

Director of Central Intelligence

~~Secret~~

25X1



National Intelligence Estimate

MASTER FILE COPY

**DO NOT GIVE OUT
OR MARK ON**

Zaire: Prospects for the Mobutu Regime (S)

Key Judgments

~~Secret~~

NIE 65-86W
November 1986

Copy 043

THIS ESTIMATE IS ISSUED BY THE DIRECTOR OF CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE.

THE NATIONAL FOREIGN INTELLIGENCE BOARD CONCURS, EXCEPT AS NOTED IN THE TEXT.

The following intelligence organizations participated in the preparation of the Estimate:

The Central Intelligence Agency, the Defense Intelligence Agency, the National Security Agency, and the intelligence organizations of the Departments of State and the Treasury.

Also Participating:

The Assistant Chief of Staff for Intelligence, Department of the Army

The Director of Naval Intelligence, Department of the Navy

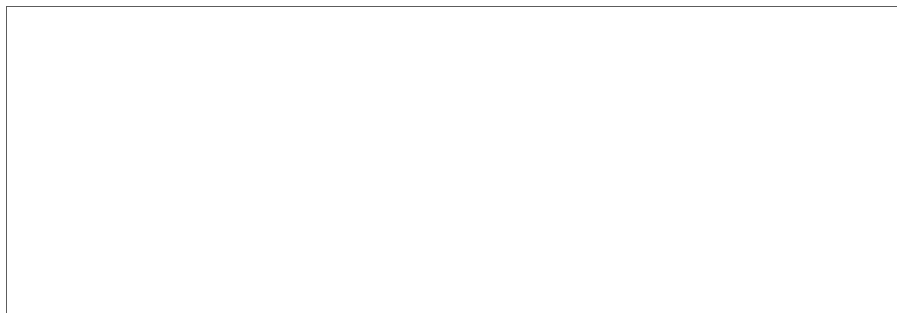
The Assistant Chief of Staff, Intelligence, Department of the Air Force

Warning Notice
Intelligence Sources or Methods Involved
(WNINTEL)

NATIONAL SECURITY INFORMATION
Unauthorized Disclosure Subject to Criminal Sanctions

DISSEMINATION CONTROL ABBREVIATIONS

NOFORN-	Not Releasable to Foreign Nationals
NOCONTRACT-	Not Releasable to Contractors or Contractor/Consultants
PROPIN-	Caution—Proprietary Information Involved
ORCON-	Dissemination and Extraction of Information Controlled by Originator
REL . . .-	This Information Has Been Authorized for Release to . . .



STAT

SECRET

NOFORN/

25X1

NIE 65-86W

**ZAIRE: PROSPECTS FOR THE
MOBUTU REGIME (S)**

Key Judgments

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.

SECRET


SECRET

NOFORN



25X1

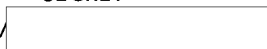
SCOPE NOTE

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 

25X1


SECRET

NOFORN/




25X1

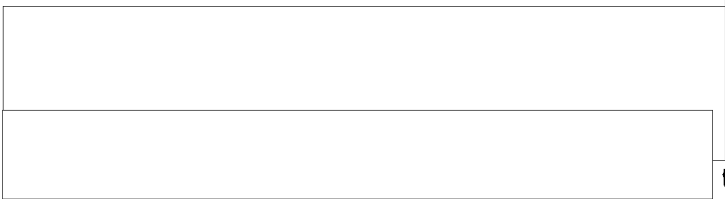
KEY JUDGMENTS



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. 

25X1

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. 

25X1



 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. 

25X1

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

SECRET

NOFORN, [REDACTED]

25X1

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. [REDACTED]

25X1

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. [REDACTED]

25X1

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. [REDACTED]

25X1

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. [REDACTED]

25X1

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

SECRET

NOFORN/

25X1

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.

25X1

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.

25X1

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.

25X1

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

SECRET

NOFORN, [REDACTED]

25X1

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. [REDACTED]

25X1

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. [REDACTED]

25X1

25X1

[REDACTED] Mobutu—like most Zairians—is becoming increasingly frustrated with the slow results of the economic reform program. [REDACTED] 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. [REDACTED]

25X1

25X1

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. [REDACTED]

25X1

6

SECRET

SECRET

NOFORN [REDACTED]

25X1

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. [REDACTED]

25X1

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. [REDACTED]

25X1

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. [REDACTED]

25X1

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. [REDACTED]

25X1

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

SECRET

NOFORN/

[redacted]

25X1

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

[redacted]

25X1

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;

[redacted]

25X1

[redacted] 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.

[redacted]

25X1

We believe Mobutu will continue to discreetly help UNITA infiltrate into Angola

[redacted]

25X1

25X1

[redacted] 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.

[redacted]

25X1

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

SECRET

NOFORN






25X1

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.



25X1

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

25X1

25X1

25X1

SECRET

Secret



Secret