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Democratic Republic of the Congo: Peace Process and Background

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Summary

The Democratic Republic of the Congo, formerly Zaire, is a vast, resource-rich country of nearly 50 million people. In August 1998, Congo was plunged into its second civil war in 2 years. A peace accord was concluded in Lusaka, Zambia, in July and August 1999, and the United Nations later agreed to send peace monitors and protecting troops, in a force known as MONUC, to assist in the peace process. Deployment was slow, but the assassination of President Laurent Kabila on January 16, 2001, was followed by progress in the peace process under a new regime headed by Joseph Kabila, Laurent's son. On June 15, 2001, the U.N. Security Council approved plans to expand MONUC to its authorized level of 5,537 personnel.

Recent instability in Congo has been rooted in ethnic and political unrest in the eastern part of the country, and also in the fact that guerrillas seeking the overthrow of the governments of Rwanda and Uganda are based in the east. Both countries have sent troops into Congo, and have allied themselves to rebel groups opposed to the Congo government. Some reports indicate that interests in both countries are exploiting Congo's rich resources of timber, gold, and diamonds. Burundi is also fighting Burundi guerrillas based in Congo.

Zimbabwe President Robert Mugabe has deployed more than 11,000 troops to back the Congo government, and reports allege that Zimbabwe interests are also profiting from Congo's resources. Angola also backs Congo government, evidently in the hope that this will help prevent UNITA, the Angolan armed opposition movement, from using bases in Congo.

The 1996-1997 rebellion began in eastern Zaire, but won broad support due to high poverty levels and dissatisfaction with the regime of President Mobutu Sese Seko, who had ruled since 1965. Rwanda, which had suffered an anti-Tutsi genocide in 1994, supported the rebellion, and broke up large Hutu refugee camps in eastern Zaire. These camps had been sheltering Hutu militants who were staging incursions into Rwanda. Rebel leader Laurent Kabila took power in May 1997, and suspended the activities of all political parties, except for his Alliance of Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Congo-Zaire (AFDL). Human rights activists maintain that he suppressed dissent in an attempt to hold onto power indefinitely. Kabila showed considerable distrust of the western donor community, which pressed for democratization, and this sharply limited aid inflows. Upon Mobutu's death in September 1997, Congo was left with a \$14 billion foreign debt.

Congo was ill-prepared for independence in 1960; its first civil war broke out almost immediately, leading to U.N. intervention. U.S. policymakers took a strong interest in Zaire during the Cold War years because of its resources and central location, but relations with Mobutu cooled in the post-Cold War era. Policymakers initially welcomed Laurent Kabila's pledge of elections in 2 years, but problems in democratization and economic reform complicated relations. A limited aid program focusing on democracy, health, the private sector, and the environment was resumed. Secretary of State Colin Powell has urged all parties to respect the Lusaka agreement and said he is "cautiously optimistic" about implementation.

Contents

Introduction	1
Historical Background	2
Political Change after 1990	3
Zaire's 1996-1997 Civil War	4
Second Congo Civil War	6
Rebellion in the East	7
Foreign Involvement	8
The RCD and MLC	9
Congo Peace Process	10
Implementing the Lusaka Agreement	10
Cease-fire and Disengagement	11
Joint Military Commission	11
Withdrawal of Foreign Forces	12
Armed Groups	13
Political Dialogue	13
United Nations Force	13
Democratization Issues	15
Humanitarian Situation	16
Prospects for the Future	17
U.S. Policy	18
Congressional Involvement	20
Appendix 1. Democratic Republic of the Congo	22
Appendix 2. Acronyms	23

Democratic Republic of the Congo: Peace Process and Background

Introduction

The Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC or DROC), formerly Zaire, is a vast, resource-rich country at the heart of Central Africa. It borders nine other countries, and events there can have an impact over much of the sub-Saharan region. Secure transport on the Congo River, as well as potential road and rail routes across Congo, could be a great economic boon to the region, and Congo could be an important market for neighboring states. As recently as the 1980s, Zaire was the world's largest producer of cobalt and a leading producer of industrial diamonds as well as copper. It has petroleum deposits, much good farmland, and great hydroelectric potential.

Despite its potential, Congo today is experiencing grave political and economic problems, following major upheaval in 1996-1997, and again in 1998-1999. Troops from five African countries are present in Congo,¹ and large parts of the east and north of the country are held by rebel groups. Armed militias also roam the east, where civilian populations are suffering from prolonged instability and civil strife, and human rights violations are common. Thus, some analysts fear a renewal of widespread armed conflict in Congo, civil war, and a possible breakup of the country.

Others, however, are encouraged by slow progress in the Congo peace process, which began in July/August 1999, and accelerated after the assassination of Congo President Laurent Kabila on January 16, 2001. United Nations Secretary General Kofi Annan, speaking to the Security Council on July 24, 2001, noted that the 6-month old Congo ceasefire was holding, despite some allegations of violations that were under investigation; that most armed forces in Congo had disengaged in accordance with a U.N.-supported disengagement plan; and that the U.N. peacekeeping force in Congo, known as MONUC, had developed a positive working relationship with the Congo government. However, the Secretary General himself remained cautious about the prospects for long-term peace in Congo, pointing out that "we are still far from the point in the DRC where the peace process is irreversible."

The purpose of this report is to review the status of the DRC peace process, provide background on recent conflicts in the Congo; briefly summarize the political history that led to these conflicts; and assess prospects for the future. U.S. Congo policy and congressional involvement are also described.

¹Details are provided below. Troops from a sixth country, Burundi, may also be present in the east, but information on this is sketchy.

Historical Background

Congo's difficulties today result in part from the stunning rate of change it has confronted over a short span of history. In 1930, Congo was a rural, peasant-based society under the control of a tiny elite of Belgian bureaucrats assisted by a few senior Congolese clerks and a sometimes brutal colonial police force. Today, the country has a sprawling capital of five to eight million inhabitants, an overall population of nearly 50 million (up from 20 million in 1970), and a complex social structure that includes a kaleidoscope of conflicting ethnic loyalties as well as sharp economic and social class divisions.²

Congo has posed challenges for the broader international system for more than a century. The Conference of Berlin (1884-1885) accepted the claims of Belgian King Léopold II to this sprawling territory of diverse peoples and many languages in order to stave off a destabilizing scramble for the region among Europe's great powers. The brutal repression, mutilations, and forced labor characteristic of Léopold's rule were exposed by human rights activists and missionaries at the turn of the century, and the situation in the Congo became an international scandal.³ In 1908, the Belgian parliament voted to remove the colony from Léopold's personal control and make it a Belgian colony. Belgium adopted a highly paternalistic style of rule, treating Congolese as incapable of self-government. Reportedly, when independence came in 1960, not one Congo citizen had received a university degree. Political parties only began to emerge in the 1950's, and according to a leading authority, "Large-scale contact with the outside world dates only from the Brussels Exposition (World Fair) of 1958, where several hundred Congolese were brought to Belgium as showpieces for the Congolese pavilion."⁴

Congo's initial upheaval broke out in July 1960, just after independence. The Belgian government had agreed to set a date for independence only in January, finally acknowledging that a small European country could not hope to maintain a large colony in Africa in the face of rising nationalism around the continent. Nonetheless, Belgian officers attempted to retain control of the Congolese army after independence, leading to a mutiny and attacks on Europeans. A United Nations peacekeeping force intervened in the resulting unrest in an effort to prevent the situation from becoming a Cold War crisis. In fact, however, Congo did become a major Cold War issue after Prime Minister Patrice Lumumba, who enjoyed the sympathy and backing of the Soviet Union, was killed in 1961. The Soviets halted their contributions to U.N. peacekeeping, leading to a financial crisis that crippled the United Nations for years. Dag Hammarskjöld, who had shown himself to be a strong and effective U.N. Secretary General, was killed in a suspicious plane crash

² Crawford Young and Thomas Turner, *The Rise and Decline of the Zairian State* (Madison, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 1985), p. 79.

