata share our concerns and have begun to question the rationale for continuing humanitarian assistance under existing terms and conditions.

The leadership of the former government, ex-FAR and Interahamwe will continue to act with impunity destabilizing the region. Attacks by these armed elements into Rwanda have steadily increased and will continue to do so, heightening fears of GOR retaliatory attacks into Zaire and raising concerns of a larger regional war. Conflicts between camp residents and the local Zairian population have also risen dramatically and are expected to increase. Voluntary repatriation has proved a failed endeavor

because it does not address the reality that camp residents have few incentives and many disincentives to return.

**B) If the United States is to support programs aimed at stimulating voluntary repatriation and refugee relocation, in what fashion should these measures occur?**

Rwandan refugee camps are located in three principal areas; Tanzania, and both North and South Kivu in eastern Zaire. To stimulate voluntary repatriation or camp relocation for those who will not return voluntarily, international assistance (food, medicine, supplies) could be phased out within specific timeframes. It is imperative, however, that while this international assistance is phased out in the camps, it be shifted for use within Rwanda by returnees. For those who choose to return home, the distance to the border in virtually all cases is less than five miles, permitting them to walk or await transportation by buses that can be provided by the international community. The refugees could be notified in advance they can either return to Rwanda or, if they fear persecution, relocate to UNHCR-run camps that would be smaller, less attractive and offer only the minimum internationally accepted levels of services several hundred kilometers away from the border.

Relocation costs per camp at their current size is estimated at \$1 million, however with some portion of the refugees returning the total amount would be less than \$55 million for relocating all camps. Relocation, and thus the following options, are dependent on Zaire and Tanzania agreeing to permit such camps to be established several hundred kilometers from the Rwandan border. If other donors agree to this approach, a concerted effort must be undertaken at senior levels to convince both Zaire and Tanzania of the need to undertake this step.

Tanzania appears willing to relocate refugees unwilling to return several hundred miles away near the Mozambican border. While Zaire has said it may be willing to consider a similar relocation scheme, there is the likelihood they may not. In such a case, the international community must encourage Tanzania to proceed and consider approaching other states (possibly Uganda, Central African Republic or Kenya) to accept the establishment of such camps on their territories. However, each of these examples pose tremendous logistical difficulties noting the very limited infrastructure in the region. Efforts to close the camps in Zaire could be slowed while international pressure is applied to the Zairian government urging officials to adopt a position similar to that of Tanzania. UNHCR must lead this and all other efforts to engage Zairian President Mobutu on measures related to this initiative.

In pursuit of stimulating refugee repatriation and relocation, additional security measures will be required. Initial reports indicate that Tanzania is prepared to use its military forces to provide needed security to cope with camps on its territory. In Zaire, however, the Zairian Camp Security Contingent organized and funded under UNHCR must be augmented to provide added protection for international relief workers, convoy movements and to prevent refugees moving from closed camps to ones at least temporarily remaining open. While details of such augmentation and its costs should be left to UNHCR, this must not include either a regional or international peacekeeping mission.

Concurrent with any option to stimulate voluntary repatriation and relocation must be an effort to gain the agreement of the Rwandan government to a series of measures aimed at building the confidence of returning refugees and promoting longterm stability. Among these the GOR parliament must pass its long awaited judicial reform bill, establish additional mechanisms to process potentially large numbers of returning refugees and guarantee basic safeties and freedoms from prosecution for returnees. It is important that the GOR also agree to a comprehensive plan of action in coordination with the UNHCR and other organizations to support returning refugees with increased international aid, reiterate its assurances on land tenure and cooperate in cross border visits to be arranged by UNHCR.

Another important issue is the risk of violence. Fomented by former government leaders, the ex-FAR or Interahamwe, any attempt by the international community to change the status quo could prompt a violent response directed at UNHCR officials in the camps, international relief workers, local populations and others. It is also possible that armed members of the former government could attempt to use refugees as a human shield to enter Rwanda en masse. In the face of such possibilities, it is imperative that the international community maintain its resoluteness of action once the announcement to move forward occurs.

**There are several options for stimulating voluntary repatriation or relocation.** (OMB paper on funding options forthcoming)

1. Gain donor agreement to stop all assistance to all camps simultaneously within 90-days and relocate those individuals who choose not to return. In coordination with donors, UNHCR would choose a specific date to end assistance to all existing refugee camps simultaneously, shifting those supplies to within Rwanda. This impending action would be conveyed to the refugees along with information regarding repatriation or the option for those who fear persecution to relocate to new, smaller and more sparse camps several hundred kilometers away from the Rwandan border.

