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Committee on Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on Africa

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Committee on Foreign Affairs
Subcommittee on Africa

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CHAIRMAN OBJECTS TO UNILATERAL FRENCH INTERVENTION IN RWANDA

Rep. Harry Johnston (D-FL), Chairman of the House Subcommittee on Africa, today strongly objected to the proposed unilateral French intervention into Rwanda and the authorization of such an intervention by the United Nations Security Council. A unilateral intervention without the consent of all parties to the conflict could lead to more bloodshed in Rwanda.

"I am extremely frustrated with delays in deploying the proposed 5,500 United Nations peacekeepers from African countries, and with the lack of effective U.S. action to provide logistical support," Johnston said. "However, French intervention amid opposition from the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) will only complicate and further exacerbate conditions on the ground."

While the French offer to assist in the resolution of the Rwandan conflict is encouraging, it is vital that it be done in a credible multilateral form. Congressman Johnston expressed disappointment over the lack of clarity of U.S. policy on this issue.

"The United States must not endorse a unilateral intervention by any country without the consent of the factions concerned," Johnston said. "The United States must condition its support for the proposed French-led intervention. First, the proposed force must be truly multilateral, not just France and a few of its African allies. Second," Johnston said, "this force must have the consent of the Rwandan parties to the conflict. Third, the duration of the force should be limited to 45 days."

Congressman Johnston said that it is crucial for members of the United Nations Security Council to consider the implications of authorizing a French-led force without the consent of all parties concerned. Congressman Johnston warned that the United Nations must be careful to avoid a serious mistake in Rwanda if it is to maintain its credibility in Africa.

"If the United Nations proceeds with its authorization of the force without taking into account the concerns of the RPF, the responsibility for increased tension in Rwanda rests on its shoulders," Johnston said.

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