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Central Intelligence Agency

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Washington, D. C. 20505

DIRECTORATE OF INTELLIGENCE

28 July 1983

ZAIRE: PRESIDENT MOBUTU'S VISIT [REDACTED]

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Summary

Zairian President Mobutu will visit the United States in early August. He is scheduled to meet with President Reagan on 4 August and will also confer with other top US officials. He is likely to appeal for greater security and economic assistance, arguing his case by pointing to his military support for the beleaguered pro-Western regime in Chad and to recent Zairian economic and political reforms. Mobutu's visit comes at a time when his position at home appears secure. [REDACTED]

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The Setting

We believe that Mobutu, whose last official trip to Washington was in December 1981, sees his visits here as demonstrating to Zairian and international audiences that he is a senior African statesman and important world figure and that he has strong US support. The visit comes at a time when relations between Kinshasa and Washington are good. According to the US Embassy in Kinshasa, relations have improved considerably following a period of uneasiness last year when Mobutu briefly renounced US aid in reaction to sharp Congressional criticism of his regime and Congressional cuts in the Administration's aid request for Zaire. [REDACTED]

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Mobutu's Perspective on Chad

Developments in Chad are likely to be foremost on Mobutu's mind, according to the US Embassy in Kinshasa. The 1,500-to-

This memorandum was written by [REDACTED] the Africa Division of the Office of African and Latin American Analysis. It has been coordinated with the Directorate of Operations. Questions and comments are welcome and may be directed to the Chief, Africa Division, ALA [REDACTED]

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1,800-man Zairian force in Chad is assigned primarily to help protect the Chadian capital, but Mobutu's orders also state that President Habre may use the Zairian troops in any way he sees fit. Zairian fighter aircraft, meanwhile, may be conducting limited reconnaissance for Habre's forces, and a Zairian C-130 transport aircraft has flown logistic missions for the Chadians. [redacted]

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We believe Mobutu will urge that a major portion of the recently authorized \$10 million in US emergency military assistance for Habre be channeled to Zairian units in Chad, many of which are poorly equipped. He may also ask for direct US support to the Zairian contingent in Chad and request increased aid to the Zairian armed forces more generally. He may bring a specific military shopping list to Washington. [redacted]

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In pressing for greater military assistance, Mobutu may stress that Kinshasa needs to be compensated for the military and financial resources it is expending in Chad at a time when Zaire is trying to cope with severe budgetary problems. [redacted]

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The Zairian intervention in Chad could backfire on Mobutu. If Habre's forces meet with reverses and the Zairians suffer casualties or are forced to withdraw from the country, Mobutu would probably come under criticism within his regime, although we do not believe his rule would be threatened. [redacted]

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Mobutu's Economic Agenda

Mobutu probably also hopes that he can parlay his government's defense of Western interests in Chad into increased US economic assistance. During his talks in Washington, he is likely to point to significant economic and administrative reforms he has instituted during the past year. These measures, recommended by the International Monetary Fund and Western donor nations, have included:

- New limitations on government spending, including a pay cap on public sector salaries, aimed at reducing the budget deficit.
- Improved accounting and marketing arrangements for cobalt and copper, designed to reduce opportunities for corruption in these key industries.

-- Removal of most controls on farm prices, and liberalization of restrictions on the movement of agricultural commodities--actions aimed at stimulating agricultural production. [redacted]

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Support for a New IMF Accord

Mobutu may urge that Washington respond to such efforts by interceding with the IMF to speed negotiations now under way for a one-year standby loan of approximately \$250 million and a compensatory fund facility of about \$110 million.* He may argue that his government already has accepted most of the reforms the Fund is urging and that delay in reaching an agreement would result in increased hardship for the Zairian people. [redacted]

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Fund officials, for their part, generally appear satisfied with Mobutu's reform efforts, according to the US Embassy in Kinshasa. The Embassy believes the principal remaining issue--reform of the country's exchange rate system, including a large devaluation--is close to resolution. [redacted]

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Increased Bilateral Aid

While in Washington, Mobutu may also solicit greater bilateral economic assistance. The United States furnished approximately \$24 million in economic aid during FY 1982; such assistance has totalled about \$625 million since Zaire's independence in 1960.** In recent years, the US has provided PL-480 food, aid to agricultural and rural development, and assistance in the nutritional and health fields. The activities of the more than 200 Peace Corps volunteers in Zaire have complemented the economic aid effort. [redacted]

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In appealing for greater assistance, Mobutu may argue that:

-- Increased aid is necessary during the current period of difficult economic adjustments.

