
CIA's Covert Operations in the Congo, 1960–1968: Insights from Newly Declassified Documents

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From 1960 to 1968, CIA conducted a series of fast-paced, multifaceted covert action (CA) operations in the newly independent Republic of the Congo (the Democratic Republic of the Congo today) to stabilize the government and minimize communist influence in a strategically vital, resource-rich location in central Africa. The overall program—the largest in the CIA's history up until then—comprised activities dealing with regime change, political action, propaganda, air and marine operations, and arms interdiction, as well as support to a spectacular hostage rescue mission. By the time the operations ended, CIA had spent nearly \$12 million (over \$80 million today) in accomplishing the Eisenhower, Kennedy, and Johnson administrations' objective of establishing a pro-Western leadership in the Congo. President Joseph Mobutu, who became permanent head of state in 1965 after serving in that capacity de facto at various times, was a reliable and staunchly anticommunist ally of Washington's until his overthrow in 1997.

Some elements of the program, particularly the notorious assassination plot against Prime Minister Patrice Lumumba that was extensively recounted in 1975 in one of the Church Committee's reports, have been described in open sources. However, besides the documentary excerpts in that report, limited releas-

es in the State Department's *Foreign Relations of the United States (FRUS)* series, and random items on the Internet and in other compilations, a comprehensive set of primary sources about CIA activities in the Congo has not been available until now. *FRUS, 1964–1968, Volume XXIII, Congo, 1960–1968*¹ is the newest in a series of retrospective volumes from the State Department's Office of the Historian (HO) to compensate for the lack of CA-related material in previously published collections about countries and time periods when CIA covert interventions were an indispensable, and often widely recognized, element of US foreign policy.^a

After scholars, the media, and some members of Congress pilloried HO for publishing a volume on Iran for 1951–54 that contained no documents about the CIA-engineered regime-change operation in 1953,² Congress in October 1991 passed a statute mandating that *FRUS* was to

a. The first intelligence-related retrospective volume was *FRUS, 1952–1954, Guatemala* (Government Printing Office, 2003). It contained documents about the CIA's regime-change operations there that were not in *FRUS, 1952–1954, Volume IV, American Republics* (Government Printing Office, 1983). Forthcoming collections on intelligence will deal with the 1953 coup in Iran and the US Intelligence Community during 1955–61.

All statements of fact, opinion, or analysis expressed in this article are those of the author. Nothing in the article should be construed as asserting or implying US government endorsement of its factual statements and interpretations.

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be “a thorough, accurate, and reliable documentary record of major United States foreign policy decisions and significant United States diplomatic activity” and ordering “other departments, agencies, and other entities of the United States Government...[to] cooperate with the Office of the Historian by providing full and complete access to the records pertinent to United States foreign policy decisions and actions and by providing copies of selected records” older than 25 years.³

Notwithstanding the new law and DCI R. James Woolsey’s pledge in 1993 to seek declassification review of 11 covert actions, including in the Congo, the two *FRUS* volumes published in the early 1990s on that country for 1958 through 1963 contained very few documents about the Agency’s CA operations there—even on the Lumumba assassination plot.⁴ In the case of the first volume, the *FRUS* editors decided not to delay publication by seeking additional records under the access requirements of the just-enacted *FRUS* law. In the second, HO and CIA were still working out how to implement those requirements, taking into account the Agency’s concerns about protecting sources and methods and the fact that its records management practices were not designed to facilitate scholarly research. Serious interagency difficulties over HO access to and CIA review of CA-related documents arose over the next few years but were mostly resolved by the early 2000s in an interagency agreement.

The new procedures in that agreement facilitated the completion of the

volume discussed here, which was held up after HO’s outside advisory committee in 1997 questioned the completeness and accuracy of the previous collections on the Congo. HO originally conceived *Congo, 1960–1968* as a volume documenting US policy during the Johnson presidency, but, at the committee’s suggestion, it postponed publication to incorporate relevant CA material missing from previous compendia.

