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E.O. 13526, 1.4(c)

Central Intelligence Agency



Washington, D.C. 20505

09 April 1994

MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: Rwanda: Background to the Crisis

1. Renewed ethnic fighting in Rwanda this week dramatically ends efforts by the Hutu-dominated government and Tutsi rebels to implement an August 1993 peace accord. Both sides were committed to a 22-month program of demobilization, refugee repatriation, and democratic elections in 1995. E.O. 13526, 1.4(d)

#### Colonial Background

2. Unlike most African states, Rwanda was not an artificial creation of colonial rule but was absorbed by German East Africa in 1899. Rwandan and Burundi had been kingdoms for several centuries. After the First World War, they became territory of the Belgians. In 1959 Hutus toppled the Tutsi monarchy; Rwanda became independent in 1962. Rwanda's first Hutu President was overthrown in 1973 by President Habyarimana who dominated Rwandan politics until his assassination last week. E.O. 13526, 1.4(c)

#### Ethnic Background

3. Rwanda's ethnic groups, which speak the same language and have largely the same religion, have a long history of ethnic bloodletting that dates back to the 15th century when the Nilotic Tutsis moved south to dominate the agricultural Hutus. More than 100,000 people have been killed in ethnic fighting since independence, triggering an exodus of 500,000 Tutsi refugees. After 30 years, these numbers have grown to over a million Tutsis. Some Tutsis, who comprise about 15 percent of the population, are successful business people, but most are marginalized. E.O. 13526, 1.4(c)

#### Post Independence Politics

4. Rwandan politics had been dominated for years by President Habyarimana's virtually uncontested rule marked by an obsession to keep Hutus in control. Growing internal pressure in recent years began to challenge his authoritarian rule however. He divided power among the country's major institutions, marginalized rivals and favored bringing to power Hutu elites from

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his northern stronghold. He has used hardline Hutus to disrupt efforts to foster ethnic reconciliation with the Tutsi minority, almost certainly sanctioning violence against Tutsi civilians. E.O. 13526, 1.4(c)

#### **Tutsi Invasion...**

5. About 2000 Rwandan exiles from the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) based in Uganda invaded northeastern Rwanda on 1 October 1990, threatening President Habyarimana's regime and raising the specter of renewed ethnic violence in the region. Initial successes by the exile force--which managed to enter the Rwandan capital--prompted Belgium and France to send troops to protect their nationals and secure the airport. Zaire, which had a mutual defense agreement with Rwanda, also provided some 1200 troops to aid Rwandan forces. The initial invasion of about 2000 Rwandan Tutsi deserters from the Ugandan Army was joined by other Tutsis and disaffected Hutus, bringing the exiles' strength to what we estimate may have numbered 20,000. Following early combat success, the RPF guerrilla force was hampered by logistic constraints and the Rwandan Army, benefiting from military resupply by France, Belgium, Egypt, and South Africa contained the rebels primarily to the northeastern Mutara region. E.O. 13526, 1.4(c)

#### **...Evolves into Peace Talks**

6. After nearly a year of negotiations held in Arusha Tanzania, in August 1993 the Hutu government and the Tutsi rebels signed the peace accord giving the Tutsi minority seats in a multi-ethnic cabinet, slots in the armed forces, and a process for resettling Tutsi refugees. Mutual distrust undermined efforts to implement the agreements, but both sides agreed to the deployment of UN troops to serve as a confidence building force. Until this week, UNAMIR's 2500 man force had been relatively effective and quick to investigate claims of cease-fire violations. Last December, the rebels sent a 600-man bodyguard force to Kigali to protect rebel leaders participating in talks over forming a multi-ethnic coalition government. E.O. 13526, 1.4(c)

#### **...But Tensions Recently Increased**

7. Efforts to form the transitional government--which should have been installed in September 1993--recently stalled with both sides blaming each other for the delays. The RPF, increasingly impatient with what it viewed as Hutu President

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Habyarimana's manipulation of the 1993 accords, recently threatened to return to war if progress was not made toward forming the multi-ethnic government. The RPF also refused to allow a Hutu supremacist party, the Coalition for Defense of the Republic (CDR), to take a national assembly seat until the CDR demonstrated its commitment to the Arusha accord. With Rwanda's two main opposition parties--the Liberal Party (PL) and the Movement for a Democratic Rwanda (MDR)--divided by ethnic based power struggles, Habyarimana and the Tutsi rebels attempted to secure a more prominent role in the future transitional government.

8. Although the Arusha accords appeared to be falling apart, meetings last week in Kampala and Tanzania on resolving ethnic conflicts in Burundi and Rwanda offered some hope that civil war would be averted in Rwanda.

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#### Troubled Outlook

9. The renewed conflict in Rwanda will undermine UNAMIR'S mandate, fuel massive refugee flows and, threaten ethnic reconciliation in neighboring Burundi. Civil war in Kigali will almost certainly slow peace efforts between neighboring Burundi's ethnic Hutu-dominated government and the Tutsi-dominated military--which launched a coup last October killing Burundi's Hutu President and his direct line of succession, triggering more than 700,000 in refugees in the region and unleashing ethnic bloodletting which left scores of Burundians dead.

10. Moreover, if the RPF rebels engage government forces in Kigali the fighting is likely to be more intense as the RPF seeks to seize the government. In addition, the RPF is unlikely to seek an accommodation with the newly named interim government, which they see as a continuation of hardline Hutu political domination. We believe that the rebel forces are probably more disciplined than government forces who have always looked to the Paris to

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support them in the capital. Even if the RPF defeats government forces, they are unlikely to be able to maintain control of the Hutu majority in Kigali. E.O. 13526, 1.4(c)

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