*Zaire's last IMF program, a three-year \$1.1 billion loan agreement approved in June 1981, lapsed after only five months when Kinshasa failed by a wide margin to meet the Fund's performance targets. [redacted]

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**US military aid deliveries to Zaire were about \$7.6 million in FY 1982 and have totalled around \$115 million since 1960. [redacted]

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- Zaire's economic problems result largely from external factors--worldwide recession and falling commodity prices--over which Kinshasa has no control.
- The present level of assistance is inconsistent with the two countries' historical ties as well as with Zaire's importance and pro-Western orientation.
- The United States tends to take Zaire for granted and in some instances provides greater assistance to less consistent supporters of Washington's positions on foreign policy issues.* [redacted]

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Mobutu also may ask that Washington back his government's efforts to get public and private creditors to reschedule Zaire's \$4.5 billion medium- and long-term debt. Western nations and private banks have periodically rescheduled Zaire's debt since 1976, and the Zairians doubtless hope that they will receive more such relief once they come to terms with the IMF. Mobutu and his financial advisers are probably hoping for a massive, long-term rescheduling. [redacted]

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Other Concerns

On other economic issues, Mobutu may ask that Washington make additional purchases of Zairian cobalt for the US strategic stockpile. He may contend that the United States should take advantage of current low world cobalt prices and Kinshasa's willingness to make such sales on concessional terms. He may also point out that such purchases would assist his government by reducing Zaire's 25,000-ton stockpile of unsold cobalt and by putting Kinshasa in a better position to repay its debts. [redacted]

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At the same time, he may voice concern over recent reports that the Congress plans to consider legislation to subsidize domestic US cobalt producers. The United States imports more than 90 percent of the cobalt it uses, and nearly 60 percent of the imported cobalt comes from Zaire. [redacted]

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Mobutu may express interest in greater US trade and investment. US private foreign investment in Zaire totalled

**Zaire, which currently sits on the UN Security Council, has supported US positions regarding Afghanistan, Nicaragua, Puerto Rico, and other issues in the UN. It has also opposed efforts by Cuba and other radical states to dominate the Nonaligned Movement.* [redacted]

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about \$123 million at yearend 1981, according to the US Department of Commerce. Major US firms with investments in Zaire include General Motors, Goodyear, Warner-Lambert, Ray-O-Vac, Continental Grain, Gulf, and Citibank. The United States and Zaire are currently trying to negotiate a bilateral accord aimed at facilitating increased investment. [redacted]

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Economic Outlook

In the near term, we expect that Mobutu will continue to endorse economic reforms needed to secure continued Western financial support. He probably recognizes that he has few other options. Even with such assistance, however, he probably will be able to do little more than slow Zaire's economic decline until the ongoing international economic recovery results in significantly higher mineral prices. Moreover, the presence of large cobalt and copper stockpiles in some countries, as well as the availability of substitutes, will tend, at least initially, to dampen pressures for major price increases. [redacted]

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Over the longer term, we are skeptical that Mobutu will display the political will needed to continue pursuing the strong belt-tightening and other measures that might turn the economy around. He has adopted economic reforms in the past with little lasting effect, and we doubt that the current recovery program will fare much better. [redacted]

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Political Issues

Mobutu probably believes that several political decisions he has made in the past year strengthen his case for strong US support. Taken as a whole, we believe these actions demonstrate that he is fully in control of his country and remains a major actor on the African scene. [redacted]

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Past Difficulties

At the time of his last visit to Washington in December 1981, Mobutu had endured a year of troublesome political developments, including:

- The sudden resignation in April 1981 of his Prime Minister, Nguza Karl-i-Bond, who fled to Belgium and proceeded to denounce Mobutu for repression and corruption.
- The theft from his residence in August 1981 of several personal articles of symbolic importance, which increased

his concerns about his personal security, according to the US Embassy in Kinshasa.

- Efforts by a group of former legislators to form a second Zairian political party.
- Indications that rebels belonging to the Front for the National Liberation of the Congo (FLNC), the Angola- and Zambia-based group that had invaded Zaire's mineral-rich Shaba Region twice in the late 1970s, were stepping up preparations to resume hostilities.
- The election of a Socialist government in France, as well as differences with Belgium over anti-Mobutu propagandizing by Zairian exiles in Brussels and over unresolved bilateral financial disputes. These developments left Mobutu worried that he could no longer count on the two West European governments that had previously provided him with key backing, including direct military intervention on his behalf during the 1978 invasion of Shaba. [redacted]

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As a result of these difficulties during 1981, according to US Embassy reporting, Mobutu felt increasingly beleaguered and insecure. The Embassy reported that his interest in the day-to-day management of the country had declined and that a general sense of malaise had gripped the Zairian leadership. According to the Embassy, the situation did not bode well for Zaire's stability. [redacted]

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Mobutu Reasserts His Leadership

Since then, with the passage of time, Mobutu appears to have regained much of his zest for governing, in part because the Shaban rebels and other opponents failed to mount a serious challenge. Thus when Mobutu meets with US officials in August, he will project the image of a strong and confident leader. [redacted]

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Mobutu can point to a number of domestic political achievements over the past year. In the second half of 1982, his government completed the most extensive series of local, regional, and national legislative elections ever held in Zaire. Organs of the official party screened all candidates to ensure their loyalty, but according to US Embassy reporting the elections were competitive and--despite some instances of vote fraud--reasonably fair by Zairian standards. [redacted]

