

Modern African Wars (4)

The Congo 1960–2002



Peter Abbott • Illustrated by Raffaele Ruggeri

Men-at-Arms . 492

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Series editor Martin Windrow

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INTRODUCTION

The Belgian Congo became independent on 30 June 1960. Belgium's preparations had been hasty and wholly inadequate, and left the population of almost a million square miles virtually without any trained African administrative, political or military elite. It had been agreed that Belgian specialists would stay on during a transition period after independence, but events prevented this.

The *ascaris* who made up the rank and file of its armed *Force Publique* waited to hear what rewards in pay and other benefits the change would bring them. Five days later they got their answer, when their Belgian commander LtGen Emile Janssens told them bluntly that 'before independence equals after independence'. The garrison at the capital, Léopoldville, promptly mutinied. Disorder and violence spread rapidly, many Belgian administrators and other Europeans fled for their lives, and government services collapsed. With the encouragement of European mining interests, two of the new country's most mineral-rich regions seceded immediately, and a third tried to break away shortly afterwards. The Congo has never really been at peace since then.

The secession war of the early 1960s was soon followed by a major rebellion in the east of the country, both these conflicts provoking intervention by foreign troops and the recruitment of white mercenaries. The 1970s saw Congolese troops intervene in neighbouring Angola, which retaliated by letting a band of Congolese exiles launch two invasions of their home province from Angolan territory. The 1980s were relatively quiet; but the 1990s saw growing internal unrest, followed by the spilling-over into Congo's eastern regions of the civil war arising from the genocide in neighbouring Rwanda. This conflict subsequently escalated into Africa's 'First Continental War', involving troops from no fewer than eight other countries ranging from Tchad in the north to Namibia in the south, and the deployment of conventional forces with tank, artillery and air support.

For reasons of space, this book deals only with events up to the ostensible end of that multinational war in 2002. However, although a peace agreement was subsequently signed in July 2003, intermittent fighting has continued

During the 1964 rebellion in Orientale province, a mutineer poses with an FN FAL rifle. He wears khaki drill shirtsleeve uniform, and below the blue-and-yellow ANC cockade on his cap he has retained, or acquired, the badge of the Belgian Quartermaster Corps. Note on the shoulder-strap slides the single silver star of *adjudant* rank. (J.P. Sonck Collection)





This photograph dates from Independence Day or soon afterwards, when the Force Publique was still obeying its Belgian officers (see front right). These troops all wear the 1955 olive-green uniform with a collarless jacket (see Plate A1). Their helmets bear a red grenade on a white ground set against a red stripe, and this Gendarmerie insignia is repeated on shoulder-strap slides. The rankers wear brown leather belt equipment and carry bolt-action Mauser rifles or carbines. In photos it is sometimes difficult to make out if Congolese troops are wearing M1-style steel helmets or, as here, the much more common plastic liners, which provide a symbol of military status rather than functional protection. (Private collection)

and pro-Khartoum Southern Sudanese rebels on Congolese soil, while many of Mobutu's defeated troops found temporary sanctuary in neighbouring Congo-Brazzaville and Centrafrique.

The fact that so many groups were involved made the conflicts extremely complex. The Continental War proper often saw three different 'layers' of combat going on simultaneously in the same regions: national armies fighting each other with sophisticated weaponry; regional regimes struggling for dominance, with forces operating essentially as light infantry; and ethnic militias raiding their ancestral enemies in the traditional way, though now equipped with automatic rifles. In all cases there was widespread looting, all too often accompanied by rape and massacre of the helpless; often this could be attributed to poor discipline, but sometimes such atrocities were a matter of state policy. The Congo's neglected infrastructure made it difficult to get aid to the civilian population displaced by these conflicts, which have cost (at the time of writing) some five million lives lost to violence, disease and malnutrition, in a humanitarian catastrophe akin to that suffered by Central Europe during the Thirty Years' War of 1618–48.

Few of the books dealing with the political, economic and social aspects of these conflicts have much to say about the structure, organization, weaponry and uniforms of the forces involved; this text is therefore devoted to those military aspects, at the expense of the broader considerations. Even so, the multitude of armed forces involved over a period of 40 years has naturally required much selection and compression. I have chosen to give priority to material relating to Congolese armies rather than to those of the other countries that sent expeditionary forces to fight on Congolese soil. While representative figures are included in the colour plates, those armies deserve their own histories.

Unfortunately, none of the available sources provide a comprehensive order of battle for the Congolese forces, and trying to assemble one is

in the east of the country, and that region remains today outside the effective control of the capital.

An important contributory factor was that most of the states involved had made a habit of harbouring their neighbours' political opponents. Congo's ruler Joseph Mobutu supported Angolan UNITA rebels; Angola retaliated by giving sanctuary to Congo's exiled Katangan troops, and both groups were to play important roles. Mobutu also sheltered the Hutus who fled Rwanda after being implicated in the genocide there – which brought the victorious Rwandan Tutsis across the border after them, subsequently sparking off the 'Continental War'. There were also Burundian, Ugandan

like attempting to complete a jigsaw puzzle with many of the pieces missing. It may be that the Congolese officers themselves did not always know the details, for many were only semi-literate at best; those few who have actually published memoirs tend to focus more on the ethnic affiliations of their former colleagues than on the formations and units under their command.

Nomenclature

A problem in terms of presentation is that many Congolese place names were changed after independence (in 1972 Mobutu even renamed the whole country as 'Zaire'), and when Laurent Kabila came to power in 1996 he changed some of them back. Rather than litter this text with constructions such as 'Lubumbashi (ex-Elizabethville)', I have used the names employed at the time, and rely on the sketch maps to show the main outlines of operations. For reference, the main changes were: Congo (the country) became Zaïre in 1972, then the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) in 1996.

Léopoldville (the national capital) became Kinshasa in 1965.

Katanga province became Shaba in 1972, but reverted to Katanga in 1996.

Elizabethville (capital of Katanga/Shaba province) became Lubumbashi in 1966.

Stanleyville (capital of Orientale province) became Kisangani in 1966.

Again, detailed studies of Congo's complicated politico-military history throw up literally scores of armed movements, each with its own set of initials; a full list of these acronyms would fill several pages, and in the panel opposite page 3 I have limited myself to the main ones. The same is true of the cast of political figures (virtually all Congolese generals were politicians rather than military men). The key individuals were:

Patrice Lumumba, the firebrand radical who briefly became independent Congo's first premier in June 1960 before being deposed, and murdered in January 1961.

Moïse Tshombé, who in 1960–63 tried unsuccessfully to make mineral-rich Katanga province in the south-east a separate country; he became premier of the whole Congo in 1964–65, only to be deposed and to meet a bad end in his turn.

Joseph Mobutu, the army commander who took power in 1965, and ran Congo/Zaire for his personal profit until his overthrow in 1997.

Laurent Kabila, the obscure Katangan revolutionary who was selected to front the 1996 rebellion against Mobutu; after becoming president in 1997 he turned on his Rwandan Tutsi backers, thus precipitating the 'Great African War' or 'First Continental War' of 1998–2002.

The Congo is home to some 200 different ethnic groups divided by bitter mutual rivalries, especially in the overpopulated east. These flared into violence whenever central government control was weak, and whoever has tried to rule the Congo has had to contend with regular outbreaks at the district or even village level. These anti-Katangan Baluba warriors, photographed in 1960, would later be followed by many more tribal militias equipped with mixtures of traditional and modern weapons, though since the mid-1990s the AK-47 has become very common. (TopFoto)





Former premier Patrice Lumumba under arrest in late 1960; his captors wear ANC uniform. Political enmity prompted Lumumba and President Kasavubu each to declare the other dismissed in September, three months after independence. In December, Lumumba was arrested by Gen Mobutu's ANC; he was transferred in mid-January 1961 to secessionist Katanga province, where he was discreetly put in front of a firing squad. His murder inspired a major rebellion in the east of the country. (Cody Images)

The Congo's official language is French, so military terms and titles are in that language. To avoid part of almost every line being printed in italics, the majority of French-language terms are only italicized at their first mention, if at all. Where they are spelt out in full I have retained the original forms as far as possible, but have used English-style abbreviations. The only term that might be unfamiliar to English-speaking readers is '*groupement*', which equates to a brigade.

The Congolese *Force Publique* in 1960

Before independence the Force Publique served simultaneously as both an army and a gendarmerie, some battalions being assigned to the former role and others to the latter. Even in 1960 its officers were all

Belgians, though 22 Congolese candidate officers had been hurriedly sent to Belgium for training. The force's field units were equipped like Belgian light infantry battalions.

