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Zaire: Prospects for the Mobutu Regime

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National Intelligence Estimate
Volume I—Key Judgments and Discussion

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NIE 65-86
November 1986

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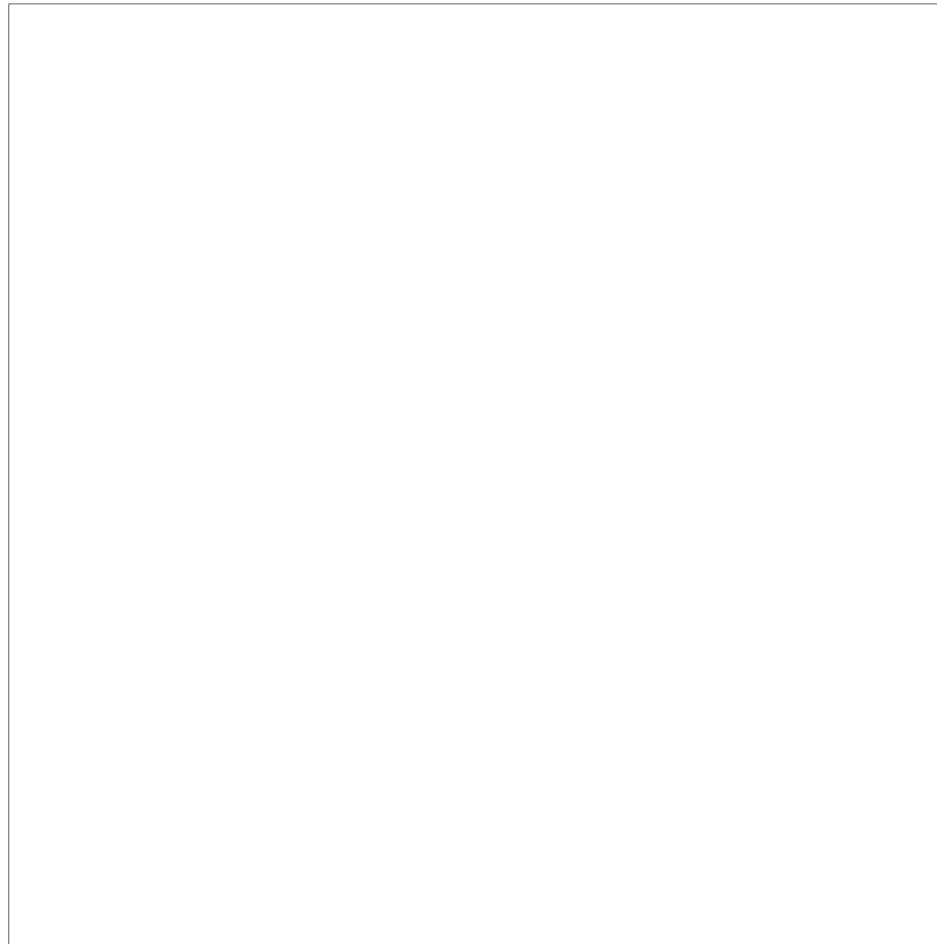
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NIE 65-86

**ZAIRES PROSPECTS FOR THE
MOBUTU REGIME**



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**Volume I—Key Judgments
and Discussion**

Information available as of 7 November 1986 was used in the preparation of this Estimate, which was approved by the National Foreign Intelligence Board on that date.

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CONTENTS

	<i>Page</i>
SCOPE NOTE	1
KEY JUDGMENTS	3
DISCUSSION	11
Daunting Economic Problems	11
Domestic Political Pressures	13
Security Concerns	14
The Dissident Threat	14
Constraints on the Military	14
Foreign Support for Dissidents	15
The Libyan Connection	15
Soviet Bloc Contact	15
Attitudes of Neighboring Countries	16
The Angola Equation	16
The View From Luanda	16
Zaire's Options	17
The Foreign Policy Arena	17
Relations With Key Foreign Backers	17
Regional Initiatives	18
Looking to the East	19
Soviet Intentions and Policies	19
Outlook	20
Alternative Scenarios	21
Significant Policy Changes	21
Mobutu's Death	21
Military Coup	22
Implications for the United States	22

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SCOPE NOTE

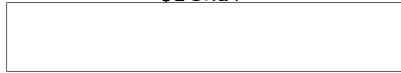
Zairian President Mobutu Sese Seko, since coming to power in 1965, has demonstrated a record of support to US regional policy second to none in Africa. This Estimate will assess Mobutu's prospects over the next two years and examine the forces working to weaken his political position. President Mobutu is scheduled to come to the United States on an official visit soon, and this Estimate looks at his perceived needs and the possible consequences for US-Zairian relations if his expectations for increased US support are not met.



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KEY JUDGMENTS

President Mobutu—a staunch friend of the United States—is facing growing domestic and foreign challenges at a time when the United States and Zaire’s other key Western backers are faced with declining foreign aid resources. We expect Mobutu’s skillful leadership and pervasive patronage system to ensure the stability of his regime over the next two years or more, but daunting economic problems and increasing political pressures are likely to slowly erode his authority over the longer term.



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President Mobutu is arguably unique in Africa in his support of US national security objectives. He has on several occasions assumed risks in undertaking efforts that benefited the United States, such as sending troops and providing support to Angolan factions in 1975, establishing relations with Israel in 1982, and sending Zairian troops to Chad in 1983. The complete alienation of Mobutu from the United States or his political demise would have serious implications for the United States and cost Washington its closest friend in Africa.



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the loss of Mobutu would eliminate a voice for compromise and political moderation in southern Africa and a potential interlocutor for negotiated settlements in the region.



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Mobutu will press hard for increased US economic and military assistance during his forthcoming visit, justifying his requests on several grounds—faithful compliance with International Monetary Fund (IMF) programs; a 21-year record of support to US policies, particularly his current support for UNITA; specific threats against him from Libyan leader Muammar Qadhafi; and more general threats posed by Soviet and Cuban-supported radical neighbor states. Although Mobutu has a penchant for exaggerating security threats to his government, we believe he nonetheless is one of Qadhafi’s primary targets in Africa because of his close ties to the United States and Israel. Tripoli is providing limited support to Zairian dissidents in the form of funds and training in sabotage and terrorism. In addition, Mobutu’s discreet support to UNITA has increased the prospect that the Angolan Popular

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Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA) regime, with Cuban/Soviet backing, may decide to renew serious support to Zairian Shaban dissidents with the objective of new attacks on Zaire (such as occurred in Shaba region in 1977 and 1978), even though the rebels currently are in disarray. []

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We believe Mobutu's high expectations for increased Western assistance are unlikely to be met. As a result, his current unhappiness with what he sees as stingy levels of US aid and doubts about Washington's reliability will be exacerbated, placing Zairian-US bilateral relations under as much stress over the next two years as at any time since Mobutu came to power in 1965. In our judgment, however, his pro-Western world view and long-term dependence on US, Belgium, and French support leave him little room to maneuver. Consequently, we believe he is unlikely to make any radical foreign policy changes that could jeopardize his strong ties to the West. He nonetheless might well take measures damaging to immediate US interests to further register his disappointment should his forthcoming Washington visit not result in increased support. Such measures might include previously tried "attention getters" such as expelling the US Ambassador, or Embassy, Agency for International Development (AID), or Peace Corps staff. Moreover, he probably would implement some of the recent proposals by the ruling party's Central Committee, such as limiting debt service payments or reversing liberalization measures, that would seriously jeopardize the IMF-supported reform program. []

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Mobutu's unhappiness probably will lead him to marginally improve relations with Moscow in an effort to elicit more US aid, diversify his sources of assistance, and improve his nonaligned credentials. To this end, he may visit Moscow, agree to some limited economic or military aid, and take other symbolic moves to improve ties. []

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Any rapprochement will be limited by Mobutu's deepseated mistrust of the Soviet Union and his need to retain essential financial and security relationships with the United States and other Western backers. Although unlikely, a serious and prolonged rift in relations with the United States over aid levels, particularly if combined with growing security problems, could tempt Mobutu to make concessions to Moscow such as assuming a more genuinely nonaligned posture or reducing support to UNITA in return for military and security assistance. []

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For its part, Moscow has two short-term goals in Zaire: improving bilateral relations that went into a deep freeze after Mobutu suspected the USSR of complicity in a 1984 Kinshasa airport bombing incident, and driving a wedge between Zaire and the United States on the question of material support to UNITA. The Soviets, however, are likely

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to continue to respond cautiously to Mobutu's overtures because they are wary of being used by Mobutu solely to elicit increased Western assistance, and are likely to only offer token economic and military aid unless Mobutu shows clear signs of distancing himself from the West.

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Zaire has taken several positive steps over the last three years that have halted the country's economic decline and improved the potential for economic growth, including:

- Allowing its currency to decline to a market-based exchange rate.
- Lowering government budget deficits by cutting subsidies, implementing parastatal reforms, and undertaking a variety of other budget stringencies.
- Reducing government corruption, particularly in Gecamines, the huge mining state enterprise.

