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The Director of Central Intelligence

Washington, D.C. 20505

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NI M 77-006

17 March 1977

MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: Implications of the Collapse of the Government of Zaire

1. Reports of the existence of a plan to overthrow President Mobutu, behind the current attack on southern Zaire from Angola by ex-Katangan gendarmes, together with the evident inability of the Zaire government to organize its defenses in a timely and effective way, have led me to consider what the implications of the attainment of such objectives might be for the US. It is too early to state with any certainty whether Mobutu will fall, but the possibility is sufficiently strong, in the view of the Embassy and of Washington observers, that I feel the following potential consequences should be brought to your attention.

2. Mobutu's overthrow would be followed by turmoil in Zaire itself, with various factions and provincial regimes scrambling for pieces of the Zaire army and beseeching support from the US, the Soviets, and the Chinese. Although pro-Western factions would emerge, they would be hard pressed to establish their authority throughout the country, unless they obtained strong US or Western European support and foreign personnel to give confidence to their military arms. There would be danger for foreign citizens in Zaire in this situation, and possibly calls for foreign intervention as a result.

3. Radical groups would have the advantages of Shaba (the old Katanga) as a domestic support base and both near-by Angola and the Congo as actively helpful neighbors. We could expect Cubans to be invited to assist in stabilizing the situation.

4. After an initial phase of disorder, and assuming a radical regime came to power, a regional realignment of forces would emerge, with Angola as the principal immediate regional beneficiary. Angola's northern insurgency

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problems would be solved, although UNITA would not be immediately affected in the south; the Benguela railway ultimately could be reopened; and a more secure base formed for the training of guerrilla forces for Namibia and if necessary, for Rhodesia.

5. If the pattern of other African countries holds, however, even a radical new government would try to maintain its key export markets for raw materials. While we doubt, therefore, that the supply of minerals from Shaba to Western Europe and the US would be interrupted for long, at least by design, a radical regime could "threaten" the supply in such a way that it would appear that the West was faced with serious losses despite the clear economic interest of a new government. The US imports close to 75 percent of its cobalt requirements--the mineral is used in the production of high-temperature alloys--from Zaire either directly or indirectly through Belgium, but the US does not depend on Zaire for other materials.

6. The shift of Zaire into partnership with Angola would also impact on the southern African problem. Prime Minister Vorster would see a Red tide advancing. While Vorster's reactions are not possible to judge precisely, we think he might well take this development as a signal that he had to stiffen his resistance to making concessions to majority rule in Namibia, and possibly in Rhodesia as well. Zambia, which currently plays a relatively moderating role in the southern Africa problem, would feel isolated and threatened, and forced to make an accommodation with the more militant elements. Black militants throughout the region would feel strengthened.

7. Mobutu has long been identified throughout Africa and the Third World as a US client, presiding over a piece of highly strategic geography; his downfall could not fail to be perceived as a major "loss" for the US in Africa and especially if he had a radical successor, a potential if not actual "gain" for the USSR, Cuba, and the radical socialist club in Africa. The more conservative African leaders would press the US for greater evidence of support for them.

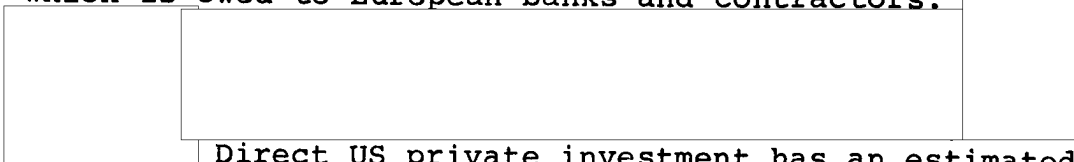
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8. My officers cannot immediately judge the psychological effect on the international financial community of a radical regime which might repudiate or call for new renegotiation of Zaire's foreign debt, the bulk of which is owed to European banks and contractors.



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Direct US private investment has an estimated book value of \$200 million. This would not necessarily be lost, but it would be subject to a lengthy period of political uncertainty, the consequences of which might be minor but which are not really calculable. Certainly default or a long period of renegotiation would not help the present climate in which it is claimed that Western credit institutions are overextended in the Third World.

STANSFIELD TURNER
Admiral, U.S. Navy

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