³ Adam Hochschild, *King Leopold's Ghost* (Boston, New York: Houghton-Mifflin, 1998)

⁴ Crawford Young, *Politics in the Congo, Decolonization and Independence* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1965), p. 280-281.

as he flew to negotiations on an end to the secession of rebellious southeastern province of Katanga (Shaba).

The U.N. force withdrew in 1964, leaving the country united, but politically unsettled and facing continued secessionist threats in key regions. In November 1965, General Joseph Mobutu, a former journalist who had risen to command the armed forces, seized power in a bloodless coup. The coup won ready acceptance in western capitals, where Mobutu already had many advocates, because of concern that the civilian regime was moving to the left. Over the next few years, Mobutu managed to neutralize his political opposition, thwart secessionist tendencies in key regions, and consolidate his power base. His methods, which included the arrest and humiliation of former allies and the elimination of independent labor unions, were authoritarian but not unusual among Third World countries at that time.

In the 1970s, however, Mobutu began a series of disruptive political and economic initiatives that brought a prolonged decline in the nation's fortunes — leading to eventual economic collapse and finally to the political crisis of 1991. His “authenticity” campaign, launched in 1971, in addition to requiring Zairians to abandon western styles of dress, included banning Christian forenames and prohibiting religious broadcasts. Mobutu himself adopted a series of honorific titles, such as Guide, Helmsman, and Father of the Nation. At the end of 1973, he launched his “Zairianization” campaign for the economy, which resulted in the seizure of foreign-owned properties and their redistribution to Mobutu loyalists. Many of the extreme measures undertaken by Mobutu in the first half of the 1970s had to be eased or retracted in subsequent years. But the confidence of foreign investors and lenders had been badly shaken, and the economy never recovered. A long era of negative growth set in, worsened by low world prices for copper, the high cost of oil imports, and what analysts described as pervasive corruption. Nonetheless, some observers credited Mobutu's policies with maintaining stability and minimizing ethnic conflict. Critics argued, however, that in stifling political dissent and impoverishing Zaire's people, Mobutu was only bottling up resentments that were bound to explode at some point.

Political Change after 1990

Mobutu's political position deteriorated sharply in 1990, as domestic and international pressures forced him into major policy changes and concessions. The denouement of the Cold War reduced the incentives for western governments to offer him political or economic support. Meanwhile, the Union for Democracy and Social Progress (UDPS), headed by Tshisekedi wa Mulumba, joined with student groups to mount a series of protests and demonstrations. Police and military repression of these protests brought fresh international criticism.

In 1990, Mobutu finally accepted the creation of a full multi-party system in principle. The continued deterioration of the economy, however, was adding fuel to popular anger, and large demonstrations broke out. In April 1991, Mobutu acceded to a key opposition demand by announcing that a national political conference would be convened. The Sovereign National Conference finally began its work in April

1992, and a long contest for power with Mobutu ensued. But while Kinshasa politicians were pre-occupied with this power struggle, the power of the central government was declining, contributing to concerns over the possible breakup of Zaire. East Kasai and its capital, Mbuji-Mayi, experienced relative prosperity based on a black market diamond industry. Investments by South African companies helped to re-orient the economy of mineral-rich Shaba province toward English-speaking southern Africa rather than Kinshasa.

Despite growing regionalism, some observers were encouraged during the mid-1990s by the emergence of a civil society in Zaire, centered around churches and non-governmental organizations. Student groups, human rights organizations, and political parties were increasingly effective and typically led by articulate, outspoken individuals. With a loosening of economic controls, the private enterprise sector grew stronger, although major business figures tended to be closely connected to Mobutu.

DRC In Brief

Area: more than one-fourth the United States

Population: 49.8 million (1999 est.)
Growth rate: 3.2% (1997 est.)

Independence: June 30, 1960, from Belgium

GDP: \$6.6 billion (1999 est.)
Per capita : \$110 (1998 est.)

Real GDP Growth: -8% (annual average, 1988-1999)

Ethnic groups: more than 200

Religions: Roman Catholic, 50%; Protestant, 20%; Kimbanguist (syncretic), 10%; Moslem 10%

Sources: U.S. Central Intelligence Agency, *World Factbook*; World Bank, *African*

Zaire's 1996-1997 Civil War

Zaire seemed to be entering a new era on May 17, 1997, when troops of the Alliance of Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Congo-Zaire (AFDL), swept into Kinshasa, the capital. AFDL leader Laurent Kabila immediately renamed the country the Democratic Republic of the Congo, declared himself president, and was formally sworn into office, with sweeping powers, on May 29, 1997. Mobutu Sese Seko, who had given Congo the unpopular name of "Zaire," fled the country, dying in exile in Morocco on September 7, 1997.

Kabila had managed to conquer a country nearly as large as the European Union in just 7 months. The takeover was made possible in part by the refusal of the rarely-paid Zairian army to fight and the lack of support for Mobutu among the Zairian people. President Mobutu was gravely ill with prostate cancer and unable to make critical military and political decisions, and his troops retreated, looting as they withdrew.

But the key factor in Kabila's victory was the support he received from neighboring states, particularly Rwanda. In a July 9, 1997, *Washington Post* interview, Paul Kagame, now Rwanda's president, claimed that his government had

planned and carried out the overthrow of Mobutu, sending soldiers and officers to participate in the fighting. It is generally believed that Uganda, anxious to bring Uganda rebel groups operating along the Congo border under control, also played a role in supporting the rebels. Angola is thought to have backed them as well because it resented the covert aid, shelter, and political support Mobutu gave over many years to the UNITA opposition movement in Angola. UNITA meanwhile, was widely reported to have aided Mobutu.

Armed conflict first broke out in South Kivu province in mid-October 1996 between the army and indigenous ethnic Tutsi — a group found primarily in neighboring Rwanda and Burundi, where Tutsi minorities dominate government and the armed forces. Known as the Banyamulenge, the South Kivu Tutsi are Congolese descendants of herders who came to the area as long as 200 years ago and may number 300,000 to 400,000 or more today. They had been targets of increasing local resentment arising from ethnic differences and economic grievances, and the Mobutu regime was intensifying an effort to deprive them of their citizenship. In October 1996, Tutsi in South Kivu were ordered to leave by the region's deputy governor, but Tutsi guerrillas, some of whom may have had experience in the Rwanda civil war, fought back with surprising effectiveness. In North Kivu, other Tutsi guerrillas, acting in alliance with local, non-Tutsi militia, completed the capture of Goma. Tutsi had first arrived in North Kivu during the colonial period. Tutsi rebels were motivated in part by anger over a local anti-Tutsi campaign, beginning in 1993, that had displaced large numbers of their people and reportedly killed thousands.