At the same time, Mobutu—in a marked departure from the past—has met rescheduled external debt obligations on time and has successfully completed two IMF standby arrangements.

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Despite these very positive steps, Mobutu has been unable to show that significant economic progress and prospects for the next two years are equally unfavorable largely because of factors beyond his control:

- Declining prices for Zaire's major exports—copper, cobalt, and petroleum.
- A debt service burden that takes 25 percent of export earnings and over 50 percent of the government's budget revenues.
- Continued reluctance of foreign investors to put new money in Zaire because of both the lack of infrastructure and concerns that Mobutu's three-year-old reform program may only be temporary.

As a result of these factors, we estimate that real gross domestic product (GDP) growth for 1986 will be about 2 percent compared to an IMF target of 4 percent; barring a major upturn in commodity prices, we believe Zaire will experience only slow economic growth and a continuation of the 10-year decline in per capita gross national product (GNP) through the end of the decade.

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Zaire's endemic corruption and Mobutu's strong need to assert centralized control continue to be a drain on the economy, in our view, while at the same time serving as a factor for stability. Although IMF and World Bank fiscal reforms have significantly reduced diversions of

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funds into the pockets of the ruling elite, government officials still regularly siphon off public money for personal gain. From Mobutu's standpoint, allowing elites some access to public funds is critical to maintaining his patronage system, while at the lower levels it serves as an essential supplement to the meager salaries of public employees. Somewhat offsetting this, Mobutu reportedly has used significant amounts of his own personal funds this year to help the government meet IMF performance targets and to improve living conditions in military barracks. Mobutu's centralized control probably is a disincentive to greater producer efforts and will be an obstacle to moving the country toward more market-oriented policies. _____

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Zaire's economic problems would be seriously compounded if events in southern Africa disrupted rail transportation to South African ports. Over 40 percent of Zaire's annual mineral exports and three-fourths of the essential imports needed in the economically vital Shaba region are shipped through South Africa via Botswana, Zimbabwe, and Zambia, making Zaire hostage to the actions of numerous actors in southern Africa. Although some trade could be rerouted at sharply increased costs, current alternate transport routes would be unable to handle substantial increases in volume, resulting in immediate lost export earnings, longer term production problems in the critical mining sector, and possibly even political tensions in Shaba region. Mobutu is increasingly concerned by Zaire's vulnerability to South African countersanctions and to pressure from Frontline States such as Zambia and Zimbabwe over his support to UNITA, and he may well promote increased Western and US support to the *Voie Nationale*, Zaire's internal rail/river transportation system, as a means to reduce Kinshasa's vulnerability during his forthcoming Washington visit. _____

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_____ Mobutu—like most Zairians—is becoming increasingly frustrated with the slow results of the economic reform program. Although reports from a variety of sources suggest that he is still committed to reform, we believe he increasingly sees the costs of the IMF program outweighing the actual benefits. His frustration was evident in his recent decisions to demote Prime Minister Kengo—widely identified as the IMF's strongest advocate—and to tentatively endorse proposals by the ruling party's Central Committee for economic policy changes that, if implemented, would derail the IMF and World Bank programs in Zaire. _____

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On balance, we believe the chances are only about even that Zaire will successfully complete the current standby arrangement that runs through March 1988. Although Mobutu is unlikely to make any economic policy changes this year, he will be increasingly inclined to backslide or even abandon the program in 1987 if the IMF and Zaire's Western backers do not agree to significantly relax conditionality and debt servicing terms. _____

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In our view, Mobutu's intolerance for competition precludes any significant political reform in the next two years. We believe Mobutu's political authority will be increasingly—but still unsuccessfully—challenged as he keeps the lid on discontent over painful economic reform and the lack of political freedom. Although the domestic opposition remains small and unorganized, it is gaining support among intellectuals and lower ranking government and military officials. []

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Although Mobutu will first use co-optation and the veneer of compromise to stifle dissent, we believe he would not hesitate to resort to force, despite the condemnation this would bring from his Western backers. Greater repression, however, risks undermining confidence in his rule among the domestic elites, foreign backers, and military leadership, in our view []

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Although externally based dissidents will pose no direct threat to the Mobutu regime over the next two years, we expect them to carry out occasional small-scale attacks that upset Mobutu and complicate his ability to deal effectively with other internal problems. In our view, the dissidents will continue to fail at forming a viable military force or mobilizing internal support, resulting in little improvement in their operational capabilities or ability to attract substantial amounts of external support. []

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Mobutu's support to UNITA and growing Libyan influence along Zaire's eastern border, however, may lead some neighboring states to begin direct support to anti-Mobutu rebels, thereby improving their ability to mount sporadic small-scale, cross-border attacks. Although Zairian military capabilities have improved considerably since the late 1970s, the armed forces are still beset with problems that limit their ability to respond to even small-scale rebel attacks. []

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Libyan leader Qadhafi, who opposes Mobutu's close ties to the West and Israel, has been the dissidents' main source of materiel support since their invasions of Shaba region in the late 1970s. Tripoli provides small amounts of arms and training, and we believe its backing probably will remain limited unless the rebels overcome their internal disarray. To date, numerous Libyan attempts to unite various factions have failed, and, in our judgment, Tripoli is becoming increasingly frustrated and has stepped up pressure on the dissidents to carry out effective military operations or risk losing support. Libya is likely to continue its efforts to unite Zairian dissidents over the next two years, but ethnic divisions, personal rivalries, and corruption probably will undermine Tripoli's attempts to create a viable insurgency capable of threatening the Zairian Government. Libyan training of dissidents will continue, raising the prospect of new isolated acts of sabotage and

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terrorism in Zaire over the next two years. We cannot rule out Libyan-sponsored attempts to assassinate Mobutu, either using Zairian or other surrogates

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The traditionally mistrustful relationship between Angola and Zaire is unlikely to improve over the next two years as the issue of support to each other's dissidents remains contentious. Luanda appears to be pursuing a policy of diplomatic and psychological pressure in the hope that Kinshasa would reduce its support to UNITA while also encouraging other Frontline States to grant covert support to anti-Mobutu dissidents in their countries. Should this prove ineffective in intimidating Zaire, Luanda might take some limited military moves such as limited cross-border operations into Zaire with its own troops or small units of Zairian dissidents designed to shake Mobutu and disrupt economically important mining facilities. In the event, however, of a dramatic increase in UNITA activity in northwest Angola, especially in Cabinda; serious Angolan military setbacks in the overall struggle against UNITA;

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we believe Luanda, with Cuban and Soviet backing, may decide to rearm Angolan-based Zairian dissidents for larger scale incursions that would threaten the economically vital Shaba region and perhaps weaken Mobutu's political position.

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We believe Mobutu will continue to discreetly help UNITA infiltrate into Angola and facilitate the transfer of materiel to Savimbi's forces because of Zaire's own national security interests and because he sees it as an opportunity to gain additional aid for Zaire. Mobutu's willingness to support Savimbi more openly, however, will be constrained by fear of Angolan retaliation and concern that he will become more isolated in the region because support to Savimbi would tie him to South Africa in the eyes of many black African leaders. Should UNITA suffer military setbacks during the next two years, we judge that Mobutu probably would come under pressure from Savimbi and South Africa to provide increased support to UNITA in the form of staging areas inside Zaire. Without specific security guarantees from his Western backers, however, we doubt that Mobutu would risk such visibly increased support.

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In our view, the unique support offered to US security objectives by Mobutu over the years derives in large part from his idiosyncratic perceptions, as well as his unchallenged political position, which almost certainly would not be carried over to a successor. Mobutu perceives that the United States has repeatedly responded to his needs when he has been faced with major threats to his government, and he sees this as a special relationship. Mobutu also has used his power as an absolute

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leader to commit his government quickly to support US objectives. In our judgment, a successor, even if well-disposed to the United States and aware of Zaire's dependence on Western economic assistance, would not have the depth of personal commitment to the relationship, nor, in the first few years of rule, the sufficient authority to commit Zaire to support US requests. Thus, even in the most favorable succession scenario, we expect considerable loss to the United States in terms of quick and decisive Zairian support to US requests. Kinshasa probably would reduce its support for US policies in Angola and Chad, adhere more closely to mainstream black African rhetoric on South Africa, and be more cautious in allowing the United States use of its territory in support of US security interests. [Redacted]

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Mobutu's death—especially if it were sudden—would greatly increase the potential for serious upheaval, and a troubled transition period would open greater opportunities for Soviet inroads and intensify Libyan meddling. On balance, we believe the chances are only about even that, in the event of Mobutu's death, Zairian leaders will be able to implement a transition that does not require military intervention or lead to serious social unrest. We believe all of the identifiable contenders for power would continue a pro-Western policy. It is possible, but we believe unlikely, that elements [Redacted]

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[Redacted] such as lower ranking military officers who harbor anti-Western views—could gain authority in a period of intense political infighting among elites. [Redacted]