The collection is well worth the wait, and specialists are making use of it already.^a In no other single source will scholars find a richer compilation of intelligence and policy documents that, when used in conjunction with the two earlier volumes, helps underscore why the fate of the Congo, as well as the other newly independent nations in Africa, drew so much attention from US national security decisionmakers then. Before 1960, when, in British Prime Minister Harold Macmillan’s famous phrase, “the wind of change” began blowing over the continent, the Soviet Union, China, and their proxies had paid little attention to it.

By early 1965, however, communist countries had established over 100 diplomatic, consular, and trade

a. On 4 March 2014, HO and the Cold War International History Project cosponsored a half-day symposium at the Woodrow Wilson Center titled “New Evidence: The Congo Crisis and Its Aftermath, 1960–1968” and featuring the new volume. This reviewer was one of the participants. Details can be found on the Wilson Center website at <http://www.wilsoncenter.org/event/new-evidence-the-congo-crisis-and-aftermath-1960-1968>.

missions; extended over \$850 million in economic grants and credits; set up front organizations, cover entities, agents of influence, and clandestine assets; and provided assistance to anti-Western groups directly and through their allies. The Congo—formerly a Belgian colony, one-quarter the size of the United States, with immense natural wealth and strategically situated in a now-contested region—was a Cold War prize of the first order. “If Congo deteriorates and Western influence fades rapidly,” the chief of CIA’s Africa Division (AF) wrote in June 1960, 10 days before the Congo gained its independence, the “Bloc will have a feast and will not need to work very hard for it.”⁵

Congo, 1960–1968 provides essential material for understanding how the United States and its Congolese allies prevented the “feast” from happening. The volume contains 582 documents and editorial notes and is divided roughly into two sections. The first, covering 1960 to 1963, depicts the Congo’s political crisis and the extensive influence of CIA covert actions to remove Lumumba from power and then to encourage allegiance to the Leopoldville government—especially the pervasive use of money to buy loyalties within leadership circles. The second part, covering 1964 to 1968, describes the continuation of the political action programs and the expansion of paramilitary and air support to the Congolese government in its effort to quell provincial rebellions, some of them communist-aided.

Over one-third of the sources in the volume are from CIA, and over 40 percent pertain to CA (the rest are about diplomacy, policy, and military matters). A number of the editorial

notes usefully summarize heavily redacted documents or paraphrase intelligence information that otherwise might not have survived the review process in raw form. In both the documents and the notes, the editors helpfully have used bracketed insertions to indicate names, titles, or agencies in place of cryptonyms that were not declassified. Similarly, in cases when more than one individual whose name cannot be declassified is mentioned in a document, they have been designated as “[Identity 1],” “[Identity 2],” and so forth for clarity—a much better procedure than repetitively using “[less than one line declassified].”

A More Nuanced View of the Situation

The documents from early 1960 at the inception of the covert program show CIA’s nuanced view of the Congo’s unsettled internal situation and the Agency’s fashioning of sensible operational objectives to achieve the Eisenhower administration’s goal of regime change.⁶ President Dwight Eisenhower clearly expressed his disquiet over developments in postcolonial Africa at a meeting with senior advisers in August 1960:

The President observed that in the last twelve months, the world has developed a kind of ferment greater than he could remember in recent times. The Communists are trying to take control of this, and have succeeded to the extent that... in many cases [people] are now saying that the Communists are thinking of the common man while the United States is ded-

*icated to supporting outmoded regimes.*⁷

CIA operations officers understood the challenges facing them as they dealt with a population of 14 million divided into over 200 ethnic groups and four major tribes, with fewer than 20 Congolese college graduates in the entire country, led by a government heavily dependent on the former Belgian colonialists to maintain infrastructure, services, and security, with an army that was poorly trained, inadequately equipped, and badly led, and a fractured political structure consisting of four semi-autonomous regions and a weak and factious “central” government in the capital of Leopoldville (Kinshasa today). The US ambassador in the early 1960s, Clare Timberlake, sympathized with the Agency officers he worked with: “Every time I look at this truly discouraging mess, I shudder over the painfully slow, frustrating and costly job ahead for the UN and US if the Congo is to really be helped. On the other hand, we can’t let go of this bull’s tail.”⁸