Ethnic tensions in eastern Zaire had been gravely exacerbated by the July 1994 arrival in eastern Zaire of an estimated 1.2 million Hutu refugees from Rwanda. The Hutu, traditional rivals⁵ of the Tutsi, had fled Rwanda as the Tutsi-dominated Rwanda Patriotic Front (RPF) was consolidating its conquest of Rwanda. The RPF had been provoked into a military offensive in April 1994, when Hutu militants, including armed bands known as Interahamwe,⁶ launched an anti-Tutsi genocide. When the Zaire rebellion broke out, Goma was surrounded by Hutu refugee camps housing 700,000 people or more, and there were Hutu refugees in other locations as well.

Interahamwe and ex-FAR at the camps, as well as former Rwanda government officials, were widely suspected of intimidating civilian refugees to prevent them from returning to Rwanda. These Hutu militants were also thought to have organized armed incursions back into Rwanda and to be preparing for an attempt to retake the country. Rwandan authorities demanded that the international community take steps to curb their activities, but nothing was done. The initial Tutsi victories exposed the weakness of the Mobutu regime, and the rebellion broadened with the early and unexpected emergence of the AFDL, uniting the Tutsi groups with other Zaire opposition forces.

⁵Whether Hutu and Tutsi were rivals in pre-colonial times, or became rivals due to the policies of colonial rulers, is a subject of debate among historians.

⁶Some translate "Interahamwe" as "those who fight together," though others argue that it means simply "those of a common age who get on well with one another."

Laurent Kabila, the AFDL leader, had been born in 1939 and was from a group known as the “Balubakat.” These are Luba people, originally from the Kasais, who settled in Katanga Province (renamed Shaba Province during the Mobutu period) in search of economic opportunities during the colonial era. Kabila was a veteran of previous revolutionary struggles, and worked with Cuban revolutionary Che Guevara when Che was supporting a revolution in eastern Zaire in the mid-1960s. Kabila’s Party of the Popular Revolution (PRP) survived for years in the mountains around Uvira, near Burundi, and originally had a Marxist orientation. In 1975, Kabila guerrillas crossed Lake Tanganyika and kidnaped one Dutch and three American students working at the chimpanzee study center run by British naturalist Jane Goodall. Held under harsh conditions before they were ransomed, the four victims remained bitter toward Kabila. They wrote then Secretary of State Albright on May 23, 1997, asking the Clinton Administration to confront the rebel leader about his record of “kidnaping, slavery, and terrorism.”⁷

Tutsi and Hutu

Rwanda: Tutsi, 15% of population; Hutu, 84%. Tutsi dominate government and army. Hutu dominated until 1994, when a Tutsi armed force seized power in reaction to an anti-Tutsi genocide.

Congo: 300,000-400,000 Tutsi settlers in South Kivu; other Tutsi in North Kivu; Hutu farmers of long residence in eastern Congo; thousands of Hutu militants who fled Rwanda after the 1994 events.

Burundi: Tutsi, 14% of population; Hutu, 85%. Tutsi, concentrated in capital, dominate government and the army. A prolonged peace process has not ended a violent ethnic conflict. Hutu rebels are believed to shelter in Congo, provoking cross-border operations by the Burundi army.

Sources include CIA World Factbook, press accounts, standard reference sources.

Second Congo Civil War

In a May 17, 1998 speech commemorating the anniversary of the revolution, Laurent Kabila claimed credit for ending the looting and intimidation practiced by Mobutu’s soldiers, stabilizing the country’s currency, and dealing with underlying social problems, such as tribalism. Observers generally agreed that the security situation had indeed improved, except in eastern Congo. Inflation had been reduced, and in June 1998, the government launched a new currency, the Congolese franc. Kabila seemed to enjoy broad public support in recognition of his success in ousting Mobutu, even if he was not deeply popular everywhere. Some sensed that Congo’s sense of national unity seemed stronger as well.

Yet Congo was still a deeply troubled nation, and the situation soon deteriorated further. Government authority was weak even in regions ostensibly under Kabila’s control, and civil servants were paid irregularly, just as in the Mobutu era. The Kabila regime was probably obtaining some financial backing from contracts with foreign mining firms but failed to attract the large-scale foreign investment needed

⁷*Washington Post* (October 25, 1997).

to spark an economic recovery. Political uncertainties, erratic behavior toward particular foreign firms, rapid inflation, and the absence of a legal regime governing business affairs were particular problems. In September 1999, Kabila closed all foreign exchange offices and imposed a \$500,000 fee, termed a financial guarantee, on all foreigners engaged in commercial activities. Fuel prices nearly tripled in June 2000, following a 60% devaluation in the Congolese franc. Congo's relations with the donor community and non-governmental organizations were seriously strained over issues related to democratization, human rights, and economic reform.

Alignment of Forces in Congo

Government aligned: armed forces of the DRC, Interahamwe, ex-FAR, and Mai-Mai, as well as troops from Angola, Zimbabwe, and Namibia.

Rwanda aligned: Rwanda troops deployed in Congo; RCD-Goma, now headed by Adolphe Onusumba Yemba.

Uganda aligned: Uganda troops in Congo; Jean-Pierre Bemba's MLC and the FLC, which he also heads; Wamba dia Wamba's RCD faction, known as RCD-Kisangani, now believed to be severely weakened.

See text and **Appendix 2, List of Acronyms**, for further details.

Rebellion in the East. The unsettled eastern Congo, particularly North Kivu and South Kivu provinces, remained torn by violence and highly unstable. Ex-soldiers from Mobutu's army ("ex-FAZ") operated in the area, along with Interahamwe, ex-FAR, Hutu rebels from Burundi, and Ugandan rebels. The governments of Rwanda and Burundi, dominated by individuals of the Tutsi ethnic group, wanted to prevent incursions by Hutu militants from Congo into their countries, and leaders probably also sympathized with persecuted Tutsi living in Congo. "Mai Mai," indigenous guerrillas in eastern Congo, known for their supposed belief that water and amulets can shield them from bullets, are strongly anti-Tutsi and are a major factor in the unrest in the east, as are the Bembe people of South Kivu, who have long resented Tutsi settlers.

In supporting Kabila during the 1996-1997 Congo revolution, Rwanda had expected that once in power, he would cooperate with Rwanda in controlling the Hutu militants in eastern Congo. President Kabila, however, found he had to cope with the unpopularity of Tutsi troops, many of them child soldiers, in Kinshasa, where they were widely viewed as arrogant foreigners. There was also popular resentment of Tutsi who held influential positions in his government and party. Kabila himself seemed to grow increasingly suspicious of his Tutsi lieutenants.

A July 27, 1998 Congolese government announcement that the presence of Rwandan soldiers in Congo had been "terminated" seemed to trigger the outbreak of the new rebellion. Whether the rebellion had been planned long in advance or came about spontaneously remains a subject of speculation, but on August 2, 1998, the Tenth Battalion of the Congolese army, based at Goma in North Kivu, broadcast a communique accusing Kabila of corruption and nepotism and stating that the army had decided to remove him from power. Organizing themselves as the Congolese

Democratic Rally (or Party, RCD), the rebels swiftly seized major towns in eastern Congo, including Goma, on the Rwanda border, which became their capital. In a surprise strategic move, rebel troops were flown to western Congo and seized the military base and airfield at Kitona. Rebels soon gained control of Congo's seaports and a hydroelectric dam supplying Kinshasa, a city of 5 million people. Periodic blackouts ensued as rebels predicted the fall of Kinshasa by the end of August.