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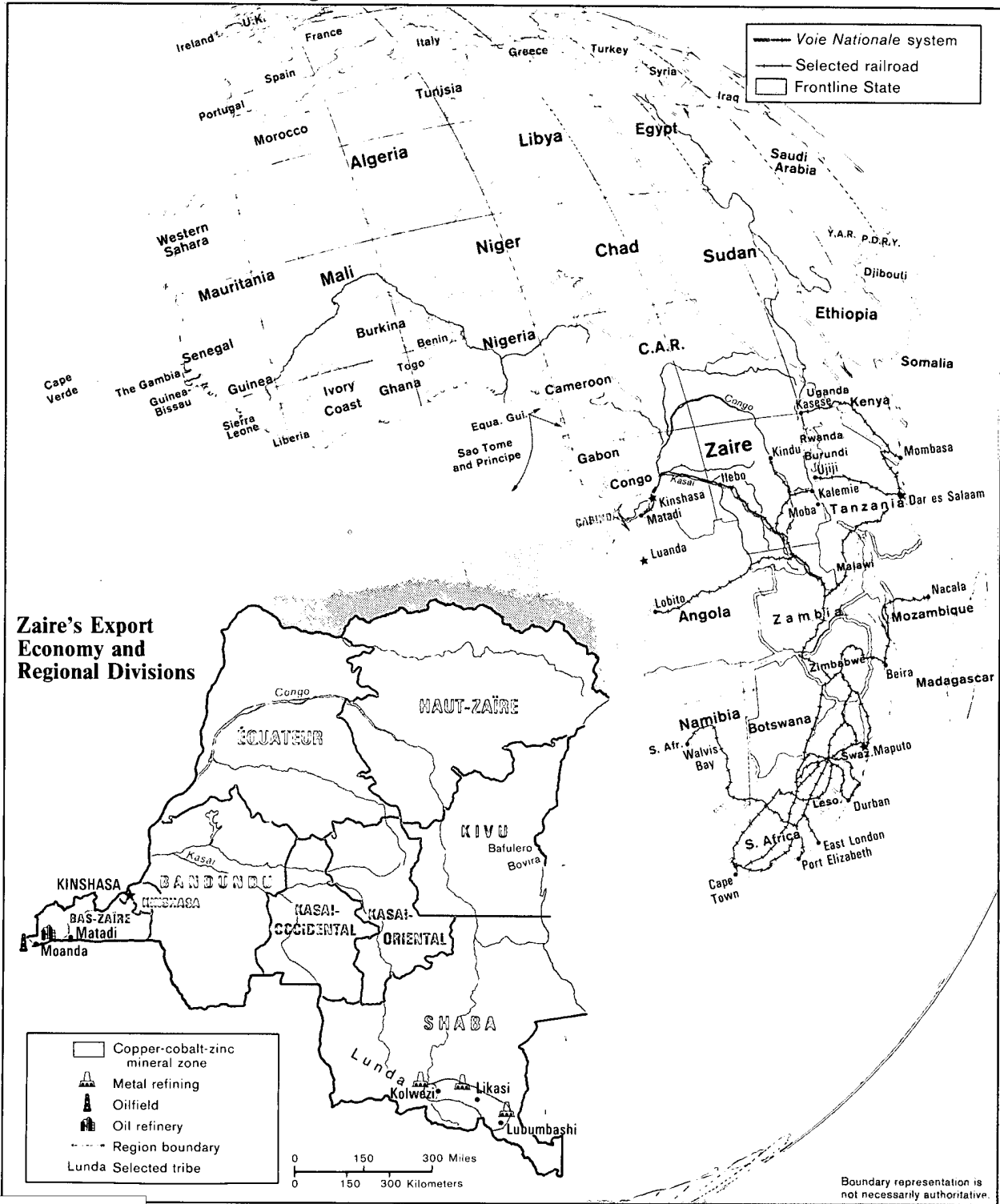
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Zaire's Rail Links With Its Neighbors



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DISCUSSION

1. Since 1965, the US Government has committed significant assistance to the central government headed by President Mobutu Sese Seko under the rubric of supporting a pro-Western government against secession and external, especially Communist-backed, aggression and subversion. President Mobutu has a record of support to US regional policies second to none in Africa—including deploying the Zairian military in support of US objectives (Angola, 1975 and Chad, 1983). Zaire itself is geopolitically dominant in the waist of Africa—a vast country, bordering on nine other African countries, and possessing large deposits of important minerals including cobalt, uranium, copper, and diamonds. Zaire's fate—and Mobutu's prospects—are, hence, of considerable importance to the United States []

2. Mobutu and Zaire, however, now face growing domestic and foreign challenges at a time when the United States and Zaire's other key Western backers are faced with declining foreign aid resources. Although we expect Mobutu to continue in power during the next two years, Zaire's stability remains fragile, and formidable economic problems, growing discontent with the autocratic political system, and foreign-supported dissidence will increasingly challenge Mobutu's political position. Moreover, the civil war in Angola and Libyan subversion will further complicate Mobutu's ability to deal with internal problems. Finally, unless Mobutu's growing frustration with what he sees as a lack of support from the United States is calmed, this is likely to lead to strained bilateral relations and opportunities for the Soviet Union to substantially increase its influence []

Daunting Economic Problems

3. Despite adherence over the past three years to a stringent International Monetary Fund (IMF)-supported reform program, Mobutu has been unable to show significant economic progress largely because of very low world prices for Zaire's major exports and a substantial debt service burden.¹ We estimate that real

¹ The last Intelligence Community paper on Zaire (IIM 82-10013, *The Outlook for the Zairian Economy*, November 1982) concluded that Mobutu would not pursue major reforms, resulting in Zaire's continued economic decline. The Interagency Intelligence Memorandum (IIM) failed to predict Mobutu's willingness to undertake serious economic reform because it placed undue emphasis on his

Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth for 1986 will be about 2 percent, well below the IMF target of 4 percent, and, barring a major upturn in commodity prices and more incentives for export and production, we believe Zaire will experience slow economic growth and a continuation of the 10-year decline in per capita Gross National Product (GNP) through the end of the decade. Meanwhile, austerity policies, originally envisioned for a period of two years, are now in their fourth year and are damaging the Zairian government's capacity to address improving the country's infrastructure, wage scales, regional economies, public health, and education. []

4. We agree with US Embassy and IMF estimates that export earnings, which account for most of the country's foreign exchange and government revenues, will drop by over 13 percent this year—to SDR 1.6 billion—because of unexpectedly low prices for copper, cobalt, and petroleum, which together comprise over 60 percent of total exports. Moreover, IMF projections for 1987 indicate that export earnings probably will continue to decline because of low copper and coffee export volumes. At the same time, the debt service burden is absorbing an increasing share of the country's scarce foreign exchange—debt repayments in 1986 will total about 25 percent of export earnings and over 50 percent of the government's budget, according to IMF figures and the US Embassy. The shortage of foreign exchange was exacerbated when the IMF postponed Zaire's scheduled drawings because of its failure to meet performance targets last June. The shortfall has forced Kinshasa to reduce essential imports, further slowing the economy. Meanwhile, because of budgetary constraints in donor nations and the reluctance of private investors and commercial banks to invest new money in Zaire, we doubt that Kinshasa can attract sufficient external funds to spur growth. []

Footnote ¹ continued

past behavior as a reliable indicator of his future actions. In doing so, the IIM underestimated the factors that in the end were critical to convincing Mobutu to pursue major reforms: realization that only drastic action would halt an economic decline that he perceived was starting to undermine his political position, fear that his intransigence was costing him critical Western support, and a growing concern with his place in history that made him more sensitive to long-term issues such as economic development. []

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Mobutu's Recent Economic Record

Mobutu over the past three years has actively encouraged economic reform and demonstrated unusual perseverance in implementing tough austerity measures designed to set the stage for future economic expansion—a marked departure from the past in which four IMF programs failed between 1976 and 1981. Zaire since 1983 has successfully completed two standby arrangements and in April 1986 reached agreement with the IMF on a 22-month program. Meanwhile, the Paris Club has agreed to a rescheduling of Zaire's debt in each of the past three years and in June 1986 provided supplementary relief through capitalization of 50 percent of the interest due on the debt rescheduling of December 1983. According to the US Embassy, a market-based exchange rate—which has reduced use of the parallel foreign exchange market—and substantially lower budget deficits brought about by cutting subsidies and undertaking a variety of other budget stringencies have been instrumental in improving Zaire's financial picture. Moreover, external debt obligations have been met on time, price liberalization has led to slightly improved agricultural production, some progress has been made on the reform of state-owned companies, and reforms have helped reduce diversions of funds into the pockets of the ruling elite.

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5. Zaire's endemic corruption and Mobutu's strong need to assert centralized control continue to be a drain on the economy, in our view. Although IMF and World Bank programs have significantly improved fiscal management, reporting from a variety of sources indicates that government officials still regularly siphon off public funds for personal gain. From Mobutu's standpoint, some graft is almost inevitable. Indeed, among the elite it constitutes his patronage system and among the workers it serves as an essential supplement to their meager salaries. Somewhat offsetting this, Mobutu reportedly has used significant amounts of his own personal funds this year to help the government meet IMF performance targets and to improve living conditions in military barracks. Mobutu's penchant for centralized control probably is a disincentive to greater producer efforts and will be an obstacle to moving the country toward more market-oriented policies.