They might have continued to be well trained and well equipped after independence, since the West saw President Mobutu (initially the ANC chief of staff) as a bulwark against Communism during the Cold War, and provided him with instructors and modern weaponry. The tragedy was that Belgium's earlier failure to train up a Congolese officer corps meant that the army quickly became a hollow shell, made up of poorly paid, demotivated troops incompetently led by corrupt political/tribal appointees.

In the first half of the 1960s, Prime Minister Tshombe's solution was to employ white mercenaries. This worked for a time in Katanga, and again during the Orientale rebellion of 1964–65, but only because they were supported by a trained staff and a competent logistic team. The mercenary so-called 'white giants' of 5e and 6e Commandos relied on speed and firepower, but they needed good communications and regular resupply, which were provided by the Belgian Army's assistance team. After this was withdrawn, the much-maligned *Armée Nationale Congolaise* (ANC) was able to put down unsupported mercenary mutinies in 1966–67, albeit with some difficulty. Mobutu's 'white legion' of 1996 again lacked this kind of support, and their rapid failure only underlines its importance.

As the text will show, none of the Congolese armies covered themselves with glory during the period under consideration. However, little Rwanda (which has been called the 'Prussia of Central Africa') has demonstrated what can be achieved by well-motivated troops led by competent officers, and proved to be more than a match for its giant neighbour. The battle-hardened Angolans also revealed themselves to be a significant regional force, along with the Ugandans and Zimbabweans. In other words, the relative ineptitude of the Congolese military certainly does not mean that every other African army can be dismissed as hopeless.

OUTLINE CHRONOLOGY

- p>1960 Independence, with Joseph Kasavubu as president and Patrice Lumumba as prime minister (June). Force Publique mutiny; Joseph Mobutu appointed ANC chief of staff by Lumumba; Belgian troops intervene, then first UN troops arrive to replace them (all July). Katanga (July) and South Kasai provinces (August) secede. Belgian troops leave (September). Lumumba dismissed (September), captured by Mobutu (December); Lumumbist revolt in Orientale and Kivu provinces of the eastern Congo.
- 1961 Lumumba murdered in Katangan captivity (January); eastern and S. Kasai revolts end, but Katanga, under Moïse Tshombe, remains defiant. UN operations against Katanga (August–September, December).
- 1962–63 Renewed UN operations vs. Katanga (October, December, January); Katangan secession abandoned (January 1963).
- 1964 APL ‘Simba’ revolt in north-east (May), led by the Maoist Pierre Mulele. UN troops leave Congo (June). Tshombe becomes prime minister of Congo (July); recruits white mercenaries and Katangese. Columns with Belgian logistic support spread out to save Europeans in isolated missions and mining towns, and to quell revolt (September). Belgian paratroop drop at Stanleyville (November).
- 1965 Revolt gradually crushed (April–November). Tshombe deposed (November); Mobutu proclaims himself president.
- 1966 First pro-Tshombe ‘mercenary mutiny’, Stanleyville (July).
- 1967 Denard and Schramme lead second ‘mercenary mutiny’ (June–July). Schramme occupies Bukavu (August); Denard’s attempt to assist him fails, and he is forced into Rwanda (both November).
- 1972 Congo renamed Zaïre; president takes name Mobutu Sese Seko.
- 1975 Unsuccessful Zaïrean intervention in Angola (November).
- 1977 Katangan exiles launch ‘Shaba I’ incursion (March).
- 1978 Katangan exiles launch ‘Shaba II’ incursion; French paratroop drop at Kolwezi (May).
- 1979 Zaïrean intervention in Central African Empire.
- 1981–83 Zaïrean interventions in Tchad.
- 1991 & 1993 Anti-Mobutu riots, factional unrest in army.
- 1994 Anti-Tutsi genocide by Hutus in Rwanda; Tutsi exile APR launches successful invasion, and many Hutus flee into Zaïre.
- 1995 Confused fighting in eastern Zaïre between Hutus, government troops, and local Tutsis (*Banyamulenge*).

1996	Outbreak of AFDL revolt in eastern Zaïre, supported by Rwandan Tutsi APR (October).
1997	AFDL, with Rwandan and Ugandan help, capture eastern regions and advance on capital; Mobutu's forces defeated. Laurent Kabila becomes president, and renames country Democratic Republic of Congo (May).
1998	Tension between Rwandan and Katangan wings of army; RCD revolt in east (August); African 'Continental War' begins.
1999–2000	Widespread multinational campaigns end in stalemate, but peace process unsuccessful.
2001	Laurent Kabila assassinated (January); his son Joseph restarts peace process.
2002	Foreign troops begin to withdraw.
2003	Peace agreement signed (July).

INDEPENDENCE AND THE SECESSION CRISIS, 1960–63

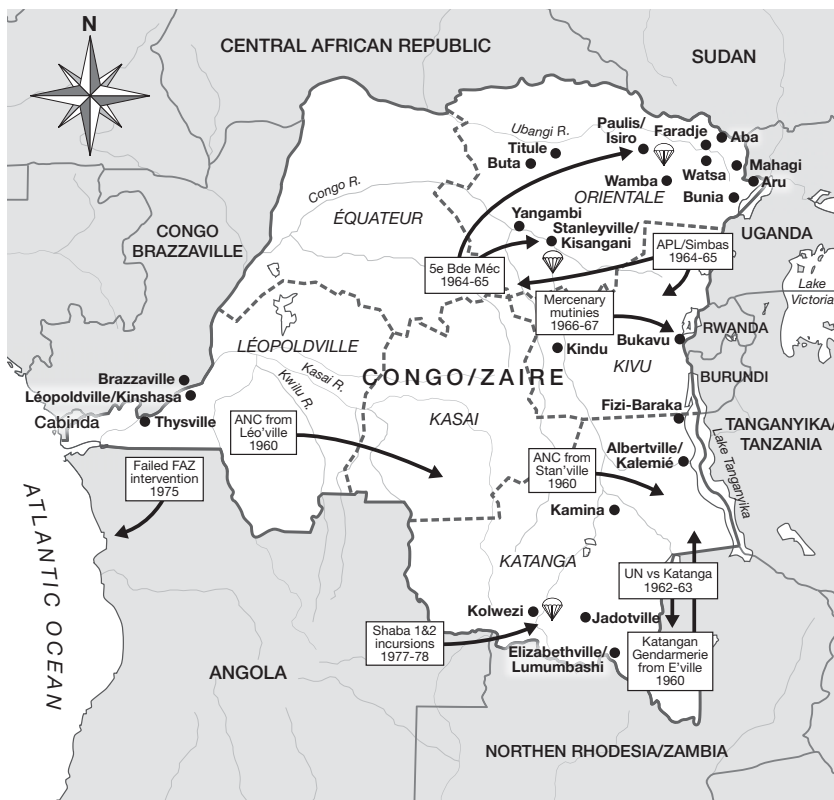
President Kasavubu (centre) and the newly promoted Gen Mobutu reviewing ANC troops in 1960. Both the former wear the Belgian so-called 'palmbeach' tropical khaki service dress, with gold trefoil epaulettes and decorative belts. The officer at right wears a slightly darker shade of service dress, with the new army's khaki-brown wool beret. The nearest troops retain M1955 Force Publique uniform with plastic helmet-liners; note the Vigneron SMG without magazine for the 'present arms'. (TopFoto)



Following the mutiny of the Force Publique in July 1960, Belgian metropolitan troops intervened to protect Europeans, and the provinces of Katanga and South Kasai took the opportunity to secede. United Nations troops arrived in response to the Congolese government's request for assistance.

Belgium's intervention was seen as neo-colonialism by the UN's newer member states, and their pressure forced the withdrawal of Belgian troops and their replacement by the UN force (ONUC). Kasai and Katanga continued to defy the new government. Prime Minister Lumumba sent units of the renamed *Armée Nationale Congolaise* into Kasai in Russian-supplied aircraft, but no logistic support was provided, and their depredations led the UN to insist that they be recalled. Lumumba's deposition and his subsequent murder in January 1961 provoked

unrest among ANC units in Orientale province; they set up what was virtually an autonomous regime, and a series of violent clashes with Léopoldville's ANC followed. This led the central authorities to reach military accords with Kasai and Katanga; the Katangans were already trying to contain a Baluba tribal revolt in the north of their province, and this brought them, too, into conflict with Orientale forces in January 1961.



