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By *fst* Date *7/17/89*
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TO : DEPARTMENT OF STATE

INFO : Amembassy BRUSSELS, Amconsul LUBUMBASHI, CINCOSTRIKE

FROM : Amembassy KINSHASA

SUBJECT : United States Policy Assessment

REF : CERP, C-1

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I. INTRODUCTION

Since the Congo achieved its sudden independence in mid-1960, U.S. policies toward this country have been based on the conviction that our long-term interests here and throughout central Africa were closely tied to a united, viable Congo. In the face of diverse centrifugal forces which threatened to break the Congo into a half-dozen feuding mini-states, paving the way for significant communist inroads and inviting a full scale Cold War struggle for control, we stressed territorial unity and political stability as the best means of ensuring our interests and avoiding chaos. And beyond the emergency of the Independence transition, we foresaw the possibility that a strong, prosperous Congo might eventually become an important force for either stability or change throughout black Africa, one whose friendship and cooperation might be counted upon to advance our own broader interests in the area.

Our estimate of the immediate dangers proved correct. During its earlier periods of almost constant turmoil, the Congo became a classic study in the tactics of subversion and the agonies of nation-building. Tendencies toward chaos and fragmentation almost invariably favored outside interests opposed to our own and spilled over in insecurity outside the Congo's borders. Unfriendly forces appeared repeatedly on the verge of gaining a permanent foothold in one area or another by exploiting regional divisions or internal disorder.

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We responded with policies which implied an extraordinary degree of involvement in the Congo's internal affairs, both political and economic. In a campaign to hold the country together and put it on its feet, we have by now invested an estimated half-billion dollars in a wide variety of programs, partly under our own direct supervision and partly in support of United Nations activities designed with similar goals in mind. In addition, we have invested considerable amounts of national prestige and influence in efforts to secure the support of other governments and of the Congolese themselves for these same goals.

The emergency phase appears to have passed. Our goals of unity and stability for the Congo have been achieved to a remarkable degree. As fragile as its present state, the Congo's outlook for continuing viability and growth is today no more uncertain than that of many other third-world countries in whose internal affairs we would not now involve ourselves so deeply as we have in the Congo's. We no longer look at the Congo as the sick man of Africa, requiring our constant ministrations, but as a force capable in its own right of exerting a positive influence upon events beyond its borders.

II. OUR INTERESTS IN THE CONGO TODAY

"Classical" United States interests in the Congo are not inconsiderable, and they have grown during the past two years as prospects for continued tranquility have improved. Basically, these are the following:

1. Continued availability to the West of the Congo's key primary products, on terms both advantageous to the Congo and commensurate with the requirements of world market stability;
2. Ready access to the growing Congolese industrial and consumer markets for American exporters, on at least an equal basis with suppliers from other countries;
3. Favorable treatment for private American investors interested in risking their capital in the Congo's development;
4. Protection under the law of the personal rights of American citizens at work in this country, including some 3000 missionaries;
5. Continued availability and easy access to Congolese airfields for US aircraft, particularly those engaged in surveillance of South Atlantic waters and those transiting Africa toward Indian Ocean destinations;

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6. Diplomatic support for our positions in the UN and in other international forums, as well as continuing opposition to the admission of the Communist Chinese bloc members to these organizations; and

7. Maintenance by the Congo of friendly, cooperative relations with other countries of the West and Third World important to our interests.

Our current interests in the Congo by no means end there, however. Our investment in the country's unity and stability has made it possible for us to think in considerably broader terms.

By virtue of its enormous size, strategic location, natural wealth, favorable demography, and ethnic mixture, a united Congo is potentially the most powerful and influential black state in sub-Saharan Africa. It has already amply demonstrated the degree to which events and turmoil here can have repercussions far beyond its borders. A united, stable, and developing Congo friendly to the United States will increasingly be in a position to exercise a positive influence in our favor upon developments throughout black Africa.

The Congo's geographic situation, strength, and outlook are particularly relevant to black Africa's confrontation with the white-rule Southern tier. The Congo shares 1500 miles of common border with Portuguese-governed Angola, and it harbors some 300,000 to 500,000 Angolan refugees inside that border. For these reasons alone, it must involve itself in the entire confrontation problem and make appropriate pan-African noises from time to time. Yet the Congo's fervor is tempered considerably by its practical need to evacuate a large proportion of its all-important copper production across Angolan territory to the port of Lobito. Thus, the Congo's self-interest dictates for the short term a more moderate approach than that of some pan-African radicals, one which dovetails with our own hope of avoiding an all-out clash between white and black Africa.

The Congo is not only rich in natural resources: its borders encompass an unusually comfortable "mix" of primary materials and agricultural potential, well-developed though run-down economic and social infrastructures, a favorable pattern of population distribution, and a satisfactory pool of fundamental manpower skills to permit exceptional hope for sound, balanced development given stable political conditions. A relatively modest catalytic input of developmental

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assistance here may be expected to pay greater dividends than in a fundamentally poorer country. And a successful Congolese model might also help to dramatize the value of regional economic cooperation among less-favored neighbors. Thus the Congo offers us a potentially valuable proving ground for development and eventually perhaps a useful model for its neighbors.

III. IMPACT OF UNITED STATES POLICIES TO DATE

A. The Congo has made great strides toward political stability and national unity during the past three years of Mobutu's rule. Its governmental machinery runs somewhat better, its security forces are stronger, and its image abroad is more favorable now than at any time since Independence. Danger areas persist, however, particularly in economic and fiscal matters, and acceptance of the regime is grudging among many. Yet we see no convincing reason why the present trend is unlikely to continue at least through 1970.

