Belgian Fomnin Claes discussed his end-February trip to Rwanda and Burundi with Colette Braeckman of the Independent Daily "Le Soir". Embassy's informal translation of the March 10 interview as well as comments from MFA Director for Sub-Saharan African Affairs elaborating on Claes' trip follow.

BEGIN EMBASSY TRANSLATION:

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF STATE
REVIEW AUTHORITY: ARCHIE M BOLSTER
CLASSIFICATION: CONFIDENTIAL REASON: 1.4(B), 1.4(D)
DECLASSIFY AFTER: 11 MAR 2016
DATE/CASE ID: 06 MAY 2011  201005065
Q. You have just returned from a trip to Rwanda. Minister of defense Delcroix is leaving for Rwanda today. What is your opinion about the situation on the ground?

A. I cannot hide my concern in view of the current political vacuum, the free fall of the economy, and the fact that the conditions that were supposed to lead to the implementation of the Arusha accords have not yet been fulfilled. Meanwhile, we can't wait any longer. It is necessary that all parties that consider themselves capable of participating in the implementation of the accords do so, even if it means they will be joined by the others later on. Otherwise, I fear Rwanda will veer towards an almost structural confrontation between ethnic groups.

Q. You warned your interlocutors and threatened to suspend cooperation. Were you listened to?

A. My remarks were not heeded, to say the least. While I

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was there a political leader was assassinated and I know that many weapons are circulated among the civilian population. For me, there is no other way out than the implementation of the Arusha accords. But even then, a lot will have to be done: fuse the two armies, demobilize a large number of armed men, prepare an urgent plan for the economy. There again, the necessary financial resources will have to be found.

Q. How do you analyze the latest events in Burundi, the new massacres in Bujumbura?

A. It is clear that the army does not accept the division of powers that took place after the election of President Ndadaye and which was reproduced after the designation of his successor.

Q. The morning of the putsch, Belgian military intervention was requested in order to avoid further confrontations...

A. That is correct. We were asked to send 2,000 soldiers but it was obvious that the army did not want them. There was, therefore, a risk of a violent confrontation. In the

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AFTERMATH, IT WAS DECIDED TO SEND A STABILIZATION FORCE COMPOSED OF TROOPS DESIGNATED BY THE OAU. BELGIUM WAS READY TO PARTICIPATE IN THE FINANCING OF THIS FORCE WITH A CONTRIBUTION OF DOLS 2 MILLION.

BUT EVEN THIS, THE ARRIVAL OF 180 MEN, THE ARMY DID NOT WANT. IT THEN BECAME A QUESTION OF SENDING 65 ENGINEERING CONFIDENTIAL

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OR MEDICAL OFFICERS. WE WERE FAR AWAY FROM A STABILIZATION FORCE. BUT THE ARMY OF BURUNDI CONSIDERED THAT THIS INTERVENTION WAS ALSO HUMILIATING. DURING MY MEETINGS WITH THE GOVERNMENT IT WAS OBVIOUS THAT THE AUTHORITIES WISHED TO REORGANIZE THE ARMY: SEPARATE PURELY MILITARY ASPECTS FROM GENDARMERIE DUTIES; CREATE A SORT OF REPUBLICAN GUARD. BELGIAN AID WAS REQUESTED. BUT SHOULD WE DECIDE TOMORROW TO REEStABLISH MILITARY COOPERATION WITH BURUNDI, I ASK MYSELF WHAT SORT OF RECEPTION WOULD BE

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L-01 ADS-00 NSAE-00 NSCE-00 OIC-02 OMB-01 PA-01
PM-01 PRS-01 P-01 SCT-03 SNP-00 SP-00 SSO-00
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Q. BELGIUM IS STILL INTERESTED IN CENTRAL AFRICA. ISN'T SHE ONE OF THE LAST COUNTRIES TO DEMONSTRATE SUCH AN INTEREST?