One of the most valuable contributions *Congo, 1960–1968* is likely to make is moving scholarship past its prevailing fixation on Lumumba and toward an examination of CIA’s multiyear, multifarious covert program and the complexities of planning and implementing it. The volume provides additional detail about the assassination plot against Lumumba and his eventual death at the hands of tribal rivals abetted by their Belgian allies, substantiating the findings of a Belgian parliamentary inquiry in 2001.⁹ Beyond that, for

a. The inquiry concluded that Belgium wanted Lumumba arrested and, not being

students of intelligence operations, the collection demonstrates the wide range of “soft” and “hard” covert initiatives CIA undertook in an often rapidly changing operational environment.

CIA’s program initially focused on removing Lumumba, not only through assassination if necessary but also with an array of nonlethal undertakings that showed the Agency’s clear understanding of the Congo’s political dynamics. The activities included contacts with oppositionists who were working to oust Lumumba with parliamentary action; payments to army commander Mobutu to ensure the loyalty of key officers and the support of legislative leaders; street demonstrations; and “black” broadcasts from a radio station in nearby Brazzaville, across the border in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, to encourage a revolt against Lumumba.

After Lumumba fled house arrest in the capital in late November 1960 and was tracked down and killed soon after,¹⁰ Agency CA concentrated on stabilizing and supporting the government of President Joseph Kasavubu and Prime Ministers Cyrille Adoula and Moïse Tshombe, with Mobutu as behind-the-scenes power broker. CIA used an extensive assortment of covert techniques to accomplish that objective:

particularly concerned with his physical well-being, took no action to prevent his death even though it knew he probably would be killed. The report specifically denied that the Belgian government ordered Lumumba’s murder but that Belgian advisers to Lumumba’s enemies assisted in making it happen.

Documents in the collection show that CIA's political program was strategically coordinated with overt policies.

- Advice and subsidies to political and tribal leaders.
- Funds to Mobutu to buy the allegiances of army officers through salary subsidies and purchases of ordnance and communications and transportation equipment.
- Payments to agents of influence in the Adoula administration and to sources in the leftist opposition.
- Parliamentary maneuvering aided by covert money.
- Contacts with labor unions and student associations.
- Newspaper subsidies, radio broadcasts, leaflet distributions, and street demonstrations.
- Efforts to influence delegations from the United Nations (UN) to adopt positions that favored the Congolese government.¹¹

The CIA's program persisted through several political crises in the Congo during 1962–63 and at least can be credited with helping the government survive them. As of mid-1964, however, the US strategic goal of bringing about a broad-based governing coalition with national appeal remained unaccomplished. The replacement of Adoula with Tshombe, who led a different faction, in July 1964 prompted a suspension of political action efforts while the new government established itself and soon became preoccupied with putting down rebel uprisings. By August, insurgents controlled over one-sixth of the country, and the Agency redirected most resources

to reinforcing and rebuilding tribal allegiances in contested areas and indirectly assisting the Congolese army by funding mercenaries in its employ.