In mid-August 1998, the armies of Zimbabwe and Angola came to Kabila's aid, breaking the siege of Kinshasa and eventually stabilizing the military situation. Today, rebel forces and their foreign supporters hold roughly the eastern third of the country along a line running roughly from somewhere south of Zongo in the northwest to the northeastern part of Katanga (Shaba) province.

Foreign Involvement. The second Congo rebellion was clearly backed by Uganda and Rwanda from the outset. By November 1998, Rwanda was openly acknowledging that it had troops in Congo to protect itself from Congo-based Hutu militants, and Uganda also admitted sending troops into Congo for national security reasons. Some observers suspect that Uganda and Rwanda had acquired territorial ambitions in Congo and of wanting to retain the ability to exploit the eastern region's resources — charges both countries deny. However, repeated clashes in 1999 and 2000 between Ugandan and Rwandan troops in Kisangani, at the center of a resource-rich region, lent credence to the view that the two erstwhile allies were actually rivals for Congo's riches. The clashes, which killed hundreds of civilians and brought heavy international condemnation, came to an end in June 2000, when the two countries agreed to withdraw their forces from Kisangani. In South Kivu, meanwhile, troops from the Tutsi-dominated Burundi army were reportedly conducting operations within Congo against Burundi Hutu rebels.

Under Kabila, Congo had joined the Southern African Development Community (SADC), and this move proved crucial in winning support against the rebellion. The head of SADC's security organ, Zimbabwe President Robert Mugabe, became an advocate of SADC armed intervention on Kabila's behalf. Analysts speculate that Mugabe saw a chance in the Congo crisis to restore his reputation as a key African leader and to reduce what he may see as the undue regional influence enjoyed by South Africa. Angola also favored backing the Kabila government, betting that Kabila would help prevent Congo from being used as a rear base by the armed Angolan opposition force known as UNITA. The thousands of exiled Hutu militants from Rwanda, including Interahamwe and ex-FAR, also joined the fight on Kabila's behalf.

Today, news reports estimate the number of Zimbabwe troops in Congo at 11,000 or more. There have been protests in Harare, the Zimbabwe capital, against this deployment, and Zimbabwe's troops are believed to have suffered a number of casualties. IMF and World Bank lending to Zimbabwe is suspended, in part because of concerns the two multilateral lenders have over Zimbabwe spending in Congo. (See CRS Issue Brief IB10059, *Zimbabwe: Current Issues*.) In July 2001, Zimbabwe and Congo reportedly signed an agreement to establish a joint economic commission in order to deepen cooperation between the two countries.

A United Nations Security Council report released on April 16, 2001 (S/2001/357), provided detailed information on what it charged was illegal

exploitation of Congo's resources, including timber and diamonds, as well as massive looting of coffee and other goods, by rebel forces, Uganda, and Rwanda. Those criticized denied the charges and maintained that the report was one-sided in that it failed to report on exploitation of Congo resources by Zimbabwe, Angola, and Namibia. Zimbabwe business interests have reportedly been active in Congo; and in June 2000, there were reports that a Zimbabwe-linked company had been formed to mine diamonds around Mbuji Mayi. Namibia acknowledged in February 2001, that it had acquired an interest in a diamond mine in Congo near Tshikapa, close to the Angolan border.

There have been some reports of a North Korean presence at an abandoned uranium mine in Congo.⁸ Firm evidence to substantiate these reports appears to be lacking, however; nor is there clear confirmation of reports of large shipments of weapons from China to the Congo army.

The RCD and MLC. The principal rebel movement in eastern Congo is the Goma-based RCD, known as RCD-Goma. Despite the strong support it receives from Rwanda, it has a civilian, Congolese leadership core that includes individuals from around the country. Until he was ousted on May 17, 1999, the RCD president or "co-ordinator" was Wamba dia Wamba, who is from the lower Congo region in western Congo. Wamba had been a professor in Tanzania, and was reportedly a friend of the late former Tanzanian president, Julius Nyerere. Jailed for a time during the Mobutu era for conducting research in Zaire, he was active in the Sovereign National Conference in the early 1990s. Wamba, supported by Uganda, has kept control of the smaller RCD faction, but this group has been weakened by internal rivalries and ethnic strife around its base at Bunia, close to the Uganda border.

Emile Ilunga, who initially replaced Wamba as head of the main body of the RCD, is a Katangan formerly associated with a Katanga separatist movement based in Angola. A physician, Ilunga has reportedly practiced in Belgium and spent time in South Africa. In October 2000, Ilunga acknowledged mistakes of leadership and resigned in favor of Adolphe Onusumba Yemba, known as Onusumba, who is reportedly from the Kasai region and considerably younger than Ilunga. RCD leaders say the movement seeks a multiparty, federal system.

Another rebel group, the Uganda-backed Movement for the Liberation of the Congo (MLC), emerged in northwestern Congo in November 1998. In January 2001, the MLC merged with a splinter of the Wamba RCD faction, not including Wamba, becoming the Front for the Liberation of the Congo (FLC). The MLC/FLC is led by Jean-Pierre Bemba, whose family was closely allied to Mobutu, and is believed to include former members of Mobutu's Presidential Guard. The MLC holds Gbadolite, a former Mobutu stronghold, and has repeatedly threatened the Congo River port of Mbandaka. The capture of Mbandaka, analysts believe, would endanger Kinshasa, the capital, since no natural obstacles or major towns lie between the two cities.

⁸ *The Times*, London (October 12, 1999); *Sunday Telegraph*, London (January 16, 2000.)

Congo Peace Process

The DRC peace process now underway originated in a 1999 initiative led by President Frederick Chiluba of Zambia, acting on behalf of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) and SADC. On July 10, 1999, at a regional summit in Lusaka, Zambia's capital, leaders of Congo, Angola, Zimbabwe, Namibia, Rwanda, and Uganda signed the Lusaka Ceasefire Agreement, as the Congo peace accord is known, following difficult negotiations. The rebel groups in Congo did not sign the accord until August 1999 due to factional disputes. Those finally signing included Emile Ilunga, then leader of the RCD-Goma; Wamba dia Wamba; and Jean-Pierre Bemba.

Implementing the Lusaka Agreement

The implementation of the Lusaka Cease-Fire Agreement has been subject to repeated delays due to outbreaks of fighting and the apparent reluctance of key actors to move forward. Many of the delays resulted from a lack of cooperation on the part of Laurent Kabila, the late Congo president, with the United Nations. However, with the January 2001 assassination of Kabila, which remains a mystery as far as the outside world is concerned,⁹ significant progress began to occur.

Laurent Kabila was succeeded by his little-known son, Joseph Kabila, who was sworn in as president on January 27, 2001. The new president immediately undertook a four-day foreign trip apparently aimed at reviving the peace process. Joseph Kabila met with Secretary of State Colin Powell in Washington on February 1. At the United Nations on February 2, Kabila said that he was willing to begin a dialogue with his military and political enemies and urged them to reciprocate. Kabila announced on February 15 that his government would resume cooperation with Sir Ketumile Masire, former president of Botswana and U.N.-appointed facilitator of the domestic political dialogue. Shortly thereafter, both Rwanda and Uganda announced partial troop withdrawal plans.