6. Zaire's economic problems would be seriously compounded if events in southern Africa disrupted rail transportation to South African ports. Over 40 percent of Zaire's annual mineral exports and three-fourths of the essential imports needed in the economically vital Shaba region are shipped through South Africa via Botswana, Zimbabwe, and Zambia, making Zaire hostage to the actions of numerous actors in southern Africa. Although some trade could be rerouted at sharply increased costs, current alternate transport routes would be unable to handle substantial increases in volume, resulting in immediate lost export earnings and longer term production problems in the critical mining sector and possibly even political tensions in Shaba region. Mobutu is increasingly concerned by Zaire's vulnerability to South African countersanctions and to pressure from Frontline States such as Zimbabwe and Zambia over his support to UNITA, and he may well promote increased Western and US support to the *Voie Nationale*, Zaire's internal rail/river transportation system, as a means to reduce Kinshasa's vulnerability during his forthcoming Washington visit.

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Table 1
Selected Financial Indicators

Million SDR
(except where noted)

	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986 ^a	1987 ^a
Exports f.o.b.	1,423	1,450	1,577	1,847	1,885	1,569	1,494
Copper (percent)	50	54	51	38	37	39	40
Imports c.i.f.	1,388	1,301	1,244	1,289	1,363	1,217	1,266
Trade balance	35	149	333	558	522	352	228
Current account	-512	-535	-328	-341	-241	-285	-470
Gross foreign reserves	130	35	97	140	173	50	
Total external debt	4,560	4,554	4,852	5,090	5,200	5,400	
Real GDP growth (percent)	2.4	-2.6	1.2	2.6	2.0	1.8	2.2
Inflation (percent)	38	37	76	20	35	45	35
Debt service ration (percent)	18	16	21	17	27	30	30 ^b
Copper production (thousand metric tons)	505	503	509	500	475	485	488
World copper price (US cents/pound)	79	67	72	62	63	57	60

^a Estimated figures.

^b Does not drop below 20 percent until after 1990.

7. Although Mobutu continues to adhere to the IMF program, we believe his frustration with the slow results and growing tensions with the Fund may lead him to suspend the program in the next year. [redacted] suggest Mobutu increasingly sees the cost of the program outweighing the benefits: his expectations for recovery have not been met, he sees foreign creditors as the principal beneficiaries of the program, and he believes increasing involvement of IMF officials in economic policy decisions undermines Zaire's sovereignty. Moreover, we believe Mobutu is increasingly concerned with what he sees as the growing potential for austerity to undermine his political position by alienating political elites and provoking social unrest. In our view, Mobutu's growing unhappiness was evident in his decisions in late October to demote Prime Minister Kengo—widely identified as the IMF's strongest advocate—and to tentatively endorse proposals by the ruling party's Central Committee for sweeping economic policy changes that, if implemented, would derail IMF and World Bank programs in Zaire. The IMF and World Bank in reaction have suspended future disbursements pending official clarification of Zaire's economic policy intentions, resulting in heightened tensions between Kinshasa and the multilateral institutions. [redacted]

Domestic Political Pressures

8. Although Mobutu has proved adept at maintaining his personal rule through Zaire's sole legal party—the Popular Movement for the Revolution (MPR) that he formed in 1967—popular pressures for a more participatory system are growing. Despite government intimidation, the illegal Union for Democratic and Social Progress (UDPS) continues to agitate for recognition as a second political party. Although the UDPS is a small, unorganized group that poses no immediate threat to the regime, it is reportedly gaining support among intellectuals and lower ranking government and military officials. There is also growing—although muted—criticism of the government's closed decision-making process within Parliament and the party Central Committee. Mobutu, however, is clearly intolerant of competition; his recent public speeches have eschewed the need for political reforms, and, last July he launched a plan of co-optation and coercion to undermine the UDPS. [redacted]

9. Simmering ethnic tensions are another growing problem for the Mobutu government. Tribal issues have factionalized the ruling elite and led to ethnic tensions throughout the MPR, government, and military. Members of Mobutu's Ngbandi tribe from his home region of Equateur hold most key government

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and military positions, almost certainly fanning deep-seated jealousies among other groups. In addition, Mobutu's placement of mulattoes—who are dependent on Mobutu and, therefore, loyal to him because they lack a tribal base—and non-Equateurians in prominent positions in recent years has created constant and often bitter competition with Equateurians in the inner circle. Although Mobutu often exploits tribal jealousies to ensure his political and economic control, these tensions contribute to mismanagement and ineffectiveness throughout the political and economic system and are likely to make ruling difficult in the post-Mobutu era. [redacted]

10. Mounting public discontent with austerity and recent Central Committee proposals for sweeping economic policy changes will place increasing pressure on Mobutu to alter current policy. Seen through Zairian eyes, there is little to show for the sacrifices of the past three years, and [redacted] reports widespread grumbling among political elites and the public over the IMF austerity program. The political elite—who are responsible for supporting legions of family and tribal dependents—are increasingly unhappy with austerity because it has cut into traditional sources of presidential largesse. Mobutu also has been under growing pressure from government employees, labor, private businessmen, and students who blame the IMF program for declining living standards and the political elites for mismanagement and corruption. Although Zairians have accepted the most stringent austerity program in Africa for three years with little complaint, continued austerity coupled with a worsening economic situation may very well set the stage for increasing signs of open protest. In our view, however, such demonstrations probably would not escalate into a regime-threatening situation [redacted]

Security Concerns

11. Although Zairian dissidents are militarily weak and in disarray, they have managed to carry out a few paramilitary operations in the past few years that have upset Mobutu and complicated his ability to deal with internal economic and political problems. Although Zairian military capabilities have improved considerably since the late 1970s, the armed forces are still beset with problems that limit their ability to respond to even small-scale rebel attacks. [redacted]

The Dissident Threat

12. A review of recent reporting indicates that Zairian dissidents, aggregated in over 25 small groups, have remained demoralized and ineffective since their last unsuccessful attempt to invade Shaba region in

1978. Ethnic tensions, uninspired leadership, widespread corruption, and a lack of revolutionary fervor have undermined attempts to form a militarily viable opposition movement, attract significant external aid, or mobilize internal support. Recent efforts by Lieutenant General Mbumba—who led rebel forces that invaded Shaba region in the late 1970s and is now head of a Tanzanian-based group—to unite the various factions have reportedly failed because of ethnic divisions and Mbumba's reputation for corruption. Meanwhile, many rebels, including most members of the group responsible for the small-scale attacks into eastern Shaba in late 1984 and mid-1985, have rallied to the government over the past year under an amnesty program. [redacted]

13. Despite their weaknesses, we believe the rebels are still capable of mounting isolated small-scale terrorist attacks in Kinshasa, paramilitary attacks on border towns in eastern Zaire, and possibly even sabotage operations against vital mining facilities in Shaba region. Since 1983, the dissidents have been responsible for a terrorist bombing in Kinshasa and two small cross-border attacks in eastern Zaire that were repelled by government troops. Although there have been no incidents since June 1985, small bands of rebels continue to be sporadically active in eastern Zaire where they pillage villages and attack government soldiers. In our view, dissidents will be unable to mount a serious challenge to the regime until they are able to form a united front, which seems unlikely in the near to medium term, and attract increased external support. [redacted]

Constraints on the Military

14. Mobutu's reluctance to create a strong military establishment because of its potential to threaten his rule, and severe budget constraints, continue to undermine efforts to improve Zairian military capabilities. Mobutu's publicized plans to enlarge the armed forces, create a Civil Guard, improve living conditions in the barracks, and expand counterinsurgency training have been scaled back sharply because of IMF budget targets and insufficient external aid. Military capabilities also continue to be hindered by weak leadership, a virtually nonexistent logistics system, and Mobutu's frequent reorganizations. Kinshasa-based units have received a larger share of military resources and foreign training, and, as a result, are far superior to troops in outlying regions. The rebel attacks in 1984 and subsequent operations have clearly demonstrated the incompetence of local military units as well as other problems such as the shortage of military transport and poor logistics, communication, and intelli-

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gence support to troops in the field. In our judgment, Zaire's Air Force is particularly ill-equipped to support its mission because of a lack of operational aircraft—for example, Zaire currently has only one operational C-130 transport. [redacted]

15. Although we believe the military remains loyal to Mobutu, there are reports of growing morale problems and increased desertions among lower ranking personnel over low pay, inadequate benefits, and senior officer corruption. Desertions may have even increased within the elite Presidential Special Division (DSP) responsible for Mobutu's personal security. In addition, Mobutu's recent reshuffling of military commanders has intensified ethnic rivalries and further eroded already poor intelligence support to troops in the east. Moreover, we believe Mobutu will continue to ensure that Kinshasa-based units receive a larger share of the military resources, forcing troops in the outlying regions to supplement their meager earnings through corruption and harassment of the civilian population. [redacted]

