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Profile

This section of the report will provide descriptive information and findings, in terms of the crisis objectives, structure, resources and activities. It is intended to profile the relief effort in DFAIT, providing information relevant to the issues under review in this study and not to be an exhaustive account of all actions. A more comprehensive, historical record of the African Great Lakes Crisis is forthcoming through the work of BCCH.

For the purpose of this study, arbitrary start and completion time frames are imposed to differentiate between the management of the crisis and 'every day business'. Specifically, this study explores the DFAIT's actions from November 10, 1996 when the Prime Minister announced Canada's intention to pursue UN approval for a Canadian-led multinational force, to December 31, 1996 when Canadian command and elements of the military force were withdrawn. It is recognized, however, that important activity both precedes and follows these time frames.

Precipitating this crisis, there were increasing hostilities surrounding the refugee camps in Zaire, resulting in the evacuation of Canadians from the region and thus critical withdrawal of humanitarian support. The Canadian Post in Kigali was instrumental in the evacuation process and, at Headquarters, GAFX had initiated interdepartmental meetings (weekly at first and then daily) to keep abreast of developments and share information. These meetings included representatives from impacted areas within DFAIT, CIDA and DND.

Additionally, Canadian Ambassador R. Chrétien had been enlisted as the United Nations Special Envoy (on November 1, 1996) and was significantly supported in his mission (from November 5 to December 5, 1996) by DFAIT Headquarters and Posts activities.