For the better part of a year, CIA opted to promote unity rather than division by declining Tshombe's and other politicians' approaches for individual subsidies. By mid-1965, when Tshombe and Kasavubu seemed nearly beyond reconciliation, the Agency tried to resume its previous political intriguing and buying of access and influence but became frustrated when the embassy resisted. US ability to affect Congolese leaders' decisions "has never been lower since departure of Lumumba," Leopoldville Station wrote in late October. A month later, Mobutu—"our only anchor to the windward" and "the best man... to act as a balance wheel between the contending political leaders," asserted CIA—staged a bloodless coup and took over the government.¹²

In Concert with US Policy

Documents in the collection show that CIA's political program was strategically coordinated with overt policies and benefited from close cooperation between the chief of station (COS) and the ambassador, at least at first, and the COS's back channel to the Congolese government, particularly with Mobutu. Larry Devlin, COS from July 1960 to May 1963 and July 1965 to June 1967, had productive relationships with Timberlake and Edmund Guillon, less so with G. McMurtrie Godley, who disapproved of the station's machinations

with local leaders. Still, Devlin largely had a free hand, and his skill and connections were so valuable that he was brought back as an informal interlocutor with the Congolese government between his tours. The State Department noted in 1965 that

from the outset the Congo operation has had to cope with successive crises on a crash basis. The very nature of the problem has meant that great reliance had to be placed on close coordination between the Ambassador and the Station Chief in the expenditure of funds. Both Ambassadors Guillon and Godley appear to have had confidence in the CIA Station Chief and in his conduct of operations. Although courses of action have frequently been discussed between representatives of the Department and CIA, the bulk of the day to day operational decisions were taken in the field without reference to the Department.¹³

Devlin's quasi-ambassadorial dealings with Mobutu underscored that the army chief was indispensable to the Congo's stability and, by extension, US policy in the Congo and sub-Saharan Africa. Devlin's fascinating personal and professional interaction with Mobutu, so evocatively described in his memoir, comes through in the official record as well, as does his indirect influence on policy decisions in Washington. The chief of AF wrote in 1967 that Mobutu had

become accustomed and to some degree dependent on the informal channel to the U.S. Government thus provided ...

[and] would interpret the termination of this relationship—particularly if termination were more or less coincident with Devlin's [second] departure—as evidence of a desire on the part of the U.S. Government to disengage from the close and friendly relations that have characterized dealings between the governments for most of the period since 1960.

Godley's successor, Robert McBride, whose posting coincided with Devlin's reassignment, even more strongly disapproved of CIA's private contacts with Mobutu and other Congolese leaders and quickly took steps to limit them. Starting from when he arrived at the embassy, the volume contains none of the COS-to-Headquarters cables of the kind Devlin used to send about his talks with Mobutu because such encounters were no longer allowed.¹⁴

When Mobutu assumed power officially, the political side of the CA program was effectively through, although it did not formally end until early 1966—"The objectives of promoting stability and moderation remain the same, but the means needed to pursue these objectives are now different," the chief of AF wrote then—and a few Congolese politicians continued receiving individual payments well into 1968.¹⁵ Although Washington had preferred to achieve its goal of political order in the Congo through parliamentary means, with a military strongman now in power, it had what it wanted: a relatively stable, nationally based, politically moderate, pro-Western government in Leopoldville.¹⁶

a. The US government showed its support

Paramilitary Operations

The primary emphasis of the CIA's program then shifted to suppressing rebellions in the eastern provinces through air and maritime paramilitary operations. *Congo, 1960–1968* contains many documents that will help scholars appreciate the difficulties in planning and running such activities, especially in a vast territory with very limited communications and transportation infrastructures and proxies of questionable skill and reliability.

CIA's air operations began modestly in 1962 as a propaganda tactic to raise the Congolese government's prestige and demonstrate its military potential to its citizenry, provincial secessionist leaders, and rebel factions. They grew to provide tactical support to UN peacekeepers, Congolese forces, and mercenaries fighting the insurgents. Eventually the aviation component of the CA program provided aircraft, pilots, and maintenance personnel for the so-called Congolese Air Force (CAF), which existed only because of US assistance. Through the course of the program, the CAF had 11 T-6s, 13 T-28s, 7 B-26s, 2 C-45s, 3 C-46s, 3 Bell helicopters, and 1 Beech twin-engine in its inventory. In total, six CIA officers ran the operations in country, aided by 125 contract maintenance workers employed by the Congolese government and 79 foreign contract pilots, who flew the missions because the Congolese were not reliably trained. Difficulties with supplies, airfield and living conditions, communications, and main-

for Mobutu very demonstratively in 1966 and 1967 by forewarning him of coup plots against him, which he quickly put down.

