

# Washington Calls for Military Action against Rwanda's FDLR Rebel Army

A Response to US Ambassador Russ Feingold

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Region: [sub-Saharan Africa](#)

Global Research, January 02, 2015

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*Addressing citizens of Rwanda December 12, 2014, President Kagame promised an expensive war to proponents of freedom, human rights, justice and democracy in Rwanda, and peace in the Great Lakes region. Amplifying Kagame's belligerent remarks, Foreign Minister Louise Mushikiwabo dismissed FDLR as « bandits » and such proponents of freedom and peace as « children selling candy”*



On December 30, 2014, U.S. Special Envoy to the Great Lakes region, Ambassador Russ Feingold, told reporters that military action should be taken against the Rwandan armed group FDLR. Ambassador Feingold added that the **'United States stands ready'** to support such military action after the expiry of the January 2, 2015, deadline. **Behind the scene there are frantic activities for Kagame and Museveni to by-pass SADC, and deploy the East African Stand-by Force, get Angola replace Tanzania and South Africa, thus qualifying for support by U.S. Special Forces.**

**Africa, you are forewarned of this new militaristic venture in our midst**

The United States is wrong again in supporting and spearheading a policy choice with grave and potentially catastrophic consequences for Rwandans and people of the Great Lakes region. As in 1994, when President Clinton and his advisers chose to ignore the plight of Rwandans, ushering in genocide and suffering in the Great Lakes region, now his fellow Democrat, President Obama is calling for war in DRC. Those who advised President Clinton against helping Rwandans in 1994 now hold even senior positions in the Obama White House, and have now decided that the best option for Rwanda now is to shoot Rwandans.

**First, FDLR** has called for dialogue with the Kagame regime while accepting to lay down its arms. The Kagame regime has categorically stated it will not negotiate with FDLR because it comprises “genocidaires” ( despite the fact that over 20 years Rwanda has integrated thousands of such elements in its Rwanda Defence Forces).

The United States echoes the Rwandan position whole sale, by not differentiating those who should account for their crimes, from the rank and file who have legitimate demands regarding marginalization of the Hutu in the post-1994 political dispensation. Accountability for crimes among those in FDLR who are responsible is an important principle that should be upheld. Equally, Kagame and his clique, responsible for horrendous abuses in Rwanda, DRC and across the globe should be equally held accountable.

**Second, unlike the M23**, FDLR is NOT fighting UN peacekeepers, Rwandan or Congolese armies. Why should the United States and Rwanda think that a war of annihilation against this group of Rwandans will be a viable and just effort this time?

**Third, another war effort in DRC** may once again turn regional and expensive, as Kagame wants and has promised, with humanitarian consequences to Congolese people and Rwandan refugees in DRC. The human toll on Rwandans and Congolese in DRC, largely due to Kagame’s wars of impunity, enabled by US protective policies have left over six millions dead in the last two decades. There are over a quarter of a million Rwandan refugees languishing in the jungles of DRC. Is the United States ready to take responsibility of another and far worse humanitarian catastrophe?

**Fourth, the main architects of the M23 defeat**, notably South Africa, Tanzania and DRC are not keen on purely military solutions that do not take into consideration Rwanda’s domestic repression that requires a peaceful dialogue, not only with FDLR but also with Rwanda’s political opposition. Kagame has closed political space. He kills and imprisons his opponents. Unable to persuade SADC as to the rationale for war, the United States has resorted to big-sticks, a check book and gunboats to woo Angola and isolate Tanzania and South Africa.

**Fifth, the United States push for war risks inflaming an already fragile and polarized situation in Rwanda, Burundi and the Democratic Republic of Congo.** Since Kagame has ruled out any dialogue with armed or political opposition to his brutal and repressive regime, and it’s principal and powerful ally ( United States) calls for war, the voices for peaceful change will increasingly become marginalized as civil war becomes the only realistic option for regime change. As Kagame promised, this will be expensive for all Rwandans, including Kagame and his henchmen, for the Great Lakes region, and for international community. Just as President Clinton has lived with a guilt-laden conscience due to his failure to act in 1994, a U.S.-engineered Rwandan/DRC tragedy may indeed come to be included in President Obama’s fateful legacy in Africa.

**Rwandans, Congolese, SADC, Africans and peace-loving members of the international community should resist calls for war by the United States and President Kagame. Instead, let Rwandans, supported by SADC, the African Union, and the international community, push for a dialogue for peace between the Kagame regime and the FDLR as well as with the political opposition.**

The United States should move away from a dangerous militaristic Kagame-centric policy

that supports a brutal regime with horrendous human rights abuses in Rwanda, DRC and across the world. Such a policy may look good in the short term, but in the medium to long term it is counter-productive to U.S. national interests. Most importantly, it runs against the foundational principles of freedom, equality and pursuit of happiness upon which the United States is built, and which even wretched Rwandans as human beings demand and deserve.

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**December 30, 2014**

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