The 90-day timeframe to end all assistance to all camps simultaneously and shift those supplies to within Rwanda would begin when refugees are first informed of the impending action.

A universal approach ending all assistance to all camps simultaneously would be the swiftest way to address the immediate regional security threat posed by the refugee camps. It would permit the international community swiftly to direct its resources to within Rwanda to entice returnees back and limit the ability of the leadership of the former government, the ex-FAR and Interahamwe to prepare strategies to oppose any alteration to the status quo. It would also have the most immediate positive impact on environmental conditions in areas around the camps.

However, such a measure might well prompt the ex-FAR to use large numbers of returning civilians as a human shield to return and attempt to occupy large portions of Rwanda. Additionally, such potentially significant numbers returnees in this brief timeframe could severely overwhelm the capacity of the Rwanda government to absorb them even with substantial international assistance.

2. Gain donor support to phase out assistance to camps gradually over 180-days, starting with those camps which pose the least immediate regional security threat, and relocate those individuals who choose not to return. In coordination with donors, UNHCR would choose a specific date to phase out all assistance over 180-days (shifting those supplies to within Rwanda), starting in the initial 90-days with those refugee camps that pose the least immediate regional security threat first. This impending action would be conveyed to the refugees along with information regarding the reality of repatriation and the option - - for those who fear persecution - - to relocate to new, smaller and more sparse camps several hundred kilometers away from the Rwandan border. Residents in the remaining camps would be informed at the same time that after this first phase was complete, all assistance to their camps would end over a subsequent 90-day period and they too would have the option of relocation. The initial 90-day timeframe would begin when refugees are first informed of the impending action. Action to end all assistance in the remaining camps would begin immediately after the first 90-day period expires.

An approach to ending assistance to those camps posing the least immediate regional security threat (over the first 90-days) could possibly bring the greatest initial success, thereby building momentum toward dealing with most contentious camps at a later stage (second 90-day phase). It is likely that under this option those refugees in the least problematic camps who are most likely to return home would do so without much convincing. A phased approach of this nature also permits UNHCR the opportunity to

learn from mistakes during the first phase which can be applied in the latter.

While this approach could bring initial success, it could create the opportunity for the leadership of the former government, ex-FAR and Interahamwe to implement well organized resistance to these efforts. These leaders could use refugees in the remaining camps as virtual hostages to prevent the ending of international assistance. Another possibility is that these forces could organize a well coordinated plan to use the refugees as a human shield to occupy portions of Rwanda. It also fails to address the pressing problems posed by those camps posing the greatest immediate regional security threat.

3. Gain donor support to phase out assistance over 180-days, starting with those camps which pose the greatest immediate regional security threat, and relocate those individuals who choose not to return. In coordination with donors, UNHCR would choose a specific date to phase out all assistance over 180-days (shifting those supplies to within Rwanda) starting in the first 90-days with those refugee camps that pose the greatest immediate regional security threat. This impending action would be conveyed to the refugees along with information regarding the reality of repatriation and the option - - for those who fear persecution - - to relocate to new, smaller and more sparse camps several hundred kilometers away from the Rwandan border. Residents in the remaining camps would be informed at the same time that after this first phase was complete, all assistance to their camps would end over a subsequent 90-day period and they too would have the option of relocation. The initial 90-day timeframe to end all assistance in those camps which pose the greatest immediate regional security threat would begin when refugees are first informed of the impending action. Action to end all assistance in the remaining camps would begin immediately after the first 90-day period expires.

By first closing the camps that pose the greatest immediate regional security threat, the resistance of camp leaders might be minimized because they would have little time to prepare. Those who remain behind would be more clearly identifiable as members of the former government, ex-FAR or Interahamwe and could be taken to camps several hundred kilometers away from the border with haste. This method would also provide the quickest solution to the immediate regional security threat posed by the presence of the camps. Success with these camps in the early stages could reflect relative ease in repatriating or relocating refugees from those camps that pose the least immediate regional security threat.

However, if camp leaders offer stiff resistance, the initial phase of stimulating voluntary repatriation could be stunted with unclear consequences for the second portion. As in option two, this approach might prompt the ex-FAR and Interahamwe to use large numbers of returning civilians as a human shield to return and attempt to occupy portions of Rwanda.