16. Despite these deficiencies, the military is capable of carrying out limited counterinsurgency operations, presidential protection, and internal security. Although the Zairian military has no units charged exclusively with combating insurgency, two Kinshasa-based units—the DSP and 31st Airborne Brigade—are well-trained by African standards for counterinsurgency and internal security missions. The French-trained and -commanded 31st Airborne Brigade, Zaire's primary counterinsurgency unit, is capable of deploying several battalions of well-trained soldiers on short notice anywhere in the country. The 31st Brigade performed well in November 1984 when it airdropped two battalions into eastern Zaire to retake the small town of Moba, which had been overrun by a small group of rebels. The Israeli-trained DSP currently serves almost exclusively as a palace guard for Mobutu, but could be called upon in case of emergency to mount counterterrorist and perhaps limited counterinsurgency operations. Both the DSP and 31st Brigade also would be the first units called on to quell civil unrest in Kinshasa or other large cities. On balance, we believe Zaire's armed forces can handle the most likely threats it faces, but, in the unlikely event that widespread civil unrest erupted in Kinshasa and other large cities or if a large rebel force threatened mining facilities in Shaba region, Mobutu would be forced to request logistic support, and possibly troops, from the United States, France, Belgium, and Morocco as he did in the late 1970s. [redacted]

Foreign Support for Dissidents

17. Zairian dissident groups have maintained contact with a wide range of foreign countries, including Libya and the Soviet Union. Although Zaire's neighbors generally do not directly support anti-Mobutu dissidents, several have long turned a blind eye to rebel activities, and we believe recent events may lead one or more to begin direct support. [redacted]

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The Libyan Connection

18. Libyan leader Qadhafi, who opposes Mobutu's close ties to the West and Israel, has been the dissidents' main source of materiel support since their invasions of Shaba region in the late 1970s. Nevertheless, because the dissidents have yet to prove their viability as an opposition movement, we believe Libyan aid has been limited to small amounts of arms and money, training in Libya for only 100 to 200 rebels, and the use of Libyan diplomatic missions in neighboring states to facilitate travel and the delivery of material. [redacted]

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19. We believe Tripoli is becoming increasingly frustrated with the dissidents and is using its influence to pressure several groups to initiate military actions. Qadhafi reportedly threatened to halt aid to 25 Zairian dissident groups [redacted] if they did not form a united front. Numerous Libyan efforts to merge the various dissident groups have failed, and we believe Tripoli is unlikely to expand its aid program unless the dissidents unite and demonstrate an ability to perform [redacted]

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20. The potential for Libyan-backed terrorism in Kinshasa—particularly an attempt on Mobutu's life—is of great concern to Zairian security [redacted]

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[redacted] leading Mobutu to improve his personal security. The potential for a successful terrorist attack on Mobutu probably has fallen in recent months because of Mobutu's improved personal protection and the disarray within the dissident movement. Nevertheless, we believe the dissidents are capable of carrying out small-scale terrorist operations similar to their bombings of two public buildings in Kinshasa in 1983. Moreover, we cannot rule out the possibility that Qadhafi may order a Libyan operative to try to assassinate Mobutu. [redacted]

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Soviet Bloc Contact

21. We have no evidence that the Soviet Union or other Soviet Bloc states have provided support to Zairian dissidents since they helped fund the attacks [redacted]

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[redacted]

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into Shaba region in the late 1970s. We believe Moscow maintains informal contacts with some dissident leaders such as Mbumba, but longstanding Soviet doubts about their ideological orientation and military capabilities almost certainly have constrained the relationship. Zairian dissidents reportedly receive token support, mostly training, from other sources such as the PLO, but not on a regular basis. [redacted]

convinced that Kinshasa [redacted] allows UNITA to use Zaire as a safehaven—especially in the economically vital north where UNITA operations have increased significantly over the past year. For their part, Zairian officials claim that Luanda, with Soviet backing, is increasing support to Angolan-based Zairian dissidents to discourage Kinshasa from supporting UNITA. [redacted]

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Attitudes of Neighboring Countries

22. Mobutu is concerned that Tanzania and Congo will begin directly supporting Zairian dissidents in retaliation for Zairian backing of the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA). While the Tanzanian Government is split on the issue, some Tanzanian officials favor more active and overt support for anti-Mobutu dissidents. [redacted]

The View From Luanda

25. We believe that the Angolan Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA) regime's policy toward Zaire will be heavily influenced by the challenges posed by UNITA activities inside Angola. At this time, Luanda appears to be pursuing a policy of diplomatic and psychological pressure in the hope of raising anxiety levels in Kinshasa sufficient to reduce Zaire's support for UNITA. We believe Angola will continue to look for concrete evidence of Kinshasa's collusion with UNITA and opportunities to present its case against Zaire in the OAU and other international meetings, perhaps including the UN Security Council. Angola may also be encouraging other Frontline States to grant covert support to anti-Mobutu dissident activities in their countries and exploring cooperation with Libya in subverting the Mobutu regime. [redacted]

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Although Congolese President Sassou in the past two years has constrained Zairian dissident activity while still granting them safehaven, we believe that a deterioration in traditionally tense relations between Brazzaville and Kinshasa could take place, motivating Sassou to consider direct aid to the rebels. Sassou, however, is unlikely to do this in 1987 while he is chairman of the Organization for African Unity (OAU). [redacted]

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23. Zairian officials believe that growing Libyan influence in Uganda, Sudan, and Burundi has resulted in the establishment of Zairian dissident bases there. Qadhafi's visit to Kampala in September 1986 has further convinced Kinshasa that Uganda plans to allow Libya to use its territory for subversion against its neighbors. In addition, Zairian officials claim that Libyan-trained Zairian dissidents operate freely in western Burundi and southern Sudan where they are successfully recruiting new members. Although we have no evidence that any of these neighboring states directly support anti-Mobutu dissidents, limited resources, domestic problems, and their desire for Libyan aid have constrained their ability or willingness to control Zairian dissident or Libyan activity in their country. [redacted]

26. Should diplomatic and psychological pressure prove ineffective, we judge that Luanda might take some limited military moves against Kinshasa, but weigh carefully any efforts to resurrect the Front for the National Liberation of the Congo (FLNC)—formerly known as the Katangan Gendarmeries—for another major attack on Zaire. To remind Zaire of its vulnerability, the Angolans could easily initiate cross-border operations into Zaire and increase overflights of Zairian territory. As a more pointed reminder, a small number of forces—either Angolans disguised as Zairian dissidents or perhaps even a reconstituted unit of Zairian dissidents—could enter Zaire on an attention-getting, small-scale raid. We believe even a small-scale dissident attack into Shaba region from Angola—particularly if it targeted key mining facilities—would greatly concern Mobutu and perhaps exacerbate Zaire's economic problems. [redacted]

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The Angola Equation

24. The traditionally mistrustful relationship between Angola and Zaire has worsened over the past year. Despite a meeting between Mobutu and Angolan President dos Santos in July and public professions of goodwill, private suspicions of each other's willingness to aid dissident groups have increased. Luanda is

27. We believe any major Angolan effort to resuscitate the FLNC as a serious threat to Mobutu would be a long-term option. Luanda would have to invest substantial time and money to revive the organization and receive Soviet and Cuban acquiescence and probable support. Moreover, we expect Luanda would weigh carefully the risks of backing a major Zairian dissident attack, given the likelihood of a strong

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Western response similar to those in the 1977 and 1978 invasions of Zaire's Shaba region. Nonetheless, we judge that Luanda might decide to renew support to FLNC under certain circumstances such as a dramatic increase in UNITA activity in northeast Angola and especially Cabinda, serious Angolan setbacks in the overall struggle against UNITA, or visible evidence of increased aid passing through Zaire to Savimbi. Large-scale rebel raids into Zaire's Shaba region would threaten economically vital mining facilities and perhaps weaken Mobutu's political position. [redacted]

Zaire's Options

28. We believe Mobutu will continue his policy of maintaining a dialogue with Luanda while providing covert logistic support to UNITA in the hope that he will be called upon by both sides to broker a reconciliation. Mobutu fears Angolan retaliation, however, and probably hopes that continued high-level contacts with Luanda, public denials of any support to UNITA, and improved military capabilities along the Angolan border will deter Luanda from launching cross-border operations. In addition to upgrading Shaba-based military units, Kinshasa is working with its key Western backers and South Africa to improve intelligence-gathering capabilities on Angola. [redacted]

29. Despite his security concerns, we believe Mobutu will continue to discreetly help UNITA infiltrate into Angola and provide use of airfields, personnel, and intelligence support to facilitate the transfer of materiel to UNITA. Mobutu has long supported UNITA because he fears an Angolan victory would leave Zaire prey to a radical Soviet- and Cuban-supported neighbor and because he believes UNITA's presence would prevent anti-Mobutu dissidents from establishing bases near the economically vital Shaba region. In addition, Mobutu sees Western backing for UNITA as substantively and symbolically important in blunting Communist inroads in the area, and, also, as an opportunity to gain additional economic and military aid for Zaire. [redacted]