tenance beset the operations, as did staffing issues: the State Department was reluctant to approve positions for Agency personnel, and CIA's Congo program managers had to compete with counterparts in Southeast Asia trying to build their operations there as the war in Vietnam expanded.¹⁷

CIA launched the first significant CAF air operations in February 1964 against rebels in Kwilu, just north of Leopoldville. Missions against the eastern rebels followed in May. The toughest operations came during late 1965–early 1966, after Chinese- and Cuban-provided weapons and training had improved the rebels' fighting ability. Some of the CAF sorties were supply airlifts, which the Agency coordinated with the State Department and the US Air Force. Besides helping suppress the insurgencies, CIA's aviation program proved vital in the crackdown Mobutu ordered against army mutineers in Katanga in August 1966. In March 1966, the National Security Council (NSC) decided that the Congo should pay for its own air force, and the Agency phased out its involvement during the next 18 months, gradually melding activities with US Air Force operations.^b¹⁸ By late 1967, the CAF belonged to the Congolese, who continued, however, to receive assistance from foreign workers.

CIA also assisted Mobutu's government in quashing the rebels by staging maritime operations on Lake Tanganyika along the Congo's eastern border and Lake Albert in

b. In late 1967, the Johnson administration authorized CIA to recruit and pay five pilots for 90 days (with a possible 30-day extension) to fly missions assisting the Congolese government in quelling an uprising of mercenaries on the eastern border.

DCI John McCone's role in policymaking comes through clearly in a number of the documents in the volume.

the northeast. Rebels in the region were ferrying Chinese-supplied arms across the two lakes and using them in the ground fighting in the two regions, and the covert activities were intended to interdict the shipments. Lake Tanganyika especially was a difficult environment for Agency personnel. It is the longest and second-largest fresh-water lake in the world, stretching for over 400 miles but with an average width of only 30 miles. Monitoring such a lengthy coastline was hard when smugglers could cross the narrow water body relatively quickly. The first CIA team deployed to the area in March 1965 and conducted its first patrol in May. What came to be called the Agency's "pocket navy" also staged a successful amphibious landing operation to deploy Congolese troops against a rebel enclave.¹⁹

To run the maritime activities, seven Agency operations officers and one communicator worked with a variety of (initially unreliable) foreign crewmen and a flotilla of six 21-foot Seacrafts, one 75-foot trawler, assorted small boats, and—after the lake's unpredictable weather showed the need for larger, faster vessels—two 50-foot Swifts equipped with radar for night surveillance. The operations had a psychological impact at first, intimidating the rebels and inspiring the Congolese troops, but over time they largely disrupted the weapons shipments and, combined with the Agency's aerial and other activities, helped tip the tactical balance on the ground in the government's favor.

In addition to its air and maritime operations, CIA secured the alle-

giance of tribal chiefs in the northeast and got their assistance in cutting off the flow of arms from Sudan and across Lake Albert from Uganda by providing them with covert cash and other forms of aid. The Agency also assisted with paying foreign mercenaries if hard currency was not available locally. As with its support for the CAF, the Agency gradually reduced its level of engagement in maritime activities and in January 1967 turned over its ship inventory to the Congolese. Acting on NSC direction, CIA began phasing out its paramilitary programs in June 1967, withdrawing personnel from all fronts. After the activities ended in late 1968, US aid to the Congolese military only came through the Defense Department's Military Assistance Program.²⁰

In late 1964, CIA had to deploy some of its paramilitary capabilities in the Congo to support the rescue of nearly 2,000 Western hostages rebels had seized in Stanleyville (Kisangani today) in August.²¹ The two dozen Americans among them included three CIA and two State Department officers. For the next four months, the rebels tormented the hostages while the US government, African leaders, and the International Red Cross negotiated for their release.²²

CIA and the Pentagon planned various rescue scenarios without a good feel for what was happening in the area. Among the ideas were dropping Belgian paratroopers into Stanleyville from US aircraft; dispatching an Agency commando team upriver; letting the Congolese army recapture

the city; and inviting in a mixed force from several African nations.