Congo/Zaire, 1960-78. Broken lines indicate the boundaries of the six provinces in 1960; on paper, this huge country was to be governed by an executive and legislature that shared authority with regional governments in these six provinces. This constitution barely survived the independence celebrations, and the provinces were soon broken up into smaller units. This map shows only the major armed groups in existence during this period, and the approximate directions of the campaigns they conducted. Parachute symbols show the location of the main combat jumps. (Map by JB Illustrations)

On 21 February 1961 the UN passed a resolution authorizing it to use force to prevent civil war in the Congo. This led to a constitutional settlement in August 1961, whereby Orientale and Kasai recognized the central government once again. However, Katanga remained defiant; the UN tried to negotiate an end to Tshombe's secession, but eventually resorted to force. Operation 'Rumpunch' in August 1961 forced the departure of many of Katanga's white mercenaries, although most soon returned; Operation 'Morthor' in September was less successful. Léopoldville launched its own attempt to end Katangan secession in September 1961; its troops advanced south-eastwards from Kasai, but were stopped by the Katangans. Troops from Orientale launched a parallel attack, advancing southwards from Kindu and sacking Albertville in mid-November, the UN having forced the Katangans to withdraw, but this offensive then petered out. The UN made a third attempt to overcome the Katangans with Operation 'Unokat' in December 1961, but this was only partially successful. Most of 1962 was taken up with fruitless negotiations. Finally, the UN launched the decisive Operation 'Grand Slam' in December 1962, and Tshombe announced his submission in mid-January 1963.

The Force Publique and ANC

At the time of the mutiny the Force Publique's priority was internal security. Its artillery battalion had been disbanded the previous year, along with the infantry battalions' pioneer sections and heavy weapons companies. The Gendarmerie battalions were dispersed between various centres in companies or platoons. In addition to various service units, the combat units of the FP then comprised:

1er Groupement (Elizabethville): 8e & 12e Bataillons d'Infanterie, 1er Escadron de Reconnaissance, 1er Bn Garde, 9e & 10e Bns de Gendarmerie
2e Grpmt (Léopoldville): 13e Bn d'Inf, 4e & 15e Bns Gndm
3e Grpmt (Stanleyville): 5e, 6e & 11e Bns d'Inf, 3e Esc Recon, 7e & 16e Bns Gndm

4e Brigade (Thysville): 2e & 3e Bns d'Inf, 2e Esc Recon

Bas-Congo Defence Unit : Two AA and two coastal artillery batteries, commando company.

The active units had a total strength of 444 European officers, 599 European NCOs and 22,403 Congolese NCOs and men. The troops were armed with Belgian bolt-action Mausers, but some M1949 SAFN and FN FAL semi-automatic rifles seem to have become available from about 1956. Other infantry arms included FN-made BARs, 81mm mortars and 75mm recoilless rifles. The artillery used British 25-pdr or French 75mm guns, and the reconnaissance elements had US M8 armoured cars and 'jeeps' of various makes.

The new ANC was the work of the Moroccan Gen Kettani, who was appointed as the new government's military advisor in August 1960; the Belgian officers were replaced by Congolese. The Gendarmerie was brought back under Ministry of Defence control, and thereafter there was little difference between these units and the ANC proper. Details of the subsequent ANC order of battle (OB) are few and partial, but one account gives it as follows:

1er Grpmt (Kasai): Three infantry battalions, engineer company

2e Grpmt (Léopoldville): One para-commando, three infantry & one gendarmerie bns, engineer co

3e Grpmt (Orientale/Kivu): One para-commando, seven infantry & two gendarmerie bns, recon sqn, an AA and a heavy mortar platoon

Independent Brigade (Thysville): One para-commando & one infantry bn, recon sqn, engineer co, heavy mortar platoon.

This outline OB probably refers to late 1960. Its similarity to the pre-independence one is obvious, but the number of infantry battalions had risen from eight to 14 and the commando company had grown into three battalions, though one of the reconnaissance squadrons had disappeared.

It is not always clear where the additional units came from. An official source states that the units involved in the joint ANC/UN campaigns against Katanga in August–November 1961 consisted of Léopoldville's 1er Grpmt with 8e, 13e & 17e Bns plus 3e Cdo Bn, and Stanleyville's 3e Grpmt with 12e, 14e, 21e and 22e Bns. Many of these units had not existed in 1960. The 21e had previously been the Bn 'Nyoka' and the 22e the Bn 'Lupembe', which suggests that they may have been raised either from the Provincial Police, who had numbered some 6,000–9,000 in 1960, or from the tribal chiefs' c.10,000 police auxiliaries. Apparently each Groupement now recruited from the dominant tribes in its region, which had not been the case under the Belgians; this meant that 3e Grpmt came to include many troops from Lumumba's ethnic group.

Belgian intervention force

This was based on troops that had been stationed in the Congo from 1953 onwards. At first these consisted of paratroop and commando companies drawn from the two home battalions of the Régiment Para-Commando, but in 1955 these companies were combined into a new

3e Bataillon. This in turn was split into 3e Para and 4e Cdo Bns in 1959, and further units were formed. By 1960, 1er and 3e Para, 4e and 6e Cdo, and 5e Para-Cdo battalions were stationed in the Congo or in Ruanda-Urundi (later Rwanda and Burundi), together with the 11e and 13e–16e independent para-commando companies.

It was also decided to send volunteer *compagnies de marche* from Belgian line units to garrison the main centres; three arrived before independence day, the others immediately after the mutiny. The companies came from the Bataillon Libération (two cos), 1er Grenadiers, 1er Chasseurs Ardennais (two), 3e Chasseurs Ardennais, 5e Ligne, 12e Ligne (two), 1er Carabiniers, 1er (two), 3e and 4e Cyclistes, 1er Guides, 1er Lanciers, I Corps Artillerie (43e, 64e, 72e & 73e Bns d'Art), the École d'Artillerie Antiaérienne (AA school), 1er & 4e Génie, and Police Militaire.

The Belgian units all left the Congo in September 1960, but a dozen remained in Ruanda-Urundi until 1962.

United Nations force

The first contingents of the UN Congo Force (ONUC), organized in response to the Congolese appeal for military assistance, came from Ethiopia, Ghana, Guinea, Mali (then a federation including Senegal), Morocco, Sudan, Tunisia and Liberia, together with units from two neutralist European states, Sweden and Eire (Ireland). They began to arrive on 14 July 1960; by mid-August there were 14,491 troops in country, and by December this had been increased to 17,500 by further contingents from Nigeria, Indonesia, Malaya, and the United Arab Republic (a nominal union of Egypt and Syria, 1958–61).

At first the UN forces were widely dispersed: the Moroccans were around Léopoldville and the Bas-Congo south of the capital, the Guineans



The Emperor Haile Selassie reviewing Ethiopian troops setting off to join the UN force in the Congo, July–August 1960. The soldiers' helmets, khaki uniforms, web equipment, M1 Garand rifles and M1 carbines are all American, though they wear British-style web anklets. (Cody Images)



Men of an early Irish contingent on their way to Katanga (see also MAA 417, *The Irish Defence Forces since 1922*). Expecting action, they wear their British Mk III steel helmets prominently painted with a white 'UN'. Webbing was British 37 Pattern, but the anklets, like the boots, were brown leather. Note the 'Ireland'-over-shamrock patch then worn, on a red shield with yellow borders, and the Irish Army's red 'winged' NCO chevrons. Small arms were the Lee-Enfield No.4 rifle, the Bren LMG and the Swedish Carl Gustav SMG. What the Irish faced became clear on 8 November 1960, when a patrol lost eight killed in an ambush at Niemba in northern Katanga. (UN Photo/BZ)

The Irish UN contingent took eight of their old Ford Mk 6 armoured cars with them to the Congo; this patrol accompanies men of a later infantry rotation, 38th Bn, near Elizabethville in southern Katanga. The infantry still wear British helmets, but have now received 7.62mm FN self-loading rifles. When the Irish left the Congo they would pass six of the armoured cars to the ANC. (UN Photo/BZ)



in north-east Léopoldville province, the Liberians in Équateur, the Ethiopians in Orientale, the Irish 32nd Bn in Kivu, and the Tunisians in Kasai. Canada also provided signals units, and countries such as Austria, Norway and Yugoslavia observers or small service units. By September further contingents had arrived, including Indian, Pakistani and other service units, a Ghanaian brigade that was stationed in Léopoldville, and battalions from Indonesia, Sudan and the UAR. In August certain UN units were permitted to enter Katanga; these were drawn from the Ethiopian, Irish, Malian, Moroccan and Swedish contingents.

Disputes over the UN's role led to Guinea, Indonesia, Morocco and the UAR withdrawing their troops early in 1961. The loss was made up by increases in some of the other contingents, including the Ethiopian, Liberian, Malayan and Tunisian, and by the arrival of an Indian brigade in May 1961. The Tunisians left in July 1961 because of their country's clash with France over Bizerta, and the Ghanaians a month later. The Malian contingent was withdrawn in November 1961 because of the break-up of the Mali Federation. Subsequently Ghanaian, Indonesian and Tunisian units returned, and the ANC's 13e Bn also came under UN command for a time.