30. Mobutu's willingness to support Savimbi more openly, however, will be constrained by fear of Angolan retaliation and concern that he will become more isolated in the region. His recent decision, [redacted] to expel three UNITA officials from Zaire—taken in response to Zaire's alleged discovery of a UNITA base inside its territory near Cabinda—suggests to us that Mobutu is determined to maintain control over UNITA activities in Zaire. Mobutu also realizes that closer association with Savimbi would tie him to South Africa in the eyes of

many black African leaders and provoke some neighboring states like Congo, Burundi, or Tanzania to begin directly supporting Zairian dissidents. Should UNITA suffer serious setbacks over the next two years, we judge that Mobutu would probably come under pressure from Savimbi and South Africa to provide increased support to UNITA in the form of staging bases inside Zaire. Without specific security guarantees from his Western backers, however, we doubt that Mobutu would risk such visibly increased support. [redacted]

The Foreign Policy Arena

31. Zaire's relations with its key foreign backers, particularly the United States, have been strained over the past 10 months as Mobutu has become increasingly frustrated with what he sees as inadequate political, economic, and military support. His unhappiness with the West and growing security concerns have prompted him to look for other sources of economic and military aid, including the Soviet Union, and to initiate actions designed to improve his regional standing. [redacted]

Relations With Key Foreign Backers

32. In Mobutu's view, Washington has taken for granted his long-standing support for US policies and, reciprocated with less than generous assistance levels, and his position as a US ally has resulted in Zaire's growing regional isolation and increased security problems. [redacted] he felt particularly slighted that President Reagan did not have time to see him during a trip to the United States in October 1985, but received the late Mozambican President Machel—a self-avowed Marxist and Soviet client. Mobutu also was angered by US criticism of his human rights policies and US media charges that Zaire serves as a conduit for US covert aid to UNITA. Moreover, we believe that Mobutu's security concerns were fueled by his perceptions of Washington's handling of longtime allies in the Phillipines and Haiti when their regimes began to founder. [redacted]

33. Mobutu's principal disappointment, however, is with what he sees as stingy levels of US economic and military aid. Although the United States has increased total aid from \$40 million in 1983 to \$79 million in 1986, [redacted] Mobutu particularly bristles at the statistic that, on a per capita basis, US aid to Zaire still ranks only 30th in Africa. We also suspect that he is dismayed that the net flow of funds from Washington to Kinshasa will be near zero in 1986 and probably negative in 1987 because

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Table 2
US Aid to Zaire, 1980-87

Million US \$
(except where noted)

	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986 ^a	1987 ^b
Economic ^c	30	32	32	36	52	64	71 ^a	60
Military ^d	3	3	3	4	8	8	8	14
TOTAL	33	35	35	40	60	72	79 ^(a)	74

^a Estimated.

^b Requested.

^c Includes Development Assistance, PL-480: Title I and II, Economic Support Fund and Peace Corps.

^d Includes IMET.

(^a) Depends on Congressional concurrence in proposed AEPRP project.

Zairian debt repayments are growing faster than new US aid disbursements. According to Zairian military officials, Mobutu has been particularly unhappy with the low level of military aid, which totaled \$8 million in 1986, at a time when he sees a growing security threat from Angola and Libya. In an effort to gain attention in Washington, he has taken a number of symbolic actions against US interests including curtailed contacts between Zairian and US officials, threats to expel the Peace Corps, and refusal to participate in a joint military exercise. [redacted]

34. Although Zaire's relations with Belgium and France—its two key West European backers—are fairly good at this time, both countries have had troubles with Kinshasa in the past year. Belgium, which has been Zaire's largest and most reliable source of technical, budgetary, and security assistance since independence in 1960, will provide about \$90-100 million in economic and military aid—about one-third of its foreign aid budget—and 98 military advisers in 1987. [redacted] Paris has been fairly responsive to Mobutu's security concerns and managed to avoid the strains that have marked Kinshasa's relations with Brussels and Washington. France in 1987 is expected to provide about \$40-45 million in aid and 109 military advisers, most of whom command and support the 31st Airborne Brigade—a key Kinshasa-based unit. Paris also has agreed to begin training a second airborne brigade and is laying the groundwork for a pan-African armored warfare training program near Kinshasa. [redacted]

35. Mobutu also values his good relations with Israel. His state visit to Tel Aviv in May 1985 solidified bilateral relations that were renewed in 1982, when

Kinshasa became the first black African state to reestablish formal ties since the 1967 Arab-Israeli war. Israel provides important security assistance through its training, material support, and provision of advisers to the DSP and the Shaba-based Kamanyola Division. More recently, Tel Aviv gave Kinshasa an \$8 million grant in September 1985 for military equipment in return for a promise to buy \$10 million worth of Israeli military equipment over the next 10 years.

Regional Initiatives

36. As Mobutu enters his 22nd year in power, we believe he is increasingly concerned with his place in history, and, as a result, is searching for a foreign policy "success" that will establish him as a significant regional statesman. Although his recent diplomatic push—he has traveled extensively over the past six months, meeting with numerous heads of state in north, west, and central Africa—has marginally improved his regional standing, we believe his close ties to the West and Israel continue to isolate him from the black African mainstream. As part of this effort, he has reactivated Zaire's membership in the OAU—following a one-year hiatus to protest the admission of the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic (SADR)—in which he hopes to play a leading role. Although Mobutu's proposal for an organization of black African states is still going nowhere, his attempts to join the Southern African Development Coordination Conference (SADCC)—a regional organization formed to try to reduce black southern African states' economic dependence on Pretoria—may soon succeed. [redacted]

[redacted] We believe that

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Mobutu sees entry into the SADCC as an opportunity to get more involved in negotiations on Angola, Namibia, and South Africa. []

37. We also believe that Mobutu is attempting to directly and indirectly support the moderate states in the region that are subject to Libyan subversion. Kinshasa is pressuring neighboring states to limit Libya's presence and has threatened military retaliation against countries that harbor Libyan-supported Zairian dissidents. Moreover, Mobutu provided [] support to Ugandan President Museveni's successful insurgency and is [] considering support to antigovernment insurgents in Sudan in an effort to gain influence in areas that border on Zaire. Over the past year, Zaire has trained about 90 members of the Central African Republic Presidential Guard and four battalions of Chadian troops, and has offered to train Ugandan soldiers []

Looking to the East

38. Mobutu's growing security concerns and unhappiness with US support has prompted him to try to improve relations with Moscow in an effort to obtain military and economic assistance. Although Mobutu is flirting with the Soviets in part to elicit additional US aid, he is determined to improve Zaire's military capabilities and would accept military aid from any source. Moreover, Mobutu probably hopes that better relations with Moscow will improve his nonaligned standing in Africa and perhaps reduce the possibility of Angolan retaliation. []

39. In our judgment, Mobutu will follow through on at least marginally improving relations with Moscow. The new Soviet Ambassador to Zaire was received immediately by Mobutu and has been given unusual access to senior officials over the past several months. Zairian and Soviet officials have signed several cultural agreements and have discussed economic and military ties, and a high-level Zairian trade delegation visited the Soviet Union last July. Former Foreign Minister Mandungu—who was educated in the Soviet Union—probably will reschedule his visit to Moscow that was canceled because it conflicted with the US-USSR summit in Iceland in October. []

40. Mobutu also has been searching for new economic and military aid from other Communist countries. Zaire has longstanding economic and military ties to China, and during former Prime Minister Kengo's visit to Beijing in May, China agreed to a \$3.4 million military assistance grant. Mandungu traveled to Romania, Yugoslavia, and Bulgaria in July to discuss closer economic cooperation []

Soviet Intentions and Policies

41. Moscow has two short-term goals in Zaire: improving bilateral relations that went into a deep freeze after Mobutu suspected the USSR of complicity in a 1984 Kinshasa airport bombing incident, and driving a wedge between Zaire and the United States on the question of material support to UNITA. The Kremlin has moved quickly on the diplomatic front to take advantage of recent overtures: Gorbachev [] calling on Kinshasa to forget past differences, a Mobutu visit to Moscow has been suggested, and an article sympathetic to Zaire was published in the Soviet press that accused Washington of mounting an anti-Zaire disinformation campaign to cover up alleged US collaboration with South Africa in support of UNITA. []

42. Moscow has not yet made concrete offers of assistance, however, giving only expressions of interest in some economic projects and a vague indication of willingness to consider future military cooperation. The Soviets probably are wary of being used by Mobutu solely to elicit more Western aid and improve his regional standing, and are not likely to offer substantial assistance unless Mobutu shows clear signs of distancing himself from the West. Moscow probably will make some limited economic—and possibly token military—aid offers, however, to encourage Mobutu to expand the Soviet presence in Zaire. A symbolic gesture such as a visit by Gorbachev en route to Angola is possible, especially if Moscow believes it might result in reduced Zairian support for UNITA. []