Washington decided on the first and second options. The airborne assault, codenamed DRAGON ROUGE, began at dawn on 24 November. American C-130 transports dropped 340 Belgian paracommandos over Stanleyville and landed another 280 at the airport, with the CAF providing air cover. The CIA paramilitary team, which was supposed to be in the city at the same time, encountered resistance from the rebels and arrived a few hours late. The combined force routed the hostage-takers, freed their captives, and secured Stanleyville. The rescuers suffered only nine casualties, but the rebels killed or wounded several dozen hostages during the first phase of the mission. Two days later, the United States and Belgium cooperated in another operation, DRAGON NOIR, to rescue nearly 400 Western hostages held near Paulis, about 240 miles from Stanleyville (CIA was not involved). After hearing about the attack there, the rebels murdered nearly 30 detainees before the rescuers arrived. The Johnson administration then decided not to stage any more such operations (two others, DRAGON BLANC and DRAGON VERT, had been planned).²³

The DCI's Role

DCI John McCone's role in policymaking comes through clearly in the volume. A California businessman with some background in intelligence from previous US government service and, more important, a reputation as a hard-nosed manager of large international enterprises, Mc-

Cone came to CIA in late 1961 with a White House mandate to carefully watch over covert operations and avoid another Bay of Pigs debacle. Beyond that, the new DCI believed he should not only be the president's chief intelligence officer but, when allowed, should proffer advice on foreign policy as well.

McCone was not at all reluctant to do so. He actively participated in the deliberations of the NSC's covert action planning group, called the Special Group and the 303 Committee during the years of the Congo crisis, and occasionally met with policymakers (President Lyndon Johnson among them) separately. Besides presenting intelligence information, McCone argued for and against policy positions on many issues, including several related to the Congo. He doubted that negotiations with the rebels were feasible, opposed suspending air operations against them to signal a willingness to parley, and advocated increasing US aid to Tshombe after he became prime minister.

McCone strongly believed that Washington should support Tshombe despite his use of South African mercenaries and reputation as a front man for Belgian economic interests. "I felt we had no choice except to insure victory for Tshombe," he told Secretary of State Dean Rusk in early 1965. "I said we should not be deterred from this by the persuasion of do-gooders, by reactions from African states in the United Nations who didn't like us anyway, or from the vote in the OAU [Organization of African Unity]."

McCone also aggressively defended CIA's covert activities, rebuffing

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State Department complaints about the Agency's use of contract pilots and Ambassador Godley's attempt to control the disbursement of covert funds to Congolese politicians.

McCone had also argued in favor of launching all the hostage-rescue operations to show that the United States was engaged in humanitarian activities and not just propping up Tshombe and the Congolese army.²⁴

The Congo covert action programs had an important organizational impact inside CIA by establishing the reputation and prominence of the new AF Division in the Directorate of Plans. Formerly paired with the more important Near East area of operations, AF became a division in 1959 and was less than one year old when the Congo became a high-priority CA target. At the time, AF had few stations in sub-Saharan Africa. Most had opened during the previous five years and had very small staffs. As the State Department noted in 1965, "the Agency started from scratch in most [African] countries, laboring under the handicap of the visibility of the white man, few natural cover opportunities...and language and cultural differences."

