

Will US Policymakers Review “Rwanda: The Untold Story” Before Sending in the Marines?

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“[Rwanda: The Untold Story](#),” a controversial BBC documentary first aired in the U.K. on Oct. 1, undermines the rationale for military action against the FDLR fighters in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo’s North Kivu Provinces. The FDLR has been described as the militia that committed the Rwandan Genocide in 1994, but the documentary suggests that no one was more responsible than Rwanda’s President Paul Kagame himself.

Transcript



Tanzanian President Jacaya Kikwete, right, has encouraged Rwandan President Paul Kagame, left, to negotiate with the FDLR militia for the safe return of Rwandan refugees in eastern Congo to Rwanda. Kagame has absolutely refused.

KPFA Weekend News Anchor Sharon Sobotta: The recent BBC documentary, “Rwanda: The Untold Story,” challenges the most fundamental and widely held beliefs about what happened in Rwanda’s war and genocide of the 1990s. Fierce argument over the documentary continues to escalate in the British, French and Rwandan press, with implications for Rwanda, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and the entire Great Lakes Region of Africa. KPFA’s Ann Garrison has more.

KPFA/Ann Garrison: The Rwandan government has shut down BBC programming in the Kinyarwanda language and said that it will indict the BBC producers of “Rwanda: The Untold Story” for “genocide denial.” The BBC told the London Guardian that they had a moral duty to make the film and announced that they will air it again this Friday.

U.K. publications including the Telegraph, the London Guardian, the Spectator and the BBC itself have all published argument over the BBC documentary, which has been the subject of

no more than an AP wire in the U.S. corporate press.

The recent BBC documentary, “Rwanda: The Untold Story,” challenges the most fundamental and widely held beliefs about what happened in Rwanda’s war and genocide of the 1990s.

A CBS News report, “Militia accused of Rwanda genocide facing onslaught,” aired this week, but failed to mention the escalating controversy over who was actually responsible for the mass killing known as the Rwandan Genocide. It included this clip.

CBS: These men have been called killers, perpetrators of genocide, and they’ve been on the run in Congo for two decades? Now they say they want to stop fighting and go home to Rwanda.

FDLR fighter: We don’t want to remain fighters. The only thing we want is for the international community to help us go back to our homeland.

KPFA: The CBS report also quoted a U.N. source who said that U.N. troops may need the help of U.S. Marines, Special Forces and special equipment to finally hunt down this Rwandan refugee militia, the Force Democratique de Liberacion du Rwanda or FDLR, in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo.



As a senator, President Barack Obama authored the Congo Relief and Democracy Promotion Act of 2006, which said that the real or perceived threat from hostile militias in eastern Congo had become a pretext for Rwanda and Uganda to invade the DRC and engage in illegal resource extraction. However, he himself is now threatening military action against one of these militias, the FDLR.

But who are the FDLR, really? Although they number no more than 1,500, Kagame’s Rwanda has used them as an excuse for its past 18 years of war and illegal resource extraction in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Many Rwandan opposition leaders, including political prisoner Victoire Ingabire and exiled opposition leader and former Rwandan Prime Minister Faustin Twagiramungu, have said that the FDLR are simply Rwandan refugees who are armed to protect more than 100,000 survivors of the refugee exodus from Rwanda to Zaire, now the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, in 1994. Tanzanian President Jacaya Kikwete has said the same and urged Rwandan President Paul Kagame to negotiate the refugees’ safe return to Rwanda.

In 1994, a Nightline reporter described the 1994 refugee exodus from Rwanda to Zaire, now the Democratic Republic of the Congo, as the most catastrophic refugee death march he had ever seen:

Nightline: The road from Goma is littered with bodies, taken out each morning like Africa's trash, to be collected each day, then dumped in deep trenches now overflowing. Two thousand Rwandans, two thousand human beings, are dying each day now, from dysentery, dehydration and cholera. That's more than one every minute. By the end of this broadcast, 40 more will be gone and tomorrow their bodies will join the others by the side of the road.

KPFA/Ann Garrison: Who was responsible for the massacres in Rwanda in the 1990s? The armed refugees who now claim that their only goal is to protect their families and the rest of the Rwandan refugees until they can return to Rwanda? Or, as the BBC suggests, the Rwandan Patriotic Front and most of all its commander, General, now President, Paul Kagame?

If the joint U.S./U.N. military action threatened on Jan. 2 takes place, will it be hunting down victims, perpetrators or both? Or will it hunt down children younger than 20 years old, who were not even born in 1994? And is there any chance that the BBC documentary, which undermines the stated rationale for military action against the FDLR, will keep President Obama from sending in the Marines?

For Pacifica, KPFA, and AfrobeatRadio, I'm Ann Garrison.

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