

But Operation Turquoise was indeed a success, and it was a success because they intervened quickly with a small number of highly mobile professional troops. The fact that widespread massacres had already occurred does not detract from their success in preventing further massacres and in limiting violence to isolated sporadic killings. By whatever measure, their presence reduced the flow of refugees to Zaire. One must assume that there were substantial numbers of government troops and militia working their way through to Zaire, and they clearly were not about to take on disciplined professional troops and many of them were even disarmed by the French. What conclusions can be drawn about UNAMIR doing likewise albeit much earlier and throughout the country?

Rwanda 'what if' scenario

One feasible Rwandan 'what if' scenario starts on April 6th 1994, the date when the presidential aircraft was shot down killing both Presidents. Within days it became clear that the de facto Rwandan authorities had no intention of fulfilling the Arusha Accords, and that they had initiated a planned extermination of moderate Hutus and Tutsis at large. At that point, ie. April 8th or 9th, it is highly feasible that in response to field intelligence, UNAMIR could have without any change in its mandate or numerical size¹², have undergone the below:

- * UNMOs could have regrouped into 5 main centres outside of Kigali and been provided with supplies, arms, armoured vehicles, and small defensive troop detachments. This would have allowed them to provide intelligence for international decisions and play a role in limiting massacres and reassuring potential refugees.

- *UNAMIR could have been provided with more armoured reconnaissance and transport vehicles. This would have allowed faster and safer movement of sub-units to facilitate roving patrols and temporary outposts. As with the UNMOs, they would have been able to play a critical role in limiting the massacres and reassuring potential refugees to stay put. It should be recalled that UNAMIR lacked even the capacity to pull GhanBatt back to Kigali.

- *The UN Belgian battalion could have been replaced by an equally trained and equipped battalion. This would not have increased the UNAMIR establishment, it would merely have replaced authorised like with like. A conservative estimate was that the departure of the Belgian UN contingent cut the armed response

¹² This scenario does not have to debate whether early warnings were sufficient to warrant earlier international action. Arguably on April 6th, UNAMIR strength and mandate was about as good as could be reasonably expected. Less reasonable was the lack of preparedness of UNAMIR, and the UN at large, to respond quickly to a crisis for which there was a reasonable likelihood.