The undersized CIA complement at Leopoldville Station, which opened in 1951, had responsibility for covering most of equatorial Africa, an area as large as half of the United States. The station grew rapidly during the three months after the Congo became independent, and, as with the Agency's other facilities on the continent, the expansion of covert activities over the next several years forced its growth. Leopoldville soon became one of CIA's most import-

ant outposts in sub-Saharan Africa, which continued to attract significant attention from policymakers through the 1960s and after.²⁵

Documents in the volume highlight the prominent role money played in the CIA's program, not only during the politically unsettled years of the Adoula and Tshombe governments but also after Mobutu took over. If he and the United States agreed that he was the indispensable man, then money became the essential feature of their relationship. In 1965, the State Department observed: "A legitimate question is whether the wholesale buying of political...leaders is a sound basis for establishing a stable government," and it answered that "in the Congo there appears to have been no feasible alternative." CIA pointed out in early 1966 that

Mobutu has no political organization which, as an alternative to the U.S. covert funding program, can provide him with the funds needed to ensure his continuation in office. Nor is there any wealthy managerial or commercial class to whom he can turn to finance his political efforts.

Moreover, as Devlin wrote later that year,

Cutting off payments to [Mobutu] would almost certainly be interpreted by him as an indication that [USG] no longer supports him. Political repercussions resulting from terminating...payments would be almost as severe as if [USG]

Over the years, Mobutu proved to be the best geopolitical friend the United States had on the continent, but he also turned into one of the world's most reviled kleptocrats.

were to cut off [international development] funds.

Although US policymakers wanted to move “away from slush funds and toward genuine development aid,” when Mobutu asked for more money in late 1968 with few strings attached, he got it because, according to the State Department,

He is the ultimate source of power in Congo...and ready access to him is vital if we hope to continue our long-standing policy of assisting the Congo to unity, stability and economic progress, with the eventual goal of seeing a stable, western-oriented government in the heart of Africa.... We do not wish to risk the impairment of access to him which if it occurred would very probably be carried over into contacts throughout the Congolese Government.²⁶

The CIA Board of National Estimates echoed that view soon after: Mobutu’s “departure, if sudden, would probably result in prolonged political turmoil and a sharp decline in internal security,” not to mention a

significant loss of Agency access and influence in the Congolese government. COS Leopoldville reported in late 1968 that he had good rapport with Mobutu, who remained the beneficiary of largely open-ended US support through the Cold War despite the corruption and profligacy that were increasingly evident near the end of the Agency’s covert activities.

In mid-1968, Ambassador McBride warned of “the galloping onset of the gold bed syndrome... vaguely and perhaps deliberately reminiscent of a figure on the banks of a more northern river called the Seine.” He was referring to Mobutu’s plan to build three replicas of St. Peter’s Basilica and “five-million dollar Versailles-like parks” and his purchase of a luxury villa in Switzerland for 1 million Swiss francs and, for private use, a British aircraft “fitted with bar, salon etc.” and costing two million pounds.^{a 27}

That Mobutu “has apparently risen in soufflé-like grandiloquence,”

a. The amounts mentioned in 2014 dollars are, respectively, \$34.1 million, \$1.6 million, and \$32.6 million.



in McBride’s words,²⁸ did not trouble Washington then or later. The goals of CIA’s program and US policy were mostly achieved, although not always as originally envisioned. Lumumba was removed from the scene but became a revolutionary martyr and an inspiration to anticolonial activists in Africa and elsewhere. Over the years, Mobutu proved to be the best geopolitical friend the United States had on the continent, but he also turned into one of the world’s most reviled kleptocrats and drove his country into economic ruin and, ultimately, political chaos.

The Soviet Union was kept out of the Congo but soon moved its anti-Western subversion elsewhere in the region. CIA’s covert activities in the Congo during the 1960s achieved success in the short and medium term but sometimes set in train developments that were not always consistent with democratic values. Those outcomes, which characterize some but by no means most of the Agency’s covert action programs, often result from the policy decisions that follow the completion of the operations and are not necessarily inherent in them. As the documents in *Congo, 1960–1968* show so well, CIA’s activities during that time there exemplify that fact.