In mid-1961 there were six brigade HQs: the Ethiopians in Orientale and Équateur, the Nigerians in Kivu and north-west Katanga, the Ghanaians in Kasai, the Indians in north Katanga and the Swedes and Irish further south. The brigade used in Operation 'Rumpunch' was made up of the 12th Swedish, 35th Irish and 1st Dogra (Indian) Bns, and that used during Operation 'Morthor' had the same units plus 3/1st Gorkha (Indian) battalion. By Operation 'Unokat' in December 1961 the UN forces had been organized into two operational brigades. The 1st Bde had the 12th & 14th Swedish Bns, 36th Irish Bn, plus

Soldiers of the Indian Army's 3/1st Gorkha Regt serving with the UN 2nd Bde in Katanga, 1961-62. They carry Lee-Enfield No.4 rifles, and wear a mixture of US M1 and British Mk II helmets. The division of UN units into a European and an Asian/African brigade by December 1961 was explained as an attempt 'to encourage competition'. (Cody Images)



Swedish and Irish armoured cars; the 2nd Bde had India's 1st Dogras & 3/1st Gorkhas, the 8th & 35th Ethiopian Bns, plus Malayan armoured cars.

By the time ONUC resumed operations against Katanga in October 1962, it had become concerned enough about attacks by the fledgling Katangan air arm to acquire air cover. Norway sent AA guns and crews, and Ethiopia, India and Sweden fighter aircraft. The final Operation 'Grand Slam' in December 1962 was carried out by the Indian and Ethiopian brigade, with support from single Irish, Swedish and Tunisian battalions. The Indians conducted the follow-up operation towards Kolwezi, and were clearly the spearhead of the UN forces.

The UN operation was wound down for financial reasons during the first six months of 1964, and the last troops left that June.¹

Katanga

The Katangan secessionist force was invariably known as the *Gendarmerie Katangaise*. It was built around some 200 ex-Force Publique soldiers together with members of the local police, and new recruits from tribes that supported Tshombe. Command was exercised by some 30 Belgian Army officers loaned to the Katangan government, and up to 250 Belgian ex-FP officers employed on contract. The local European settlers formed a separate volunteer force, which was issued with government arms and advised by Belgian officers. By December 1960 the Gendarmerie numbered 6,000–7,000, well equipped with weapons from Belgian stocks held at Kamina, and organized into independent companies.

UN pressure led to the withdrawal of most of the regular Belgian officers in early 1961, though Belgian mercenaries remained. Some French arrived too, allegedly with the blessing of the French government. Meanwhile, the mining interests which supported secession were spreading the word, and numbers of white South Africans and Rhodesians also arrived. The French-speakers were split up among the Gendarmerie companies, while the English-speakers formed a separate *Compagnie Internationale*.

By mid-1961 the Katangan forces had a strength of 13,000, with 460 white and 144 African officers and NCOs, and the companies had been expanded into battalions. The *Compagnie Internationale* was dissolved in July 1961, and in August the UN's Operation 'Rumpunch' led to the expulsion of many more mercenaries. Tshombe announced the immediate Africanization of his Gendarmerie; however, about 180 mercenaries remained, and since a good many others soon returned there was little real change.

The Katangan order of battle in September 1961 consisted of 21er–24e, 33e & 34e Bns de Gendarmerie, 1er Bn d'Inf Portée, 1er Bn Para-Cdo (aka '1er Commando' – see Plate C2), 1er Bn Police Militaire, 1er Bn Garde Mobile, four 'mobile groups' lettered A–D, sundry service units, and a 'Tanganyika Flotilla' on that lake. Small arms were a mixture of old

Katangan President Moise Tshombe with a seconded or contract Belgian officer, and a member of his ceremonial Mounted Escort. The Belgian wears khaki drill, with the badge of the Gendarmerie Katangaise on the front of his bush hat and his rank on shoulder-strap slides (see Plate C1). The Escort's uniform was based on that of the French Garde Républicaine. The silver helmet had a red tuft at the front of the crest, a black horsehair mane, and a left-side plume of green, over red, over white – Katanga's national colours. The coat was green with red turnbacks and collar patches; the double aiguillettes were in green, red and white; the shoulder trefloils were of red cloth. The spurred boots had strapped legs and laced insteps. The saddle shabraque was green, and bore a white shield with three red 'Katanga crosses' across the top, above a red lozenge with white crossed sabres. Some of the Escort rode motorcycles and wore white crash helmets. (TopFoto)



¹ For further details see Osprey Elite 54, *UN Forces 1948–94*



1961: well-equipped Katangan gendarmes manning an 81mm mortar. They wear Belgian 'Denison'-style camouflage smocks, with shield-shaped Katanga badges and their ranking on shoulder-strap slides. Perhaps unusually, two British Lee-Enfield rifles can be seen in the background. The mercenary-led Katangan units were given a variety of military and civilian trucks, pick-ups and jeeps to increase their mobility, many of the latter being Minerva-built Land Rovers. (Private collection)

Mausers and new FN FAL rifles (in approximately one-third/two-thirds proportions). In addition to the regular units, tribal warriors had been issued with small arms in readiness for guerrilla warfare. These forces successfully resisted the UN's Operation 'Morthor' in September 1961.

The October 1961 order of battle was similar, except that it showed the 22e Bn as engineers, and added a *peloton de Garde Présidentielle*, and a *unité Européen* of 40–50 men. These units fought the UN forces to a draw in the so-called 'second round' in December.

After another ten months or so of fruitless negotiation the UN launched Operation 'Grand Slam', which defeated the Katangans by January 1963. The Gendarmerie order of battle in the Jadotville-Kolwezi area at that time included the 2e, 8e, 34e and one other infantry battalion, a Para-Commando Bn, a Mobile Group with Mercedes armoured cars, and three Military Police companies.

Most of the weapons acquired during the course of the war were Belgian, with some US types. The standard arms were Vigneron and Sten SMGs, FN FAL rifles, FN MAG, Browning .30cal and some .50cal machine guns, 60mm and 81mm mortars, 75mm recoilless rifles, and 40mm 'Beaufort' (i.e. Bofors) guns. Transport was abundant, if motley; communication equipment (mostly Japanese radios) was adequate, and a local workshop produced some home-made 'Mammouth' AFVs.

South Kasai & Orientale

When South Kasai declared itself independent in mid-1960 it formed its own Gendarmerie. Initially this had a strength of three companies each of 120 men, but it was later expanded to about 2,000 in three battalions and a depot, with Belgian senior officers. The force was said to be well armed but poorly disciplined. These troops were reintegrated into the ANC towards the end of 1961, most being dispersed among other units.

The dissident Orientale garrison was based on the ANC's 3e Groupement. This numbered 5,000 in December 1960, but few organizational details are available other than those noted on page 10.

THE ORIENTALE REVOLT, 1964–65

The ANC in 1964

By early 1964 the Congo's provinces were all under central control. However, the ANC's efficiency had declined as its numbers rose (to 35,000 by the end of 1961), and its officer corps had been Africanized too rapidly. Those appointed were elected by committees of soldiers and NCOs; in 2e Groupement they were generally the most competent of the candidates, and discipline was soon re-established, but the troops in the other regions had tended to elect weaker men in order to maintain their own power. This was particularly so in 3e Groupement, which helps to explain the disorders within its region. In 1962, under the American-inspired 'Greene Plan', Belgium had agreed to train the army proper,

Israel a paratroop regiment, and Italy the air force, while the US supplied equipment. This reorganization did achieve some of the desired reduction in numbers, which fell to an estimated 29,000 in 1964.

An OB dated April 1964 unfortunately did not identify any individual units, or say how many there were in total. There were now four Groupements: 1e Grpmt in western Katanga, 2e at Léopoldville, 3e at Stanleyville in Orientale, and 4e at Elizabethville in southern Katanga. Each had a number of infantry and gendarmerie battalions, a military police company and services. There were also two *Brigades*, the 7e and 8e, to which the Para and Commando battalions were allocated; they were clearly meant to be mobile field formations, equipped with integral light armour (though only 7e Bde had this) and a support company of 4.2in mortars. Their numbering is curious, for there was as yet no 5e Bde, and there never seems to have been a 6e Brigade.