43. The historical record suggests that Moscow probably lacks confidence in Zairian dissidents. Yet, in our view, if Luanda voices a strong desire to rearm the dissidents with Angolan equipment in reaction to increased Zairian involvement with UNITA, Moscow probably would acquiesce. In the event Angolan armed forces suffer setbacks because of significant increases in support to UNITA channeled through Zaire, Moscow might overcome its reservations and move forcefully to form Angolan-based Zairian dissidents into a viable opposition movement that, over the longer term, might threaten Mobutu's rule. Moreover, Cuba, which provided military training to Zairian rebels in the late 1970s, probably would renew support at Luanda's request even at the risk of losing its diplomatic presence in Zaire. []

44. The Soviets are not pursuing any of their policy options in Zaire with much fervor, reflecting the relatively low priority they attach to Zaire compared to Angola or Mozambique. In our view, Moscow

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probably believes that substantially improving its position in Zaire will be difficult as long as Mobutu is in power. Consequently, we believe Moscow for now is content to pursue a low-risk, two-track policy of trying to increase its influence in Kinshasa at little cost while maintaining informal contacts with dissidents. []

Outlook

45. We judge that Mobutu's skillful leadership and pervasive patronage system will ensure his regime's stability over the next two years or more, but that daunting economic problems and increasing political pressures will slowly erode his authority over the longer term. The UDPS probably will continue to gain popular support as Zairians grow increasingly frustrated with a stagnant economy and the closed decision-making process, but Mobutu will quickly repress any efforts to reform the political system. This, in turn, may lead more radical opposition elements to adopt violent methods to rally support and gain international attention. Although Mobutu will first use co-optation and the veneer of compromise to stifle dissents, he will not hesitate to resort to force to preserve his political position, in our view. Greater repression, however, risks undermining his political authority over the longer term, in our judgment, as political elites and the military could begin to question his leadership. []

46. On the economic front, we believe the chances are only about even that Zaire will successfully complete the current IMF standby arrangement that runs through March 1988. In our judgment, although Mobutu wants to continue cooperation with multilateral institutions, he is now convinced that the IMF and Zaire's Western backers must agree to more lenient terms that emphasize growth rather than austerity. Mobutu is likely to try to meet IMF performance targets through 1986 to enhance his negotiating position, but foreign exchange shortfalls may force Kinshasa out of compliance. The outlook for 1987 is far worse, as we estimate that Zaire faces a balance-of-payments gap of about SDR 140 million that probably can only be closed if donors significantly increase bilateral aid or debt relief—which seems unlikely, in our view. Although the IMF appears sympathetic to Zaire's situation, Mobutu will be asking the Fund to show unprecedented flexibility in granting waivers and setting lenient performance targets for 1987. The IMF and World Bank are unlikely to relax significantly their conditions for new credit, however, increasing the prospects that Mobutu will enact many of the ruling party's recommendations including limiting debt payments to a percentage of export earnings and

reversing liberalization measures that would derail the IMF and World Bank programs, as well as Paris Club agreements. Although IMF flexibility in early 1987 would significantly improve the chances that Mobutu will stick with the program, we believe he will come under increasing pressure from political elites and the public over the next year, adding to the likelihood that he will suspend the program, despite the probable economic consequences. In our view, large cuts in US aid, or Mobutu's perception that the program has become a serious political liability, would further decrease the prospects for successful completion of the program. []

47. Although externally based dissidents will pose no direct threat to the Mobutu regime over the next two years, we expect them to carry out occasional small-scale attacks that upset Mobutu and complicate his ability to deal with other internal problems. In our judgment, the rebels will not be able to rise above their ethnic differences, personal rivalries, and corruption to form a united front, and, as a result, are unlikely to significantly improve their capabilities or attract substantial new external support. Mobutu's support to UNITA and growing Libyan influence along Zaire's eastern border, however, may lead some neighboring states to more directly support the dissidents, facilitating their ability to mount limited cross-border attacks. Growing tensions along the border with Angola, particularly if Luanda renews support to Angolan-based dissidents, would further tax Zaire's limited military capabilities and probably encourage other dissident groups to increase their attacks. []

48. In the foreign policy arena, we believe Mobutu is unlikely to make any radical policy changes that could jeopardize his ties to the West, which have helped ensure the stability of his regime for over 20 years. Bilateral relations with Western backers, however, particularly with the United States, probably will remain troubled as Mobutu's expectations of increased support go unmet. Meanwhile, we expect Mobutu to continue to marginally improve relations with Moscow in an effort to diversify sources of military and economic aid and to improve his nonaligned credentials. To this end, he may visit Moscow, agree to some limited economic or military aid, and take other symbolic moves to improve ties. Nevertheless, we believe any rapprochement will be limited by Mobutu's deep-seated mistrust of the Soviet Union and the need to retain essential financial and security ties to the United States and other Western backers. []

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Alternative Scenarios

49. Although we expect Mobutu to remain in power and continue a relatively close relationship with the West over the next two years, we see the potential for other less likely scenarios that would have adverse effects on US interests.

Significant Policy Changes

50. Mobutu, spurred by what he sees as a lack of Western support and threats to his political position, could decide to abandon the IMF-supported economic reform program and declare a unilateral moratorium on some portion of Zaire's debt. He would probably calculate that it would free up significant resources in the short term that could be spent on military purchases, higher wages, public investment, social welfare, and increased liquidity for the private sector—all of which would have immediate political benefits. Under this scenario, Mobutu probably would become convinced that either the short-term gains were crucial to his survival or that economic growth would occur only without an IMF program. Over the medium term, however, the probable consequences of abandoning the IMF program—economic deterioration, increased mismanagement as reforms are scrapped, drastically reduced foreign financial support, and strained relations with key Western backers—probably would undermine Mobutu's political position and possibly set the stage for increased instability in Zaire. At this point Mobutu—as he has in the past—could reverse course and again seek IMF support.

51. In our view, an economic slide combined with drastically reduced levels of Western aid would lead Mobutu to become increasingly paranoid about potential threats to his rule. Mobutu's commitment to his own political survival probably would spur him at this point to more willingly make concessions to Moscow such as adopting a more genuinely nonaligned foreign policy or ending support to UNITA in an effort to convince the Soviets to supply what Mobutu would see as desperately needed military and economic aid. Under these circumstances, Moscow almost certainly would respond by agreeing to some military assistance but only marginal economic aid.

Mobutu's Death

52. Mobutu's death, by illness or assassination, would greatly increase the potential for serious political upheaval in Zaire. In the unlikely event that medical problems force Mobutu—now in good health, —to relinquish

power, or if he is assassinated, we would expect intense maneuvering. Mobutu's exploitation of rivalries among senior military officers and government leaders, however, has created divisions among the ruling elite that would seriously complicate their ability to agree on a successor. Moreover, Mobutu's highly personalistic rule has precluded the development of political institutions, the grooming of a successor, or the establishment of legal procedures that would facilitate a smooth transfer of power. In our view, succession as specified in the constitution is unworkable. Zaire's constitution specifies that the 80-man Central Committee of Zaire's sole political party is to assume collective leadership exercised through the Committee's septuagenarian dean, Derikoye—a tribal chief from Haut-Zaire region who has little political power. The committee must nominate a presidential candidate and schedule popular elections within 30 to 60 days.

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53. On balance, we believe the chances are about even that, in the event of Mobutu's death, Zairian leaders will be able to implement a transition that does not require military intervention or lead to serious social unrest. A prolonged illness would provide Mobutu the opportunity to appoint a successor, improving the chances for a relatively smooth transfer of power. Even if he dies suddenly, a relatively smooth succession could occur if civilian and military leaders from Mobutu's Equateur region unite to protect their interests and quickly agree on a successor. We do not believe that Mobutu's son Niwya has adequate support among the Equateurian elite to succeed his father. In our view, the new leader likely would be a compromise candidate from the Equateur region without the skills necessary to consolidate control. This, in turn, almost certainly would lead to a period of political uncertainty until a new strongman—possibly from within the military—emerges.

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54. A protracted leadership struggle is equally probable, in our view, as numerous factions vie for political power. If political leaders were unable to agree on a presidential candidate within 60 days, particularly in the face of growing unrest or a deteriorating security situation, the military leadership probably would decide to step in. In our judgment, however, the military lacks the expertise to govern on its own and would almost certainly bring in civilians to run most ministries and key agencies. The military also is beset with ethnic factionalism, and various factions could align themselves with political groupings, raising the specter—reminiscent of the first few years after

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Zaire's independence in 1960—of Kinshasa's inability to govern outlying provinces and of a resurgence of intertribal warfare.

Military Coup

55. In our view, military leaders would be likely to seize power if they believed that theirs was the only institution capable of preventing widespread civil unrest. Such a scenario might develop if Mobutu died or made a series of missteps that undermined military confidence in him. In our view, a serious economic slide may cause the frustration level among various domestic groups that have quietly accepted the past four years of austerity to reach the point where a catalyst—such as a wildcat strike or student protests—would lead them to rise up in open and violent protest against the government. Externally based dissident attacks or increased pressure from the UDPS designed to exploit the situation would further complicate the situation. If the military were called upon to quell public demonstrations, junior officers and enlisted men—also suffering under austerity—could begin coup plotting, while senior officers would almost certainly question Mobutu's control. Should Mobutu respond to military discontent by becoming paranoid about his personal security—as he has done in the past—he might aggravate the situation by arresting a popular senior officer who he perceived as a threat, and thereby rally other senior officers against him.