Endnotes

1. Department of State, Office of the Historian, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1964–1968, Volume XXIII, Congo, 1960–1968* (Government Printing Office, 2013). Quotations from the FRUS volumes in this review are as they appear in print.
2. *FRUS, 1952–1954, Volume X, Iran, 1951–1954* (Government Printing Office, 1989).
3. The controversy is well recounted in Department of State, Office of the Historian, Toward “Thorough, Accurate, and Reliable”: A History of the Foreign Relations of the United States Series,” chapters 9 and 10, at <http://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus-history>, accessed 19 May 2014.
4. *FRUS, 1958–1960, Volume XIV, Africa* (Government Printing Office, 1992); *FRUS, 1961–1963, Volume XX, Congo Crisis* (Government Printing Office, 1994).
5. Facts and quote from David Robarge, “CIA during the Congo Crisis: Political Action and Paramilitary Operations, 1960–1968,” briefing package derived from internal studies and documents and cleared for public use by the CIA Publications Review Board on 6 March 2014.
6. See, among others, documents 4 and 5.
7. *FRUS, 1958–1960, XIV*, document 157.
8. *Ibid.*, document 254.
9. Documents 24, 28, 30, 32, 33, 43, 46, 60, 62, 68, 70, 72, 75, and 76. Footnote cite: “The Conclusions of the Enquiry Committee,” 16 November 2001, at http://www.lachambre.be/kvvcr/pdf_sections/comm/lmb/conclusions.pdf, accessed 20 May 2014.
10. Documents 60, 62, 68, 70, 72, and 75.
11. Documents 8–10, 16, 37, 40, 55, 57, 73, 82, 87, 90, 94, 100, 109, 123, 138, 142, 143, 146, 155, 167, and 170; “CIA during the Congo Crisis.”
12. Documents 169, 186, 209, 219, 223, 241, 253, 301, 371, 394, 407, 417, 419, 420, 430, 434, 442, 450, and 459.
13. Department of State, “Review of 1964 Operations in the AF Area,” undated but c. 1965, *FRUS, 1964–1968, Volume XXIV, Africa* (Government Printing Office, 1999), document 191; Congo, 1960–1968, documents 40 note 9, 64, 170, 194, and 217.
14. Documents 19, 48, 101, 119, 122, 191 notes 2 and 3, 192, 194, 446, 448, 454, 498, and 499.
15. Documents 466 and 573.
16. Documents 470, 471, 474, 475, and 490.
17. Documents 71, 123, 124, 127, 168, 171, 219, 237, 272, 427, 440, 462, 483, 544, 546, and 564; “CIA during the Congo Crisis.”
18. Documents 415, 440, 472, 478, 486, 492, 497, and 500; “CIA during the Congo Crisis.” Footnote cite: Documents 544, 546, and 564.
19. “CIA during the Congo Crisis.”
20. Documents 219, 223, 427, 431, 462, 464, 486, 494, and 575; “CIA during the Congo Crisis.”
21. Many documents on the hostage-takings and rescue operations are between pages 338 and 526 of the collection.
22. Two of the hostages have written of their ordeal in books: David Reed, *111 Days in Stanleyville* (Harper & Row, 1965); and Michael P.E. Hoyt, *Captive in the Congo: A Consul's Return to the Heart of Darkness* (Naval Institute Press, 2000).
23. Thomas P. Odom, *Dragon Operations: Hostage Rescues in the Congo, 1964, 1965* (Command Studies Institute, US Army Command and General Staff College, 1988); Fred E. Wagoner, *Dragon Rouge: The Rescue of Hostages in the Congo* (National Defense University, 1980).
24. Documents 178, 180, 211, 218 note 3, 289, 362, 369, 373, and 383.
25. “Review of 1964 Operations in the AF Area”; “CIA during the Congo Crisis.”
26. Documents 54, 65, 77, 102, 109, 219, 227, 462, 485, 501, and 578; “Review of 1964 Operations in the AF Area.”
27. Documents 577, 579, and 581.
28. Document 581.