* * *

In late 1963 Lumumbist-inspired disturbances broke out in Kwilu district east of Léopoldville, and in May 1964 there were further local risings in Kivu and northern Katanga. The ANC's heavy-handed efforts to repress these (the reader should understand this euphemism in an African context, to mean villages looted and burned, and men, women and children killed out of hand) only fanned the flames. The Lumumbists captured Kindu and moved on to Stanleyville, which was taken on 5 August 1964. Orientale province became the centre of the revolt, and once again 3e Grpmt mutineers provided the bulk of the rebels. Although they were undisciplined their morale was better than that of the capital's ANC, on whom they were able to inflict a number of defeats. The Stanleyville garrison had included c.1,000 'commandos', but although regarded as part of the ANC's elite these failed to offer any serious resistance.



Katanga had several mining and rail centres, so the breakaway forces had access to engineering workshops. They added this extended turret to an old US M8 Greyhound armoured car, lifting the mounting for the .50cal heavy machine gun; other, similar modifications were also photographed. Note the propeller-shaped 'Katanga cross' painted on the glacis; officially it was supposed to be copper-coloured – the symbol recalled the traditional copper currency of the region – but here it is probably yellow. (Private collection)



ANC paratroopers or 'para-commandos' photographed soon after the formation of the first battalions at the beginning of the 1960s; later these troops would for many years be the mainstay of President Mobutu's regime. They wear plastic helmet-liners, some of them with wide-mesh string camouflage netting, and Belgian 'jigsaw'-pattern camouflage smocks. Their weapons may be of mixed origin – the man at the right clearly has a Mk II Sten gun. (Private collection)



The six-wheeled M8 Greyhound – mounting a 37mm gun, a co-axial .30cal MG and sometimes a ring-mounted .50cal – had equipped the Force Publique's reconnaissance element in the 1950s, and remained in use by the ANC. However, in 1964 only enough were serviceable to equip a single squadron, with 7e Brigade. The problems Belgian specialists were soon to experience in putting together a 'mechanized' force to face the 1964–65 rebellion suggest that abysmal local maintenance standards may have been the reason. (Private collection)

Rebel leaders taking the salute in Stanleyville, 1964. Second from right is the commander-in-chief of the People's Liberation Army, Gen Nicolas Olenga, still wearing ANC uniform and badges. Note the revolutionary salute adopted by the APL. (J.P. Sonck Collection)



Rebel forces

The 1963 rebels in Kwilu province were essentially a guerrilla force based on the local *Jeunesse* (a kind of political youth militia). The 1964 rebels in Kivu and Orientale, inspired by Pierre Mulele and commanded by Nicolas Olenga, proclaimed a Chinese-backed People's Republic and formed an *Armée Populaire de Libération* (APL). This included ANC deserters, tribesmen and Jeunesse, and collectively the rebels were frequently called 'Simbas' (Swahili for 'lions').

The APL was divided into '*unités d'opérations*', '*unités de garnison*' and '*barrières*'. Its regular units included the 5e and 6e Bns and 3e Esc de Recon (all original 3e Grpmt units), plus a collection of others raised subsequently, such as the 1er, 18e and 21e Bns de Commandos de Choc, the 2e Wamba, 8e Uvira and 19e Kindu battalions. The APL followed ANC organization, with a 1e Bde at Uvira (Central), 2e Bde at Fizi (Southern) and 3e Bde at Paulis (Northern); the 2e Bde had the 3e, 7e & 8e Bns, plus commando and MP companies. Command and control were disorganized, and the expanded rebel forces, though enthusiastic, were even more poorly disciplined than the ANC.

The 'barrières' were local auxiliary forces composed of tribesmen and Jeunesse, divided into *équipes* each commanded by a *président* (war chief), assisted by a *caporal de guerre* and a *commissaire politique*. These groups had both numbers and names, the latter generally revolutionary in flavour (e.g. '*Moscou*' and '*Chine*'); they used tribal or makeshift arms such as bows, machetes, locally made guns and *pupus* (Molotov cocktails).

5e Brigade Mécanisée: Belgians, mercenaries and Katangans

The revolt found the ANC still unprepared for a major campaign. At this point there were about 14 infantry battalions; additionally there were two each of paratroopers (1er & 2e) and commandos (3e & 4e), which together seem to have provided the infantry of 7e and 8e Brigades.

Katanga's former leader Tshombe became the Congo's premier in July 1964. He used his old contacts to recruit white mercenaries, both English-speaking South Africans and Rhodesians and French-speakers. He also appealed to those Katangan gendarmes who had either taken refuge in Angola or fled into the bush. These were formed into new units, which were combined in a new 5e Brigade Mécanisée. The decision

to form this seems to have been taken in early September, and its commander, the Belgian Col Vandewalle, was given operational responsibility for defeating the rebellion. His Belgian staff were code-named '*l'Ommegang*' after a Brussels carnival procession. Although they went to the Congo with the blessing of the Belgian government, they were technically members of the ANC.

The new brigade was planned as a multi-battalion formation, all such units being designated as 'Commandos'. These were the 5e (white, English-speaking,

CO Hoare) and 6e (white, French-speaking), plus four composed of Katangans led by Belgian officers, these being the 7e (CO Leigeois), 8e (CO Lamouline), 9e (CO Protin) and 10e (exiles returned from Angola led by a local planter, Jean Schramme). Attached to this strike force were the 11e–15e Cdos, which collectively formed the ‘Régiment Baka’ (standing for ‘*Bataillons Katangais*’); these, led by Belgian or mercenary officers, were intended as occupation troops.



Rebel troops parading in eastern Congo, 1964. Their commander wears khaki; he displays the ANC infantry's bright blue shoulder-strap slides with an adjutant's star below crossed rifles, but has no cap badge. His men have all acquired khaki trousers, but have draped leaves and grass around their torsos.

In practice, 5e Cdo was split up to provide spearhead elements for a concentric advance on Stanleyville. Mike Hoare calls these sub-units ‘commandos’, but they were *pelotons* as far as the ANC and Belgians were concerned, each with 40–50 mercenaries. No 51 advanced from the north with the help of an ANC company; No 52 approached from the west and was joined by No 54; and No 53 flew to Bukavu and advanced northwards. Meanwhile Nos 55, 56 & 57, constituting the core of 5e Cdo, were used to spearhead 5e Bde Méc's advance from the south, some elements being combined with 7e Cdo to form Column ‘Lima I’, and others with 8e Cdo to form ‘Lima II’. Column ‘Papa’, consisting of 9e and 10e Cdos, operated from Albertville on Lake Tanganyika. (A group of CIA-sponsored anti-Castro Cubans also joined ‘Lima I’ part way through the campaign, and later became No 58 Cdo – see ‘Foreign interventions’ below.)

The French-speaking 6e Cdo was built up at the same time and eventually consisted of sub-units designated Groupes 60–65 and Para. At this date mostly Belgian, it was used to reinforce the columns in the engineer, supply and guard roles. It was not yet regarded as a spearhead unit in the same way as 5e Cdo, though its Groupe Para Spéciale did retake the town of Buta in Uele district from the Simbas in November 1964 (only for ANC troops to lose it again ten days later).

The columns were equipped with a miscellany of trucks and jeeps (the Kaiser M606 jeep being common), and their teeth elements had a few AFVs, including some Scania armoured cars donated by the Swedish UN contingent and Ferrets left behind by the Malaysians. ‘Lima I’ also had a *peloton* with four 4.2in mortars, and another of engineers. The 5e Bde Méc as a whole had a company of mortars and one of combat engineers.



Oriental rebels posing for a group photo in Stanleyville, 1964, brandishing Mausers and a Vigneron SMG. They are presumably 3e Grpmt mutineers, since they show a range of ANC uniform; note the way that the ‘Simbas’ modified their outfits by adding fur, feathers or leaves to the headgear. (J.P. Sonck Collection)



1964: Maj Mike Hoare (right), CO of 5e Commando, with one of his men. Hoare was an Irish-born officer of the British Army in World War II who had emigrated to South Africa in 1947. Here he wears a commando-green beret with the officers' gold ANC badge between the two bars of field rank; his green shoulder-strap slides bore a commando dagger badge above the star and thick bar of major's rank. Photos show 5e Cdo personnel out of the line wearing berets, khaki shirts and green trousers (see Plate D2); here both men wear the usual field outfit of complete green fatigues, which were worn with M1 steel helmets and limited British-style webbing. The standard weapon was the FN FAL rifle. (Associated Press)

On 24 November, Stanleyville was retaken by Belgian paratroopers dropped by USAF aircraft to rescue the white hostages held there; this Operation 'Dragon Rouge' was not officially part of Kinshasa's offensive, but 'Lima I' and 'II' reached the city on the same day. Some ANC paratroopers from Kinshasa also arrived, but did not come under 5e Bde Méc command. The Belgians carried out another drop code-named 'Dragon Noire' over Paulis (now Isiro) on 26 November.