Cease-fire and Disengagement. The Lusaka agreement called for a cease-fire within 24 hours, and the immediate disengagement of forces in areas where they were in direct contact. However, there were many subsequent outbreaks of fighting punctuated by efforts of diplomats to establish a genuine halt to hostilities. On April 8, 2000, the Lusaka parties, meeting in Kampala, Uganda, agreed to a new cease-fire to take effect on April 14, but this was respected only briefly. In late 2000, substantial fighting occurred in the northwest, around Mbandaka, and in Katanga (Shaba) province, where Rwanda-backed RCD forces made gains around Lake Mweru. Nonetheless, U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan, in his December 6, 2000 report to the Security Council (S/2000/1156), said that there was "substantial

⁹It is generally accepted that Laurent Kabila was shot by a bodyguard, but whether the killing was part of a larger conspiracy remains unclear. In May 2001, a Joseph Kabila-appointed commission reported that Rwanda and Uganda were behind the killing, and the governments of both countries immediately rejected the charge. A large number of suspects are reportedly in jail in Kinshasa on suspicion of involvement in the assassination.

compliance with the cease-fire in most parts” of the DRC. This compliance seems to have deepened since the death of Laurent Kabila.

There has also been substantial progress on the disengagement of forces since Laurent Kabila’s death. In December 2000, the rebel groups and contending armies had met in Harare, Zimbabwe, and agreed to a 15-kilometer pullback of forces along the front lines. The pullback was to occur over 2 weeks, beginning January 21, 2001, but by February nothing had happened. On February 22, 2001, the United Nations Security Council, after a three-day meeting on the Congo conflict, passed resolution 1341, demanding that the parties begin the pullback by March 15. Secretary General Annan reported in April that some withdrawals had begun,¹⁰ and by June, he was expressing satisfaction with withdrawals everywhere except Equateur province, where Bemba’s FLC remained in place. The FLC claimed that its forces were required to protect the civilian population in occupied areas.

In June 2001, the Secretary General noted some evidence for FLC withdrawals,¹¹ but subsequent reports indicate that the FLC continues to occupy positions which it had been expected to leave. Moreover, on July 24, 2001 the Security Council stated that it was “unacceptable”¹² that RCD-Goma troops remained in the northeastern city of Kisangani more than a year after the Council had demanded the complete demilitarization of the city.¹³ The resolution had been passed after repeated outbreaks of fighting in the city (see below).

Joint Military Commission. The Lusaka accord called for the creation of a Joint Military Commission (JMC), including representatives of the signatories and a neutral chairman, within one week. The responsibilities of the commission were to include the investigation of cease-fire violations and the development of mechanisms to disarm militia groups in Congo. Unable to carry out these functions due to the unsettled conditions in Congo, the JMC has focused on drawing up disengagement and redeployment plans for the Congo combatants. At an April 6, 2001 meeting in Lusaka, the JMC agreed on a draft plan for the disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration, also referred to as DDR, of armed groups in Congo. (Additional “Rs,” standing for resettlement and repatriation, are at times added to DDR, forming the acronym DDRRR.)

Withdrawal of Foreign Forces. Under the Lusaka agreement, all foreign forces, apart from peacekeepers, were to withdraw from Congo within 9 months, according to a timetable to be worked out by the U.N., the OAU, and the JMC. For many months, there was no sign of progress on this aspect of the agreement, but in July 2000, Uganda began to bring home 3,000 to 4,000 troops that had been based

¹⁰United Nations Security Council, “Seventh Report of the Secretary General of the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo,” U.N. Document S/2001/273 (April 17, 2001).

¹¹United Nations Security Council, “Eighth Report of the Secretary General,” U.N. Document S/2001/572 (June 8, 2001).

¹²Presidential Statement, U.N. Press Release SC/7105 (July 24, 2001).

¹³Security Council Resolution 1304 of June 15, 2000. The resolution came after repeated outbreaks of fighting in the city. See below.

in Kisangani. The withdrawal came after Rwanda and Uganda had mutually agreed to pull their forces out of Kisangani and may reflect growing dissatisfaction within Uganda with the costly Congo deployment. Both Uganda and Rwanda maintain that they have intervened in Congo to protect their countries from incursions by Congo-based rebel groups, and that they cannot withdraw entirely until eastern Congo has been stabilized. On June 16, 2000, however, the United Nations Security Council unanimously adopted Resolution 1304, which demanded that Uganda and Rwanda withdraw all their forces from Congo “without further delay.” South African President Thabo Mbeki convened a regional mini-summit at Maputo, Mozambique, on October 16, 2000, and leaders of the DRC, Mozambique, Namibia, Rwanda, Uganda, and Zimbabwe agreed that armed forces in the DRC should begin to disengage. The December 2000 meeting of defense chiefs in Harare developed plans for the pullback of foreign forces and rebel groups.

Laurent Kabila’s death seemed to accelerate progress on foreign troop withdrawals. Rwanda announced on February 21, 2001, that it would pull its troops back 200 kilometers to the east. That same day, Uganda announced that it would withdraw two battalions, while on April 7, Zimbabwe said it would withdraw 5,000 troops from Congo in the immediate future. Secretary General Annan, in his June 2001 report on the Congo situation, noted that MONUC had monitored withdrawals by Ugandan and Zimbabwe troops from several locations.

However, the complete withdrawal of foreign forces seems unlikely in the near future, particularly in view of the refusal of President Paul Kagame of Rwanda to pull out his troops before armed groups in eastern Congo are brought under control. He told a visiting U.N. Security Council delegation in May 2001, that Rwanda would not withdraw while Interahamwe and ex-FAR remained active in Congo and a threat to Rwanda itself.¹⁴ Angolan and Zimbabwe troops protecting the Kabila government will probably not leave Congo while Rwandan troops remain. Burundi, which is also under threat from Hutu militants based in Congo, is believed to still have some troops in Congo, although their number is uncertain. It too may be reluctant to withdraw until the armed groups are brought under control. Namibia, however, has said that it will withdraw completely from Congo by the end of August 2001, and half of its 2,000 troops reportedly left in July.