B. While the Congo's policies and the measure of internal security which these have obtained, as well as the signal accomplishments of the monetary reform, have resulted in significantly improving the business climate generally and have paved the way for increased foreign investment, in certain vital areas economic progress is not keeping pace with achievements in the political sector. The regime sadly lacks clear developmental priorities and sound control over its spending. However, the GDRC has alleviated technical skills shortages through business contracts with the private sector for needed services, thus reducing the need for direct governmental assistance from abroad.

C. With its problems of unity and stability at home reduced to manageable proportions, the Congo is increasingly turning its attention to the larger African context. After toying with several postures and power experiments, the GDRC seems to be finding its place of moderate leadership, and other Africans are beginning to appreciate its growing strength and potential influence.

D. The United States may justly take a large part of the credit for the Congo's progress in recent years. Our psychological and diplomatic support for Kinshasa (and by implication for Mobutu) has materially impeded the fragmentation process while encouraging a sense of national identity, pride, and self-confidence. Our material help in riding out periods of economic dislocation, political disorder,

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and subversion has literally held the country together. Our assistance contributed successfully to the establishment of a sounder economic base through the monetary reform, but along with our aid we have probably fostered illusions which exaggerate both our influence and our interest here.

E. The Congo today is probably as able as many Third World countries to solve its own everyday problems and absorb setbacks. With the emergency phase over, we should now begin to focus our attention more upon the Congo's long-term prospects for developmental growth and political influence in Africa. In so doing, we should concentrate our energies and resources on advancing our broader interests and worry less about our responsiveness to politically inspired GDRC wishes and short-term objectives.

F. President Mobutu is closely identified with us and we with him. An important key to his unquestionable strength lies in this relationship, and our hope for continued stability rests mainly upon him. Both we and he would probably like to see this dependent relationship loosened somewhat. But we both recognize that a sudden suggestion of withdrawal on our part could seriously undermine his position and hence prejudice our own investment in the Congo's stability. We must thus play an extremely careful and subtle game, confining our advice mainly to vital matters, yet continuing to assure him publicly and privately of the United States' continuing interest in a stable, united Congo.

IV. CONTINUING POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

In pursuit of our up-dated relationship with the Congo and its President, we propose the following guidelines:

A. International Affairs:

1. Quietly support Mobutu's pragmatic position on Angola and the southern tier, encouraging consultation with fellow African moderates and active participation on the UN Committee of 24 and African Liberation Committee.

2. Encourage the Congo to continue its participation in OAU and OCAM efforts to find a solution to the Nigerian conflict.

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3. If necessary, attempt to discourage the President from foolish political, military and financial adventures in Congo-Brazzaville and other neighboring countries which might undermine the area's stability.

4. Invite Mobutu to visit the United States officially next fall.

B. Congolese Internal Affairs:

1. Mobutu's economic ineptitude in general, and his fiscal irresponsibility in particular, may yet bring the political edifice he has erected crashing down around his ears. This may not happen for some time, but it could happen fairly soon if the copper price breaks. This situation poses a sharp dilemma for U.S. policy. On the one hand, active intervention with Mobutu to change his ways may jeopardize our relations with him and the privileged status that we enjoy in the Congo. On the other hand, if the Congo reverts to political and economic chaos, our whole position in sub-Sahara Africa cannot fail to be compromised. It seems better to take the risks of discrete intervention since we may not have much to lose, anyway. We have made a beginning at this already, and the results have not been entirely discouraging.

2. Equally important is the critical question of optimum allocation of resources and establishment of developmental priorities. We should use all leverage at our disposal, through our prestige and influence in general and our aid program in particular, to help bring about much-needed improvements in this area. A small nucleus of the abler, more thoughtful officials in Mobutu's government already are well aware of the potential value of engaging foreign consultants to assist in this complex task. We should offer all possible help and encouragement, if necessary with financial assistance, to bring in teams of planners and technical experts to prepare studies and recommend priorities, especially in infrastructure and agricultural development, but also in other sectors of the Congolese economy. In this endeavor we should try to coordinate our efforts closely with those of the World Bank, the IMF and the European Development Fund.

3. The Congo needs major inputs of new direct foreign investment, and the economy is now better able to absorb such capital. In addition to the program of U.S. development lending scheduled to begin in FY '70, we therefore should make every effort to encourage

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and assist U.S. potential investors here, drawing on the services of AID's private investment program and the Export-Import Bank. At the same time, we should urge the Congolese to support these efforts through better identification of investment opportunities, promulgation of the long-overdue investment law, and implementation of the projected Congolese development bank.

4. In tandem with our efforts to attract U.S. investment, we should strive to advance a more classical policy objective: the promotion of U.S.-Congolese trade and an absolute as well as relative increase of American exports to the Congo.

5. In order to remove one major obstacle to foreign investment (and a potentially troublesome blight on Belgo-Congolese relations) we should use our influence with Mobutu to move him toward settlement of the UMHK dispute, with or without World Bank mediation. Obviously this is an extremely delicate matter, calling for the utmost in diplomatic skill, tact and discretion. Nevertheless the objective is sufficiently important to warrant using propitious and appropriate occasions to tread on this dangerous ground.

6. Since the ANC is the ultimate source of power in the Congo, we should maintain our close ties with the Congolese military by continuing our MAP, Defense Attaché and USIS language programs. The objectives of these programs should continue to be geared toward modernization and reduction in size of the military forces as well as maintaining friendly contacts with actual and potential leaders within the various officer grades.

7. Although we should avoid the temptation to give advice to Mobutu except on matters of direct importance to our efforts in the Congo (mainly in the economic and military fields), it is vital that the American Ambassador maintain direct and intimate contact with the President so as to assure him that when he needs and requests advice the USG will always be listening sympathetically.

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