Two further lengthy campaigns during 1965 were necessary to put down the revolt completely. The first consisted of a sweep by 5e and 14e Cdos along the Ugandan and Sudanese borders (Mahagi, Aru, Faradje and Aba). The second was the reduction of the Fizi-Baraka pocket in South Kivu, which involved an amphibious assault by elements of 5e Cdo while a column from the same unit advanced from the south. Another, composed of ANC units spearheaded by 6e Cdo (CO Lamouline, and now incorporating Denard's French '1er Choc' element), drove from the west. A third column from the north comprised ANC units spearheaded by some 20 mercenaries recruited by a sugar company and known as the 'Codoki Commando' (which was subsequently incorporated into the ANC as No 63 Cdo).

Few regular ANC units were involved in the reconquest, but by mid-December 1964 5e Bde Méc's composition included 8e and 21e Bns as well as 3e, 4e & 5e Cdos. Others were involved in the later operations in a supporting role. No full ANC order of battle seems to be available, but these

latter included 2e Bn Para and 1er Bn, together with 7e Bn Gndm and 13e Bn, who continued to garrison Bukavu.

Foreign interventions

As already stated, the Belgian Army's *Assistance Technique et Militaire Belge* (ATMB) provided the commander and operations staff for 5e Bde Méc, and the whole 'l'Ommegang' support effort.

The American CIA provided covert air support for the ANC in 1964 by supplying a number of T-28 and B-26 (aka A-26 Invader) aircraft, and exiled anti-Castro Cuban pilots and technicians to keep them in the air. Of some 200 Cubans, infantry provided airfield security and later formed No 58 Cdo. (For the land campaign there were also attempts to recruit friendly African contingents, and even Korean or Philippine troops, but these came to nothing.)

In 1964, media reports of atrocities by the Simbas, and the seizure of Western hostages by the Orientale regime, provoked an international crisis. America considered sending two US airborne battalions to recapture Stanleyville, but then agreed a joint US-Belgian plan. These November 1964 'Dragon' operations employed troops from Belgium's Régiment Para-Commando and USAF C-130 Hercules aircraft. The force dropped on Stanleyville in 'Dragon Rouge' were mainly from 1er Bn Para with a company from 2e Bn Cdo; the smaller force dropped over Paulis in 'Dragon Noire' was drawn from 1er Bn Para only. The troops were withdrawn as soon as their mission had been accomplished.

This Western initiative provoked a reaction. In March 1965 Castro's Cuba sent 'Che' Guevara and c.100 Afro-Cuban volunteers to the eastern Congo to help train the rebels with Chinese-supplied arms. Inserted across Lake Tanganyika from what became Tanzania, they were to have been supplemented by smaller units from Algeria, Ghana and the UAR. However, a coup in Algeria halted this joint action, and the Sino-Soviet split put the pro-China Congolese rebels and the pro-Soviet Cubans at loggerheads. The ANC then launched an offensive into the area, and the Cubans withdrew to Tanzania in November.



The US participation in Operations 'Dragon Rouge' and 'Dragon Noire' was negotiated at the highest diplomatic and military levels, and the documentary record was not declassified for many years afterwards. Here a Belgian soldier of 1er Bn Para, Rég't Para-Cdo, rigs up on Kamina airfield before boarding one of the five USAF C-130E Hercules drop aircraft on the night of 23/24 November 1964 for 'Dragon Rouge'. (USAF/ex-Wagoner)

The mercenary mutinies, 1966 & 1967

Before the final suppression of the Orientale revolt in November 1965, Premier Tshombe was dismissed by President Kasavubu. He in turn was deposed by his army commander; for this coup Gen Mobutu was able to call on three special battalions (at least one of them paratroopers) known as 'Mobutu's Own'.

The mercenaries were retained in the east, and the Katangese Rég't Baka was concentrated in Stanleyville. There were clashes between these troops and what was now called the ANC's 5e Gpmt; this was based on 5e Bde Méc, with 6e Cdo (CO Denard) as a nucleus and new ANC elements drafted in. Now commanded by John Peters, 5e Cdo was dispersed on mopping-up operations.

The Katangan units (there seem to have been nine altogether) had always been 'provisional'; once the emergency was over, Mobutu planned to disband them and disperse the men throughout the ANC. Realizing this, and provoked by Belgian mercenaries on behalf of the exiled Tshombe, some units at Stanleyville (11e, 12e & 14e Cdos) mutinied in July 1966. Denard's 6e Cdo, and Schramme's 10e (aka 'Bn Léopard' or

BELOW LEFT While the Belgian paratroopers were dropping on Stanleyville on 24 November 1964, the two mercenary-led 'Lima' columns from the ANC 5e Bde Méc were fighting their way in by road. Here, jeep-mounted commandos are responding to an ambush with .50cal machine guns. (Wikicommons)

BELOW RIGHT As well as eight Belgian armed jeeps, the USAF C-130 Hercules transports landed 12 of these AS-24 'tricycles' to provide light mobility. The right-hand para has an FN MAG machine gun stowed alongside him; for uniform, see Plate D1. (Wikicommons)





Bob Denard (see also Plate C2) as a lieutenant-colonel commanding 6e Cdo, 1967. He returned to Tshombe's service early in 1965 after a spell of soldiering in the Yemen. Unable to recruit enough men for his French '1er Choc' unit, he integrated it into LtCol Roger Lamouline's 6e Cdo, which played a significant role during the 1965 campaigns against the Simbas. In July 1965 he was promoted major by Gen Mobutu; when the latter seized power that November, Denard replaced Lamouline as CO of 6e Cdo, retaining command until July 1967. His attempt in October 1967 to distract the ANC from the siege of Jean Schramme's force at Bukavu, by sending some 400 white and African mercenaries north-east from Luaschi in Angola towards Kolwezi, was a complete failure. During his second Congo tour, Denard took to sporting a maroon beret with the French badge of the former Colonial Paratroopers, to which he was certainly not entitled. Here his gold Commando dagger badge and rank are worn on full shoulderboards rather than slides. (TopFoto)

'Cdo Kansimba') – which was recruited from a different group to the others, and stationed apart from them – remained loyal, as did 7e and 9e Commandos. Under pressure from loyalist units the mutineers tried to withdraw towards Katanga in September, but their retreat was blocked and they surrendered. The units involved in the suppression of the mutiny comprised loyal elements of 5e Grpmt, including 6e Cdo; 1er and 2e Bns Para from Kinshasa, 1er and 3e Bns d'Inf, and 22e Bn Garde. The 2e and 20e Bns d'Inf together with 3e Bn Cdo were active in blocking the mutineers' retreat, while an element of 5e Cdo actually took the surrender.

After the mutiny all the Katangan units other than 7e, 9e and 10e Cdos were disbanded, and 5e Cdo was finally dissolved in April 1967. The 6e Cdo was retained as a strike force in Orientale and Kivu provinces, along with Schramme's 10e Cdo. However, these two units mutinied in June 1967, taking Kisangani (ex-Stanleyville). Denard was wounded and evacuated to Rhodesia, and Schramme was forced to retire to Bukavu in August. While some ANC units (notably the 2e Bn Para) performed well, it still took seven weeks for 15,000 of them to bring the rebels to terms, and at least one ANC battalion reportedly changed sides during the fighting. The 7e and 9e Cdos were meant to have joined the revolt, but ended up helping to besiege their comrades in Bukavu. The 3e Bn Para was also involved, while 1er Bn Para was flown to Katanga to guard against a failed incursion launched by Denard from Angola towards Kolwezi. The ANC's Cuban-flown T-28s attacked Schramme's positions, and on the night of 4 November he led his survivors into Rwandan internment.

Some of the former Katangese gendarmes integrated into the ANC under Tshombe had been transferred into an expanded Katangan Police Force, but after the 1967 mutinies this was purged. The survivors fled to Angola along with a considerable number of Katangan civilians, where they took service with the Portuguese and fought the Mobutu-supported Angolan rebels.² It is not clear what happened to 7e and 9e Cdos, but they were probably broken up.

MOBUTU'S CONGO/ZAÏRE, 1967–96

The ANC's structure seems to have been revised at about this period, producing six military regions each with its own Groupement. In 1967 these were 1er Grpmt (S. Kasai), 2e (Kinshasa), 3e (Kisangani), 4e (Lubumbashi), 5e (Bukavu) and 6e (Mbandaka, Équateur province), with an additional 7e Grpmt in Bas-Congo. The paratroop and commando battalions formed a Brigade 'Kamanyola' in 1967–68; this name commemorated one of the ANC's few successes, when Mobutu rallied troops near Bukavu in 1964. In 1968 this formation became the elite Division des Troupes Aéroportées de Choc (DITRAC).