Armed Groups. The Lusaka agreement committed all parties to locate and disarm militias and other irregular armed groups, and provided that U.N. peacekeepers were responsible for “tracking down and disarming” armed groups as well. No progress has been reported on this aspect of the agreement. Indeed, Rwanda has charged that the Congo government is equipping the armed groups, and that their activities are intensifying rather than declining. The groups at issue include the Interahamwe, the ex-FAR, and the Mai-Mai, which are threats to Tutsi residents of Congo – and in the cases of Interahamwe and ex-Far, threats to Rwanda as well. A U.S. diplomat participating in a July 24, 2001 Security Council debate on Congo confirmed that the Congo government was arming the Interahamwe and the ex-Far, and that as long as this continued, there could be no disarmament, demobilization,

¹⁴“President Kagame Accuses U.N. of ‘Lacking Political Will,’” BBC (May 25, 2001).

and reintegration.¹⁵ The Congo government denies aiding either of these groups, and also maintains that the Mai-Mai should not be regarded as an “armed group” within the terms of the Lusaka agreement since it consists of Congolese citizens resisting Rwandan occupation of eastern Congo.¹⁶

Political Dialogue. Within 45 days, under the Lusaka agreement, the Congo government was to enter into a dialogue with the RCD, as well as domestic opposition groups and civil society, on the country’s future. After six weeks of dialogue, there was to be agreement on new national political arrangements. The first sign of progress on the dialogue appeared on December 14, 1999, when the Congo parties agreed that the former president of Botswana, Sir Ketumile Masire, should serve as a neutral facilitator. The Laurent Kabila government was soon accusing Masire of being biased against it, however, and in June 2000, it briefly sealed his office. Laurent Kabila unilaterally appointed a “transition” parliament of 300 members, which convened in August 2000 at Lubumbashi, capital of Katanga province. Joseph Kabila, however, has resumed cooperation with Masire, who is again actively mediating with the aim of convening an “inter-Congolese dialogue” – although some observers maintain that he is moving too slowly. A Declaration of Principles for the conduct of the dialogue was signed in Lusaka on May 17, 2001, and Masire announced that he would convene a preparatory meeting on July 16. This meeting was subsequently postponed until August 20.

United Nations Force. According to the Lusaka agreement, the United Nations Security Council, in collaboration with the Organization of African Unity (OAU), was to deploy a large force to Congo in order to ensure implementation of the accord and provide humanitarian assistance to civilians. This did not happen initially because the United States and other likely sponsors of such a force were wary of a prolonged and expensive entanglement with an uncertain mandate. They were also concerned about the potential for violence, since the cease-fire was not being respected.

On August 6, 1999, however, U.N. Security Council passed Resolution 1258, authorizing Phase I of MONUC, a scaled-down deployment of 90 U.N. military liaison personnel for three months to assist the JMC and report back to the Secretary General on the situation. In a January 17, 2000 report (S/2000/30), the Secretary General proposed expanding MONUC to a “Phase II” force of 5,537 personnel – consisting of 500 observers to be protected by the remainder of the force. On February 24, 2000, the Security Council endorsed this proposal in Resolution 1291 but emphasized that actual deployment would be based on the assumption that parties to the Lusaka accord respect the cease-fire. MONUC is to monitor implementation of the cease-fire, investigate violations, and supervise and verify the disengagement of forces. At the same time, it is to facilitate humanitarian assistance and human rights monitoring, support the national dialogue, and launch a survey of landmines and unexploded ordinance.

The Secretary General’s initial reports to the Security Council on MONUC deployment consistently complained of obstacles created by the Laurent Kabila

¹⁵U.N. Security Council press release, United Nations Document SC/7105 (July 24, 2001).

¹⁶Eighth Report of the Secretary General.

government and rebel forces that have denied full freedom of movement to MONUC personnel. As a result of the many problems encountered, only 224 liaison officers and military observers had been sent to Congo by December 1, 2000, although the U.N. had succeeded in deploying liaison officers at the headquarters of each rebel group and at several other key locations, such as Mbandaka.

In his December 6, 2000 report, the Secretary General stated that the Congo government had been showing a “more positive attitude” and was relaxing some restrictions on MONUC. With Laurent Kabila’s death and subsequent progress in Lusaka implementation, the United Nations has been able to increase the number of peacekeepers for its scaled down, 3,000 member force. By June 8, 2001, 363 military observers had been deployed, supported by 1,869 troops and 134 staff officers, for a total deployment of 2,366. MONUC was focusing on verifying promised redeployments by the armed forces of the contending parties.

In his reports to the Security Council, Secretary General Annan has referred to the eventual need to deploy a larger, Phase III MONUC operation, which would have three tasks: the accomplishment of the withdrawal of all foreign forces, securing the borders of the DRC, and the DDRRR of armed groups.¹⁷ The Secretary General proposed in his June 8, 2001 report to begin the transition to Phase III while remaining within the authorized MONUC ceiling of 5,537 personnel. He recommended adding additional troops, additional civilian staff to help with administration and humanitarian tasks, and the creation of a civilian police component. On June 15, the Security Council approved this “updated concept of operations” under Resolution 1355. Estimates of the scale of any Phase III deployment have typically ranged between 10,000 and 25,000. However, on July 12, 2001, Brookings Institution scholar Michael O’Hanlon testified before the House International Relations Committee that “a serious mission in Congo could easily require 100,000 troops” in view of the country’s size, its challenging topography, and its large population. A U.N. force deployed in Congo from 1960-1964 reached nearly 20,000 troops and incurred 250 fatalities, including accidental and natural deaths as well as 126 deaths in combat.

¹⁷Report to the Security Council, S/2001/373 (April 17, 2001), 14.

Democratization Issues

After his 1997 takeover, Laurent Kabila promised elections by April 1999, but later said these could not be held until the rebellion ended. A draft constitution provided for a strong presidency, although there was also to be a bicameral parliament. Opposition figures suspected that Kabila would try to arrange any elections process to assure that he remained in power. The activities of political parties other than the AFDL were suspended after Kabila took over, and anti-government demonstrations were banned.

Kabila's treatment of the press and opposition voices in society raised grave concerns among human rights and democracy advocates. Several journalists were arrested or harassed, some newspapers were closed, and the opposition was denied access to the broadcast media, which the government controls. Some opposition politicians, other government critics, and figures from the former regime were also arrested.

Tshisekedi wa Mulumba, who led the non-violent political struggle against Mobutu, at great personal cost over many years, was exiled to his remote home village by Kabila in February 1998, although he was later allowed to return to Kinshasa and then went into exile in Belgium. Tshisekedi, who regards himself as Congo's rightful prime minister, is an advocate of what he calls "plural democracy" and a strong critic of the political party ban. Laurent Kabila criticized Tshisekedi and the rest of the non-violent opposition to Mobutu for their fractiousness and ineffectiveness against Mobutu. In April 2001, Tshisekedi, who is reportedly regarded as a "difficult person" and "tempestuous" by some western observers,¹⁸ returned to Congo after a 15-month exile.

On May 17, 2001, the Joseph Kabila government lifted the formal ban on political party activity, and on July 21, it was announced that parties were free to restart normal political activities. However, two journalists attempting to cover an opposition press conference were detained by the authorities on July 24, and on July 30, an opposition protest demonstration over the delay in starting the internal political dialogue was broken up by police.¹⁹ Hence, the status of democratization in Congo remains in question.

¹⁸*Washington Post* (June 27, 1997).

¹⁹"NGO Protests Detention of Two Foreign Journalists," United Nations Integrated Regional Information Network (July 28, 2001); "Police Break Up Opposition Protest in Congo's Capital," Associated Press (July 30, 2001).

Humanitarian Situation

Both phases of the Congo conflict have been marked by serious human rights abuses, hunger, killings of civilians, and the forcible displacement of civilian populations; but detailed and reliable information on the humanitarian situation has been difficult to obtain. On June 29, 1998, U.N. Secretary General Annan transmitted to the Security Council the report of a U.N. team that had been investigating allegations of massacres and other human rights violations during the 1996-1997 civil war. The Secretary General said two conclusions stood out: that all parties to the conflict had committed serious human rights violations; and that killings by the AFDL and elements of the Rwandan Patriotic Army constituted crimes against humanity and may have constituted genocide, pending further investigation. The Secretary General noted with “deep regret” that the investigating team had not been allowed to carry out its mission fully and without hindrance by the Congolese government. The governments of Congo and Rwanda rejected the findings of the report.