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nel over low pay, chronic shortages of food and other supplies, Mobutu's tribal and regional favoritism, and corruption that has enriched many senior officers. US officials have little access to junior officers or enlisted men, and we therefore are not sure whether radical elements are influential in these quarters. Junior officers, however, are more likely to adopt a genuinely nonaligned foreign policy, perhaps imitating populist coups in the early 1980s by junior officers in Ghana and Burkina.

Implications for the United States

58. We believe Zairian-US bilateral relations will be under as much stress over the next two years as at any time since Mobutu came to power in 1965. Keeping Mobutu on the hard road to economic reform will be particularly difficult as the President grows more frustrated with the slow pace of recovery, unmet expectations for higher levels of Western aid and investment, and what he sees as bilateral inequities. Mobutu is likely to grow increasingly angry with attempts to explain declining US aid levels as fiscally necessary, particularly if other African countries—which he views as less stable and supportive of Washington's policies—continue to receive substantially more aid than Zaire. Human rights and corruption may also become increasingly contentious bilateral issues as the United States is asked to increase aid to Zaire during a period of severe budget austerity. In our view, Mobutu has become convinced that taking actions that threaten US interests—such as calling for the removal of the Peace Corps—is an effective way to focus senior US policymaker attention on Zaire, and he is likely to periodically use this ploy. Moreover, Mobutu may choose to keep relations with the United States somewhat cooler than in the past

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56. Kinshasa-based commanders, especially Presidential Guard leader Nzimbi, are best placed to lead a coup. An attempt by other senior officers, such as Chief of Staff Eluki, to seize power without the support of Kinshasa-based units almost certainly would not succeed. Even if the senior officer corps overcame the divisions Mobutu has fostered and seized control, it would confront the same set of problems facing any successor regime. Although another military strongman might emerge, we believe it more likely that a coalition of civilian and military leaders would be formed. In our view, given the ethnic and ideological makeup of key military and civilian groups at this time, such a coalition probably would be dominated by Equateurians and would look to the West for support.

57. Still less likely, but possible in our view, would be a power grab by junior officers or enlisted men able to win broad support among their colleagues in the Presidential Special Division and the 31st Airborne Brigade—the two key Kinshasa-based units. there has long been considerable resentment among lower ranking person-

to improve his nonaligned credentials so that he can play a greater role in regional affairs.

59. Mobutu hopes that during his forthcoming visit to Washington to meet with President Reagan he will be able to smooth relations and convince senior US policymakers that Zaire deserves increased US assistance. In our view, the chances of Mobutu taking actions that would create a serious rift in Zairian-US relations can be reduced significantly by a successful visit to Washington that included the following:

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- Public sessions in which Mobutu is recognized as an African statesman and congratulated for his adherence to the most ambitious economic reform program in Africa.


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- Promises that Zaire will receive a larger slice of the foreign aid budget for Africa and assurances of US support in the IMF and Paris Club for more flexible policies. Mobutu in the past year has put increasing emphasis on Washington backing its public statements of support for his reform efforts with concrete assistance. In particular, he believes Zaire should be receiving as much aid as countries like Sudan and Liberia.
- Some positive response to Mobutu's concerns about Zaire's dependence on the vulnerable rail line to South Africa. Addressing the question of increased support to Zaire's *Voie Nationale* could alleviate this specific concern.
- Assurances that the United States is aware of security threats facing Zaire and appreciates its efforts in Angola, Chad, and the region to defend Western interests. Mobutu probably expects some concrete signs of support—such as the announcement of a recently agreed to joint military exercise and promises of help in refurbishing Kamina Air Base in central Shaba region—as well as private assurance that the United States would again provide logistic support if rebels threatened major towns or vital mining enclaves. We believe he would view any cuts in the limited US military aid program as a serious slight. 

became clear. While the Soviets might offer a small arms deal to demonstrate their interest, they almost certainly would insist on extensive discussions and some concessions from Kinshasa such as halting aid to UNITA before making a serious commitment. 


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62. Belgium and France are likely to continue to work with the United States to encourage Mobutu to adhere to the economic reform program and to improve the regime's military capabilities. Brussels and Paris have gained favor in Kinshasa in recent months by appearing responsive to Mobutu's concerns, but budget constraints in both countries are likely to prevent them from significantly increasing aid over the next two years—even if US aid levels fall drastically. Despite the mutuality of interests among Zaire's Western backers, however, competition for influence and Mobutu's skillful efforts to play one against the other potentially could lead to some friction. In the event of a large-scale rebel attack, Mobutu would quickly call on France and Belgium for support, and we believe both Paris and Brussels would again send troops as they did in 1977 and 1978 if the regime's stability were threatened. As previously, any commitment in strength or need for heavy equipment probably would require US airlift assistance. Paris might also consider forming a Pan-African intervention force to supplement its troops as it did in 1978. 

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60. If Mobutu returns home with only verbal support and no debt relief or materiel assistance follows, we believe he will be further convinced that his friendship is taken for granted and respond perhaps by following through on his threats to abandon IMF-supported reform programs or to expel the Peace Corps. Moreover, the potential for deep cuts in US aid to Zaire in FY 1987 raises the specter of a serious crisis in relations next year that could spur Mobutu to take more drastic actions such as expelling the US Ambassador 



63. In our view, the unique support offered to US security objectives by Mobutu over the years derives in large part from his idiosyncratic perceptions, as well as his unchallenged political position, which almost certainly would not be carried over to a successor. Mobutu perceives that the United States has repeatedly responded to his needs when he has been faced with major threats to his government, and he sees this as a special relationship. Mobutu also has used his power as an absolute leader to commit his government quickly to support US objectives. In our judgment, a successor, even if well-disposed to the United States and aware of Zaire's dependence on Western economic assistance, would not have the depth of personal commitment to the relationship, nor, in the first few years of rule, the sufficient authority to commit Zaire to support US requests. Kinshasa probably would reduce its support for US policies in Angola and Chad, adhere more closely to mainstream black African rhetoric on South Africa, and be more cautious in allowing the United States use of its territory in support of US security interests. 

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61. Mobutu's doubts about Washington's willingness to adequately support him economically and militarily are likely to sustain his effort to try to reduce his dependence on the West. A serious rift in Zairian-US relations over aid levels or the IMF program probably would spur Mobutu to try to accelerate the diversification of sources of aid. The Soviets probably would respond to a forthright request by Mobutu for arms with a statement of Soviet interest in military ties. Nevertheless, Moscow would probably proceed slowly until the sincerity of Kinshasa's turn from the West



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64. Mobutu has been the dominant force behind Zaire's stability and pro-Western foreign policy for over 20 years, and his death or removal would be likely to lead to a weaker government in Kinshasa that would be less supportive of US policies in the region. Although Western interests probably would be somewhat protected if a successor emerged from the current leaderships of the ruling party or military hierarchy, the new leader initially almost certainly would have a tenuous power base, perhaps leading him to adopt a more nonaligned foreign policy in an effort to gain support. Moreover, countries such as Libya, Angola, and the Soviet Union are likely to try to exploit a turbulent transition to increase subversion and make a bid for influence. A prolonged succession crisis would, of course, raise the possibility for a radical leader to emerge, but we believe Zaire's ongoing need for economic support would eventually work to Western advantage. []

65. A resurgence of intertribal conflict is also possible in the post-Mobutu period, when competing groups may look upon Mobutu's departure as an opportunity to settle old scores. Nevertheless, we believe that there is a greater sense of national identity today and that most Zairians would work to avoid the anarchy and bloodshed of the early 1960s. The ability

of a post-Mobutu regime to minimize violence and instability is likely to depend on the extent to which it is seen by the populace as firm and decisive, representative of the main tribal groupings, and attempting to address economic problems. In our view, a key factor in a successor regime's ability to consolidate control would be the degree to which Western countries—particularly Belgium, France, and the United States—demonstrated economic, political, and military backing. []

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66. The Soviets have relatively few assets they could use—at least over the short to medium term—to directly exploit internal turmoil in Zaire, as Mobutu's political control has prevented the establishment of front groups or political parties favorable to the USSR. The Soviet Union probably would take a wait-and-see attitude as the political maneuvering played itself out while attempting to identify and court potentially pro-Soviet or anti-Western elements. Should moderate, pro-Western military or civilian forces take control, Moscow would be likely to indicate its interest in improved political and economic ties, but would not make any substantial aid offers. Alternatively, the emergence of a "progressive" regime in Kinshasa would attract greater Soviet attention, including rhetorical support and, possibly, quick offers of military and security aid. []

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Next 1 Page(s) In Document Denied