² See MAA 202, *Modern African Wars (2): Angola and Moçambique 1961–74*

The FAZ in the 1970s

After the collapse of the mercenary mutinies Mobutu ran the country as a personal fief for the next 30 years. In 1972 he changed its name to 'Zaire', and the army became the *Forces Armées Zaïroises* (FAZ). Initially the FAZ were Mobutu's pride and joy, and he does seem to have made serious efforts to improve their efficiency.

In 1970 the ANC's strength was given as 12 infantry, two paratroop and four commando battalions. France began to supply armoured cars, and in 1973 the retitled FAZ had one armoured car battalion (formed 1972), one mechanized, 14 infantry and four 'other' battalions, plus the elite DITRAC of seven paratroop and commando battalions modelled on the Belgian Rég^t Para-Commando. The line units still formed seven Groupements, and total strength was 49,000. The DITRAC was initially trained by Israelis, but they withdrew after 1972 when Mobutu began to follow a more pro-Arab policy, and this may have led to the eventual break-up of the formation. The armour consisted of 60x AML-90 armoured cars, some Ferret scout cars and a number of old M3 half-tracks. More AMLs were acquired over the next three years, and some 60x Type 62 light tanks were obtained from Communist China.

A major reorganization began in July 1973 with the official creation of a new Division 'Kamanyola'. Not composed of paratroopers (as some reports mistakenly stated, in confusion with the precursor of DITRAC), in fact this was to be an infantry division with some mechanized elements, and represented an attempt to create a modern field formation. Mobutu wanted its brigades to act as the nuclei for divisions based in each of three newly created Zones de Défense, which equated to the Force Publique's old Groupement areas. At the time, much was made of the fact that the new division was recruited from relatively well-educated men between 18 and 25 years of age, half of them with secondary schooling. It was trained by North Koreans, who concentrated as much on political as on military education, and also helped to create a corps of political commissars who were attached to all unit HQs to ensure loyalty to the new state. The Div 'Kamanyola' also included a women's unit, and two battalions of pygmies (previously not accepted by the ANC, which retained the old Force Publique minimum height requirement).

Some FAZ troops were deployed in Burundi in 1974, and others in unsuccessful interventions in northern Angola and Cabinda in 1975–76. These latter interventions involved the equivalent of four or five battalions, including armoured cars and elements of the 7e and 14e Para-Cdo Battalions.

In 1975 a planned coup was averted. The plotters were allegedly motivated by ethnic rivalries, so FAZ recruitment from Bandundu, Kasai



Mobutu (in service dress cap) and his staff during the 'Shaba I' campaign, spring 1977. He wears French-pattern camouflage fatigues, the others a variety of outfits. The officer second from left in the front row, wearing plain green, is a Moroccan; in 1977 a small Moroccan paratroop battalion did most of the fighting against the Katangan *Tigres*. The Moroccans were divided into a 30-strong HQ and four *Détachements d'Intervention Rapide* each with a strength of just over 100 men. (Zaire Armed Forces)

and Shaba was banned. Thereafter tribal favouritism and corruption increasingly degraded the army's effectiveness.

'Shaba I', 1977

In March 1977 a force of exiled Katangans tried to retake control of their native province. After fleeing the Congo they had taken service with the new Angolan government, which hated Mobutu because he supported its own UNITA rebels. This conflict has since become known as 'Shaba I', because there was another incursion the following year. The FAZ's official account of this first campaign does provide more detail about the troops involved than is usually available. It is clear that Kinshasa struggled to put together units to confront the invasion, with officers being rounded up and sent to command troops they had never seen before. Weapons also were clearly in short supply, the local troops initially not even possessing mortars. The official account noted sourly that if Mobutu's directives had been implemented promptly the FAZ could have reacted more effectively, and blamed 'intermediate echelons' for the delay.

The only units immediately available were the 2e Bn Para and 3e Bn Cdo, but both at only 35 per cent of their authorized strength. These were reinforced by elements of 12e Bn, and a reconnaissance squadron with 12 armoured cars and APCs. Subsequently the 1er, 2e and 4e Bns of a 'Brigade Spéciale' arrived, followed by 12e Bde's 121e, 122e and 123e Bns, all from the new Div 'Kamanyola'. Other reinforcements included 13e Bn, some paratrooper trainees, a company of pygmies, and, in a rear protection role, some archers from Équateur province who carried poisoned arrows. These were assembled into ad hoc battalions named after their commanders; but French officers had to be brought in to take charge of logistics, and most of the actual fighting was done by a contingent of Moroccan paratroopers. The Angola-based Katangan exiles of the Front Nationale pour la Libération du Congo (FNLC) who launched the first Shaba invasion were organized into five 450-strong battalions. One 'airborne' battalion and two companies remained in Angola for planned deployment later in the campaign. The companies were numbered sequentially from 1e to 14e, with '13e' omitted. By the end of the invasion the invaders' strength had risen to 6,000–7,000 men, and they had 19 companies inside Zaïre.

'Shaba I' was followed by a purge of FAZ officers and men who were deemed to have failed, and the French began to train an entirely new 31e Brigade Parachutiste (311e, 312e & 313e Bns), with French officers in command positions. The term '*groupement*' had clearly been abandoned, and all brigades formed subsequently (e.g. 21e, 41e) were given two-digit numbers with associated battalion numbers.

'Shaba II', 1978

The Katangan former gendarmes launched a second attempt in May 1978, and took Kolwezi, whose population included some 2,300 Europeans. For this operation the FNLC troops were reportedly organized into ten or 11 battalions, with a few armoured cars; their local sympathisers around Kolwezi had also formed a militia equipped with arms smuggled in from Zambia.

At this point the Div 'Kamanyola' had its 11e Bde guarding the Kasai river stretch of the Angolan frontier, its 12e Bde along the border

south-east of that, and its (weakest) 14e Bde at Kolwezi watching the Zambian frontier, which was the sector thought to be the least at risk.

The FAZ's efforts to recover the situation were limited to an attempt to form a brigade made up of 311e Bn Para, 133e Bn, and a unit composed of Military Academy cadets. One company of the 311e that jumped over Kolwezi to relieve the remnants of the garrison there was destroyed. An overland drive succeeded in reaching the airport at Kolwezi, but left the outnumbered force in grave danger itself.

Fortunately for them, the situation was resolved by a Franco-Belgian airborne intervention, Operation 'Léopard'. The French Foreign Legion's 2e REP was dropped and air-landed in two lifts on 19 and 20 May. They captured Kolwezi town (though not before the murder of many Europeans and locals), and patrolled over a 185-mile radius before being withdrawn on 28 May. Troops from Belgium's 1er and 3e Bns Para were also air-landed after Kolwezi had been secured.³

The FAZ in the 1980s

The relative failure of the supposedly elite 'Kamanyola' units during 'Shaba II' led to renewed attempts to produce more effective formations. The Belgians trained a new 21e Bde, and in 1980–81 the Chinese began to train a 41e Bde Commando.

From 1983 the Israelis supplied some arms and training for Mobutu's Garde Présidentielle. This had evolved from the president's personal entourage, to which some 100 commando-trained officers were attached in 1976. In about 1978 these were incorporated into a new Brigade Spéciale Présidentielle (BSP) with one presidential security battalion (immediate security), 1er Bn Para (more extended security), and the Bn de la Garde Républicaine (honour guard). It was the paratroopers who were trained and equipped by the Israelis, who also helped to raise and equip an artillery 'regiment' within the brigade. Its equipment – which included 130mm guns – was far from new, but greatly impressed onlookers when it was paraded.

The BSP replaced the old DITRAC as the elite element; it came to be recruited overwhelmingly from Mobutu's own Ngbandi tribal group, and received the best equipment. In 1986 it was retitled as a division (DSP); it had two brigades (1e Bde with 1er–3e Bns, 2e Bde with 6e–8e Bns), plus an independent 5e Bn, the specialized Bn 'Dragon' whose role was to rescue Mobutu in the event of a coup.

The FAZ's weakness did not stop Mobutu from trying to act as the 'Gendarme of Central Africa'. Troops were deployed in Bokassa's Central African Empire in early 1979, in Tchad in 1981–82 and again in 1983, while some joined a French intervention force in Togo in 1986 after a mercenary attack there. Most were drawn from 31e Bde Para, but those involved in putting down a rebellion in eastern Zaïre in 1984 were helped by the 'naval' 13e Bde, which probably means that since this was based near Lake Tanganyika it had some capacity for waterborne movement.