Human rights organizations have released a number of reports alleging widespread human rights abuses during the second phase of the Congo conflict – and during the period since the Lusaka Ceasefire Agreement was signed. A Human Rights Watch [<http://www.hrw.org>] study issued on May 16, 2000, charged that Congo rebels and Rwandan soldiers had carried out rapes and civilian killings on a massive scale. Amnesty International charged on June 1, 2000 that Ugandan troops had played a role in ethnic unrest in the Ituri region, near the Ugandan border, that killed 7,000 civilians in 1999. Uganda firmly denied the charge, and a spokesman claimed that Ugandan troops were noted for their good discipline.²⁰ Representative Frank Wolf, after returning from a January 2001 trip to several African countries, reported widespread suffering in eastern Congo, including numerous incidents of rape carried out by soldiers of all sides.

On May 8, 2001, the International Rescue Committee released a report indicating that since August 1998, 2.5 million people in eastern Congo who would not otherwise have perished had died because of the war.²¹ Based on 11 mortality surveys in five eastern provinces, the report found high levels of indiscriminate violence and disproportionate deaths among children. Save the Children, Oxfam, and Christian AID reported on August 7, 2001, that more than 16 million people in Congo are going hungry, more than two million have been displaced by war, and two out of five children are dying in infancy.²²

²⁰*Africa News Service* (June 1, 2000).

²¹The report may be found at [<http://www.theIRC.org/mortality.cfm>]

²²“Congo in Dire Trouble, Say Agencies,” BBC (August 7, 2001).

Prospects for the Future

Diplomats in Africa and the West had hoped that the months following the signing of the Lusaka agreement would see the arrival of growing numbers of peacekeepers, and – as confidence in the process built – a gradual withdrawal of foreign forces and the launching of a substantive dialogue between rebel leaders and the Kabila regime. Laurent Kabila came to be seen as an obstacle to the peace process, and there is still much hope that the new Joseph Kabila government will move the process forward.

During his February 2001 overseas trip, Joseph Kabila impressed foreign leaders with his willingness to compromise and to permit a resumption of the internal political dialogue. Some regard this dialogue as the best hope for the country's future, since it has the potential to restore political unity and promote reconciliation, while creating the basis for the eventual election of a legitimate, civilian government. Yet many are concerned that ethnic and political divisions among Congo politicians, as well as between the armed rebel groups and internal non-violent opposition, will prove too wide to bridge.

There is also concern that Joseph Kabila, who was reportedly just 29 years of age when he took office, lacks the power and experience to maintain political stability in the capital, or to guide the peace process to a successful conclusion. There have been rumors of coup attempts and dozens of people have reportedly been jailed on suspicion of involvement in the assassination of Laurent Kabila. Finally, many worry that Rwanda, Uganda, and their rebel allies are at best lukewarm with respect to the peace process, and have little interest in bringing it to a rapid conclusion. In part, analysts argue, their attitude reflects legitimate security concerns on such issues as the role of the Kabila government in assisting the armed groups. But, experts maintain, it may also reflect the stake rebel leaders and elites from Rwanda and Uganda have acquired in their continued exploitation of Congo's resources.²³

Conceivably, fighting could resume if rebel groups and their external backers come to feel that their interests are not being protected – and if the numbers of peacekeepers remain small. If the process falters, Congo could fall into a prolonged, de-facto breakup leaving an unstable central government backed by Angola and/or Zimbabwe in control of the capital region and the coast; Bemba and ex-Mobutuists dominant in the northwest, with support from Uganda; Uganda in control of the northeast in alliance with the small Wamba RCD faction; and South Kivu together with an undefined area to the west under the RCD-Goma with backing from Rwanda. The fate of mineral-rich Katanga (Shaba) in this break-up scenario, and of the Kasais, including the diamond center at Mbuji Mayi, is not yet clear.

If the peace process does move forward, the Phase II peacekeeping force will face major challenges in view of the large number of armed groups, the large stores of weapons that have accumulated over years of conflict, and the country's gravely deteriorated infrastructure. Nonetheless, such a force, working in cooperation with

²³Philip Reyntjens, "Briefing: The Democratic Republic of Congo, From Kabila to Kabila," *African Affairs* (2001) 311-317.

an actively engaged JMC and backed by pressure from donors, could eventually prepare the way for a Phase III deployment and other steps toward long-term stabilization.

U.S. Policy

Congo was a contentious issue in U.S. foreign policy from 1960 into the early 1990s. The Cold War and the emergence of a communist regime in Cuba were very much on the minds of policymakers in 1960 and lent a special urgency to their efforts to stabilize Congo through U.N. peacekeeping. Policy-makers saw this approach as the best available means for minimizing Soviet influence in Congo. Some U.S. critics of the policy, however, regarded the United Nations itself as a leftist influence and thought that the United States should have fostered the secession of Katanga province as a bastion against communism.

The most controversial event of that era was the death of Prime Minister Lumumba in January 1961. Many American observers regarded him as a communist and Soviet agent, although others argued that he was essentially a nationalist and populist. Evidence developed at 1975 Senate hearings indicated that U.S. officials had attempted to implement a plan to assassinate Lumumba through poisoning or exposure to a virus. This plot evidently failed, and Lumumba died in Katanga after falling into the hands of secessionist forces. Whether the United States played a role in this event was a matter of controversy, but it is widely believed in Congo that the United States was indeed involved. (The Belgian parliament is currently investigating charges that the actual assassination of Lumumba was planned and carried out by Belgians.) Many Congolese also blame the United Nations, which had a peacekeeping force in Congo at the time, for failing to protect Lumumba.

Mobutu enjoyed good relations with the United States in the first years of his regime. President Carter, however, pressed for human rights improvements as well as political and economic reforms. Nonetheless, Carter found himself lending air transport to an intervention by Belgium, France, and other countries during the 1978 Shaba uprising because of concern over Soviet gains in Africa. Mobutu's relations with the Reagan Administration were close, and in 1983 Reagan described the Zairian leader as "a faithful friend to the United States for some 20 years." In the late 1980s, officials often expressed reservations about Mobutu's human rights record and economic policies but suggested that no alternative leader appeared capable of maintaining stability in Zaire.

In the early 1960s, U.S. economic aid to Zaire amounted to between one-quarter and one-third of all U.S. economic assistance to sub-Saharan Africa. Aid reached high levels again in FY1976 through FY1978 in response to perceived Soviet gains in Africa and the crises in Shaba province. Aid rose once more in the second half of the 1980s, reflecting Zaire's deteriorating economic situation and perhaps Zaire's cooperative role in the Angola situation. From the beginning of 1986, the executive branch had publicly acknowledged giving covert assistance to UNITA in Angola, and according to many press reports, important facilities for channeling this aid to UNITA were located in Zaire. Overall, according to the U.S. Agency for International Development, the United States provided \$1.3 billion in economic and

military assistance to Zaire between 1962 and 1991.²⁴ The focus of U.S. Angola policy after 1991 shifted to implementation of the Angolan peace agreements, and Zaire lost any value it might have had as a staging area for covert U.S. military aid.

