

Rwanda Breaks Diplomatic Ties With France

By [Global Research](#)

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PARIS, November 24, 2006 – Rwanda severed diplomatic ties with France on Friday in response to a French judge’s decision to issue international arrest warrants for nine ranking Rwandans suspected of plotting the 1994 killing of the African nation’s president.

The French Foreign Ministry said it regretted Rwanda’s decision and was “taking all necessary arrangements.”

France’s ambassador in Rwanda, Dominique Decherf, will leave the country Saturday and the 29 other embassy personnel in the capital, Kigali, were leaving by Monday evening, embassy security chief Serge Kulmicht told The Associated Press.

On Wednesday, a French investigating judge issued arrest warrants for nine ranking Rwandans suspected of plotting the downing of then-President Juvenal Habyarimana’s airplane on April 6, 1994 – an act that sparked the country’s genocide.

Late Thursday, Rwanda withdrew its ambassador, Emmanuel Ndagijimanam, from Paris for consultations, diplomat Parfait Gahamanyi said. The officials targeted by the French judge are close to Rwanda’s current president, Paul Kagame, and the decision has enflamed tensions.

Rwandan Justice Minister Tharcisse Karugarama said the move was a response to French “bullying.”

“There is no reason why there should be diplomatic relations with a country that is actually attempting to destabilize the institutions of Rwanda’s government,” Karugarama told The Associated Press.

French anti-terrorism judge Jean-Louis Bruguiere suspects that nine Rwandans were responsible for plotting the assassination or actually shooting down Habyarimana’s airplane.

Bruguiere – renowned for tracking down the renowned terrorist Carlos the Jackal – is investigating the case because the crew on the downed plane was French. The families of the pilot, co-pilot and mechanic, who all died in the crash, filed a suit in France in 1998.

After the attack, militants from the Hutu ethnic majority, known as interahamwe, quickly set up roadblocks across the capital, Kigali, and on April 7 began killing Tutsis and moderate Hutus. More than 500,000 people were killed in 100 days.

Kagame’s Rwanda Patriotic Front, or RPF, toppled the Hutu extremists and ended the genocide.

The question of who shot down the plane has been a central mystery of the genocide. Speculation has focused on Kagame's largely Tutsi force, or hard-line Hutus hoping to encourage mass violence against Tutsis.

According to Bruguiere's order, Kagame allegedly instructed his group to down the aircraft.

"The final order to attack the presidential plane was given by Paul Kagame himself during a meeting held in Mulindi on March 31, 1994," Bruguiere wrote in the warrant request.

France grants immunity to acting heads of state, preventing judicial authorities from issuing a warrant for Kagame. Those targeted include armed forces chief James Kabarebe and army chief of staff Charles Kayonga. Warrants also were issued for those suspected by the French judge of attacking the plane – Franck Nziza, believed to be a captain in the presidential guard, and Eric Hakizimana, of the secret service.

Kagame called the judge "an impostor, a politician" in an interview Wednesday with France-Culture radio. He also promised that ties between both countries would suffer.

France annulled Rwanda's entire \$57 million bilateral debt this year. But relations between France and Rwanda have been strained for years, with Kagame accusing France of doing too little to stop the genocide.

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