A. THIS MORNING I EXPLAINED TO THE UNSYG'S REP FOR AFRICA THAT THE INDUSTRIALIZED COUNTRIES RISKED BECOMING DISCOURAGED OVER AFRICA, THAT THEY WOULD TURN THEIR BACKS ON IT, IF AFRICANS THEMSELVES GAVE NO MINIMUM GUARANTEES OF STABILITY IN ORDER TO ALLOW FRUITFUL COOPERATION. YOU KNOW, WITHIN THE EU, BELGIUM AND FRANCE ARE THE LAST TWO ADVOCATES OF THE AFRICAN CONTINENT. ONLY THE MAGHREB COUNTRIES, ON ONE HAND, AND SOUTH AFRICA, ON THE OTHER, ARE STILL CONSIDERED INTERESTING. I ALSO WISH TO POINT OUT THAT 85 PERCENT OF THE BELGIAN COOPERATION BUDGET IS STILL DESTINED FOR AFRICA. THIS COOPERATION MUST NOT BECOME IMPOSSIBLE.

Q. SPEAKING OF ZAIRE, IS THE WESTERN TROIKA STILL IN EXISTENCE?

A. AS WILL PARIS AND WASHINGTON, WE WILL ACCEPT THE
OUTCOME OF THE EXISTING PARLIAMENTARY DISCUSSIONS. WE OBVIOUSLY RECOGNIZE THE NEW STRUCTURE (HIGH COUNCIL OF THE REPUBLIC - TRANSITIONAL PARLIAMENT) BECAUSE IT EMANATES FROM THE ACCORDS NEGOTIATED BY ZAIRIANS THEMSELVES. NEGOTIATED, BUT NOT YET SIGNED. JUST AS OUR PARTNERS, WE SUPPORT ANY PRIME MINISTER EMANATING FROM THIS NEW ZAIRIAN PARLIAMENT. IT IS NOT A QUESTION OF PERSONALITIES FOR US.

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BUT OF PRINCIPLE. THE HCR/PT REPRESENTS TO US THE NEW SOURCE OF LEGALITY IN ZAIRE. BUT I REPEAT THAT BEFORE ANY RESUMPTION OF INTERNATIONAL AID, SERIOUS GUARANTEES WILL BE NEEDED.

END EMBASSY TRANSLATION.

3. (C) WILFRIED JAENEN, BELGIAN MFA DIRECTOR FOR SUBSAHARAN AFRICA, WHO ACCOMPANIED FONMIN CLAES DURING HIS CENTRAL AFRICA SWING, CONFIRMED CLAES' PESSIMISTIC EVALUATION OF THE SITUATION IN RWANDA AND BURUNDI. THE MURDER OF A POLITICAL LEADER JUST HOURS AFTER HE HAD PARTICIPATED IN A MEETING WITH CLAES HAD SHOCKED AND SADDENED THE FOREIGN MINISTER.
PROVIDING APPROXIMATELY BF 1 BILLION IN DIRECT AID TO RWANDA. CLAES' MUCH PUBLICIZED THREAT TO REVIEW AID LEVELS ABSENT PROGRESS HAD NOT BEEN AN EMPTY ONE, JAENEN STATED. WHILE NEITHER CLAES NOR THE MFA HAD ANY "DROP DEAD" DATES IN MIND, THE UPCOMING UN REVIEW OF UNAMIR WAS A BUILT-IN DEADLINE. JAENEN SAID HE HOPED BOTH SIDES WOULD KEEP THIS IN MIND.

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EUR-01  HA-09  H-01  TEDE-00  INR-00  IO-16  LAB-01
L-01  ADS-00  NSAE-00  NSCE-00  OIC-02  OMB-01  PA-01
PM-01  PRS-01  P-01  SCT-03  SNP-00  SP-00  SSO-00
SS-00  TRSE-00  T-00  USIE-00  SNIS-00  NISC-02  PMB-00

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DEPARTMENT FOR AF/C AND EUR/NE

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BELGIUM WAS CURRENTLY ALLOCATING APPROXIMATELY BF 600 MILLION FOR ASSISTANCE TO REFUGEES AND DISPLACED IN RWANDA AND BURUNDI. JAENEN SAID HE EXPECTED FURTHER BILATERAL DISCUSSIONS WITH UGANDA, TANZANIA, AND KENYA ON THE POSSIBILITY OF DEVELOPING A REGIONAL COOPERATION SCHEME WITH AN EAST AFRICAN FOCUS.