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Mobutu may note that late last year he gave his tough new Prime Minister, Kengo wa Dondo, a broad mandate to "clean house". Kengo promptly launched a large-scale anti-corruption campaign, resulting in the arrest of dozens of middle-level officials and small businessmen but very few high-level figures. We believe the campaign was designed primarily to impress the United States and other Western countries, but it has also been popular with many Zairians, according to the US Embassy in Kinshasa. [redacted]

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Mobutu may also point to a general amnesty he declared this May for imprisoned and exiled politicians. His government appears to have released most political prisoners--precise figures are unavailable--including 13 former legislators who had been jailed last year after trying to establish a second political party. A few prominent exiles have accepted the amnesty, but most are remaining abroad. [redacted]

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Very few of the several thousand Shaban rebels in Angola and Zambia have availed themselves of Mobutu's amnesty, according to the US Embassy in Kinshasa. Nonetheless, [redacted]

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[redacted] the rebels suffer from deep factional divisions and severe material and financial problems. We doubt that they can mount another invasion anytime soon, although militant elements within the group might carry out isolated guerrilla or sabotage operations at some point. [redacted]

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Despite these political trends in Mobutu's favor during the past year, the poor state of the economy could spark outbreaks of unrest with little advance warning. According to the US Embassy, living standards in Zaire are lower today than at independence. But major disturbances that might threaten Mobutu's regime are unlikely anytime soon, in our judgment. The population's evident preoccupation with economic survival, Mobutu's proven adroitness at repression of some opponents and cooptation of others, and the relative reliability of key military units in Kinshasa all work in favor of the regime's survival, at least over the next two years. [redacted]

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Foreign Policy Achievements

Mobutu may also point to actions he has taken in the past year on African issues. In addition to Zaire's role in Chad, he may note that he hosted the annual French-African summit conference in October 1982. With some 37 countries participating, this meeting contrasted sharply with unsuccessful efforts by other African leaders last year to convene a summit of

the Organization of African Unity. Mobutu no doubt believes that the Kinshasa summit affirmed his status as a leading African statesman. It also eased his worries about his relations with the Socialist government in Paris; President Mitterrand attended the conference and privately pledged continuity in French-Zairian relations, according to the US Embassy in Kinshasa. [redacted]

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The Zairian leader may also refer to his decision in May 1982 to reestablish relations with Israel, making Zaire the first--and thus far the only--African country fully to restore ties broken at the time of the 1973 Arab-Israeli war. The move cost Zaire some Arab economic assistance [redacted]

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Mobutu probably will ask US officials for a status report on the Namibian problem and the related issue of a Cuban troop withdrawal from Angola. He is likely to express support for US positions and initiatives on these issues. [redacted]

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Relations with Washington

Although Kinshasa's relations with Washington have generally been good during Mobutu's nearly 18 years in office, occasional periods of tension have arisen. In 1975 Mobutu, apparently fearing US complicity in an alleged plot to overthrow him, expelled the US Ambassador. Mobutu took strong exception to the human rights policies of the Carter Administration, but US logistic support to the Zairian military during the rebel invasions of Shaba Region in 1977 and 1978 helped to mollify him, according to US Embassy reporting. [redacted]

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Following Mobutu's brief "renunciation" of US aid in May 1982, relations improved with Ambassador Kirkpatrick's visit to Zaire in July 1982, Mobutu's meetings last summer with Ambassador-at-Large Walters and other visiting State Department officials, and Vice President Bush's trip to Zaire last November. [redacted]

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The bilateral relationship is likely to continue to be characterized by occasional periods of uneasiness, in part because Mobutu probably will try periodically to play off Zaire's traditional friends--especially France, Belgium, and the United

States--against one another, as he has in the past. But we do not expect any change in his basically pro-Western orientation.

[redacted]

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Prospects

We do not anticipate that Mobutu will be removed from office in the next two years. Even if he were, we would not expect an anti-Western government to come to power, although a post-Mobutu regime might make some adjustments in the direction of a more nonaligned policy. According to the US Embassy in Kinshasa, most members of the civilian and military elite are Western-oriented and distrustful of leftist ideology; they are likely to be watchful for Soviet or Libyan efforts to meddle in the post-Mobutu era.

[redacted]

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[redacted]

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Indeed, we believe a resurgence of the widespread violence and political instability that plagued Zaire before Mobutu took power in 1965 will be a real possibility no matter what kind of regime succeeds him. Strong ethnic and social tensions exist beneath Zaire's present surface calm, according to US Embassy officers. In our judgment, various ethnic-regional groups would probably look upon Mobutu's departure as an opportunity to settle old scores. The Shaban rebels and other dissidents would probably be emboldened to attempt new revolts, creating new opportunities for Soviet and Libyan meddling.

[redacted]

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At the same time, we believe most Zairians want to avoid a recurrence of the anarchy and bloodshed of the early 1960s. We also think there is a greater sense of national identity today than there was then. In view of these countervailing factors, a post-Mobutu regime's ability to minimize violence and instability may depend on the extent to which it is seen by the populace as

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firm and decisive, representative of the main tribal and regional groups, genuinely attempting to address economic problems, and-- perhaps most importantly--as having strong Western political, economic, and military backing.

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