The deteriorating situation in Zaire after the beginning of 1990, the end of the Cold War, and the Angolan agreements decisively shifted executive branch views of Mobutu. Secretary of State James Baker visited Zaire in March 1990 and urged Mobutu to undertake reforms — or risk being swept aside. U.S. aid fell from \$38 million in 1991 to less than \$1 million in 1991, and then ceased almost entirely.²⁵ The Clinton Administration continued to pressure Mobutu for reforms, and efforts were launched to persuade Zairians across the political spectrum, including Mobutu, to move forward with a free and fair vote. U.S. policy on Zaire was impeded by the weakening of policy coordination in the “troika” of major external actors — France, Belgium, and the United States — after the May 1995 election of President Jacques Chirac in France. Chirac met personally with Mobutu in April 1996, and Paris said it would resume aid to Zaire. French policymakers appeared to see the United States as a competitor for economic and political influence in Zaire.

In May 1997, then U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations Bill Richardson carried out an urgent round of diplomacy in Zaire and the region aimed at arranging what he later called a “soft-landing” for Kabila’s rebels when they reached the capital to avoid “bloodshed and chaos.” Secretary Albright announced during a December 12, 1997 press conference with Kabila that she would be working with Congress on a substantial aid package to assist the Congolese people and their government in building democratic institutions and governing capacity. The Clinton Administration strongly supported the Lusaka peace process.

With the deteriorating political situation in Congo, discussion of a substantial aid program faded. However, in FY1998, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) did resume a limited development assistance program focused on infant, child, and maternal health, as well as on efforts to strengthen civil society, enhance food security, and promote biodiversity. USAID maintains that its presence in Congo puts it in position to respond swiftly to any opportunities that may arise for supporting implementation of the

U.S. Aid to Congo in FY2001	
(Estimated, \$000)	
Development Assistance:	1,288
Child Survival and Disease Programs Fund	15,809
Emergency Assistance, including Food Aid	60,485
Total	77,582

²⁴U.S. Agency for International Development, *U.S. Overseas Loans and Grants and Assistance from International Organizations, July 1, 1945-September 30, 1994*, 75.

²⁵Assistance through the Peace Corps ended in FY1993, but Zaire received \$65,000 in development assistance in FY1995. USAID’s Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance provided disaster relief in response to humanitarian emergencies in 1994 and 1997.

Lusaka agreement.²⁶ In addition, the United States is providing substantial amounts of emergency humanitarian assistance in response to hunger and health problems arising from continuing insecurity in Congo.²⁷

For FY2001, as indicated in the accompanying Text Box, U.S. assistance is expected to total more than \$77 million. The Bush Administration has requested \$2.8 million in Development Assistance for Congo in FY2002 and \$15.8 million under the Child Survival and Disease Programs Fund. Emergency assistance requirements are not yet known.

In addition to direct assistance to Congo, the United States is contributing to the United Nations in support of MONUC peacekeeping operation. In its FY2002 budget submission to Congress, the Department of State reports that the United States contributed \$30.2 million for MONUC in FY2000, as the operation got underway, and the Department estimates the FY2001 contribution at \$5.3 million. In view of the anticipated expansion of MONUC, the Bush Administration has requested \$83.5 million for MONUC in FY2002.

Secretary of State Colin Powell discussed Congo with African leaders during a visit to the continent in May 2001, urging all parties to respect the Lusaka agreement. He told an audience in South Africa that he had been meeting with protagonists in the conflict since January and was “cautiously optimistic” that the Lusaka agreement would bring peace to Congo.

Congressional Involvement

Congressional concerns over the Mobutu regime began to grow in the late 1970s. In subsequent years, a series of hearings and reports, sometimes growing out of Member and staff visits, focused on allegations of corruption, human rights violations, and shortcomings in the U.S. aid program. In 1985, Congress imposed restrictions on security assistance to Zaire, and in the early 1990s, as instability and human rights violations mounted, both the House and Senate passed resolutions urging Mobutu to step down (102nd Congress, H.Con.Res. 238, S.Con.Res. 80). After the Rwanda upheaval, several Members studied the refugee situation directly through visits to the camps around Goma.

The obstacles created by the Laurent Kabila regime to the U.N. investigation of human rights violations during the first rebellion, as well as reports of ongoing human rights violations, gave rise to some congressional skepticism toward the new regime — and toward Clinton Administration policy. The annual Foreign Operations Appropriations for FY1999²⁸ through FY2001 prohibited assistance to the central

²⁶USAID, *Budget Justification to the Congress, Fiscal Year 2002*, Annex I, Africa, 90.

²⁷For the most recent information visit [<http://www.usaid.gov>], then click on Disaster Assistance and Reports Index.

²⁸The FY1999 prohibition (P.L. 105-277, Section 575) would have permitted the resumption of aid if the President reported in writing that those responsible for human rights violations were being investigated and prosecuted, and that a credible democratic transition was being (continued...)

government to the Congo. This restriction does not appear in the House-passed version of the FY2002 Foreign Operations Appropriations bill (H.R. 2506), although, as in previous years, the bill would require notification of the Committees on Appropriations before aid is expended or committed for Congo. (At time of publication, the report on the Senate version of the Foreign Operations Appropriations had not been released.)

On January 30, 2001, Representative Alcee Hastings introduced H.Con.Res. 16 calling for a peaceful transition to stability and democracy in the DRC.

²⁸(...continued)
implemented.)

Appendix 1. Democratic Republic of the Congo



Adapted by CRS from Magellan Geographix. Used with permission.

Appendix 2. Acronyms

AFDL	Alliance of Democratic Forces of Congo-Zaire. Political organization founded by the late Laurent Kabila, with Rwandan support, in 1996.
DDR	Disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration.
DDRRR	Disarmament, demobilization, reintegration, resettlement, and repatriation.
DRC	Democratic Republic of the Congo, formerly Zaire.
ex-FAR	Bands of Hutu militants formerly in the pre-genocide army of Rwanda.
ex-FAZ	Bands of former soldiers of President Mobutu's Armed Forces of Zaire. The current strength and alignment of ex-FAZ units are unclear. Some ex-FAZ are believed to be sheltering in the Republic of Congo, also known as Congo Brazzaville.
FLC	Front for the Liberation of the Congo. MLC-dominated rebel group including a splinter of the RCD led by Mbusa Nyamwisi. Friction between MLC leader Bemba and Nyamwisi has been reported.
JMC	Joint Military Commission, including military representatives of national and armed forces, as provided for in the Lusaka agreement.
MLC	Movement for the Liberation of the Congo. Uganda-backed rebel group headed by Jean-Pierre Bemba and based in northwest Congo.
MONUC	United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, first authorized in August 1999.
OAU	Organization of African Unity.
PRP	Party of the Popular Revolution, Laurent original party, based in the mountains of eastern Congo.
RCD	Congolese Democratic Rally or Party. Congo rebel movement, whose main, Rwanda-backed faction is based at Goma, DRC. Wamba dia Wamba's Uganda-aligned faction, RCD-Kisangani, is believed to be in a severely weakened state, and Wamba himself has been reported to be in Tanzania.
UDPS	Union for Democracy and Social Progress, headed by Tshisekedi wa Mulumba.
UNITA	National Union for the Total Independence of Angola. Angolan rebel movement headed by Jonas Savimbi.