'Shaba II', May 1978: LtCol Philippe Erulin, CO of the French 2e REP, at Kolwezi following the parachute and airborne insertion of his unit by Zaïrean C-130Hs and French Transalls flying from Kinshasa. The légionnaires wore green fatigues for the jump, subsequently changing into 'all-arms' camouflage uniforms. Another contingent of Moroccans subsequently replaced the French and flown-in Belgian troops, along with a Senegalese battalion, and token contingents from the Central African Republic, Gabon, Ivory Coast and Togo; these did not stay for long. (ECPA)

³ See Elite 6, *French Foreign Legion Paratroops*



Men of the FAZ's French-trained 311e Bataillon Parachutiste; they wear French camouflage fatigues, and carry a mix of weapons – Belgian FN FALs (one with a folding stock) but also US M16A1s. One company of this unit dropped on Kolwezi town on 16 May 1978, but faded into the bush after taking heavy casualties on the DZ. This cheerful group are from another company, which made a successful drop the same day to secure a bridge a few miles outside the town. (EPCA)

these attempts were neutralized by growing corruption and rampant tribalism. Senior appointments increasingly went to members of Mobutu's own tribe, but even they were rotated through their posts rapidly to avoid them gathering loyal personal followings capable of mounting a coup. Mobutu recognized the danger posed by well-armed, well-trained units, and the 'model' ones created in each successive wave of reforms were then allowed to deteriorate.

One such organization was the Service d'Actions et de Renseignements Militaire (SARM), formed in 1986 to provide both military intelligence and internal security. Although staffed by seconded FAZ officers it remained a separate arm, but it included a Régiment d'Action which was given commando training. However, SARM was soon weakened by being 'tribalized' along the same lines as the DSP. Overall, corruption meant that FAZ pay remained poor and unreliable, which reduced most soldiers to licensed brigandage. Payrolls were inflated by 'ghosts', with the result that nobody knew how many soldiers Zaïre really had. Mobutu himself referred to the FAZ as 'The Seventh Scourge', but after his early attempts he did nothing to improve the situation.

In the late 1980s the FAZ still consisted of the Div 'Kamanyola' (11e, 12e and 14e Bdes d'Inf, all operating in West Shaba); 13e Bde d'Inf in East Shaba; 21e Bde d'Inf at Lubumbashi; 31e Bde Para (most at Kinshasa, but one battalion at Kamina); 41e Bde Cdo (four battalions, at Kisangani and in the east); 1e Bde Blindée (armour, based south-west of Kinshasa); and the DSP (in and around Kinshasa). Each infantry brigade had one support and three infantry battalions. The Belgian-trained 1e Bde Blindée had only about 500 men, and provided training and specialists rather than being an operational unit; the same was probably true of a Régiment d'Artillerie mentioned in one account. In fact, in 1989 Mobutu ordered that all heavy equipment should be handed over to the DSP. This was still reported to be trained by the Israelis, and was said to provide Zaïre's 'only operational troops' by then.

The main infantry weapons continued to be the Belgian Vigneron and FN-made Uzi SMGs with the FN FAL rifle, but some AK-47 and Chinese Type 56-1 rifles appeared during the 1970s, along with a number of US M16A1s. During the 1980s, quantities of 5.56mm Galil, FN FNC and SIG-510 rifles appeared alongside the older weapons. The armoured units used Panhard AML-60s and 90s. The operational status of the

(continued on page 33)

INDEPENDENCE & CRISIS, 1960

1: Soldat, Force Publique/Armée
Nationale Congolaise

2: Honour Guard, Gendarmerie

3: Soldat, 1er Rég't de Grenadiers,
Belgian intervention force



UN CONTINGENTS, 1960–64

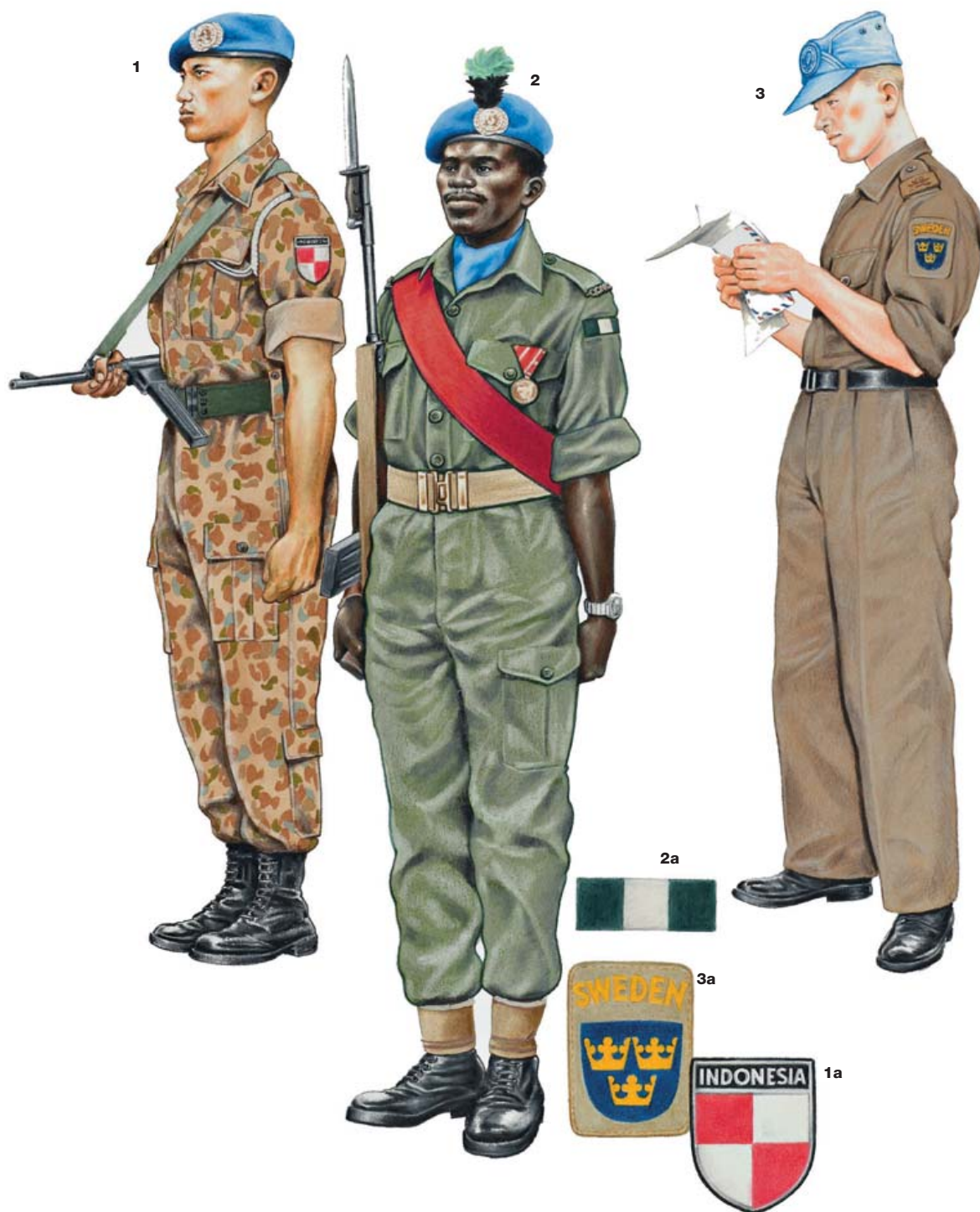
1: Indonesian paratrooper, Batalyon

330 Para-Raider

2: CSM, 5th Bn Queen's Own

Nigerian Rifles

3: Swedish infantryman, off duty



**CONGO'S BREAKWAY
PROVINCES, 1960–63**

**1: Sous-lieutenant, Prévoté
Militaire Katangaise, 1961**

**2: Capt-Cdt Bob Denard, 1er
Commando, 1962**

**3: Secessionist gendarme,
South Kasai, 1960**



THE 1964-65 REBELLION

- 1: Squad leader, Belgian 1er Bn
Para, Régnt Para-Cdo, Stanleyville
2: Adjudant, 5e Commando
3: Officer, Armée Populaire de
Libération, Orientale



**FORCES ARMÉES ZAIREOIS,
1970s–90s**

1: Paratrooper, parade order,
in 'leopard-spot' camouflage

2: General officer

3: *Capitaine* ADC, Commandos,
in 'abacost'



THE LAST DAYS OF MOBUTU

1: Infantryman, *Forces Armées Rwandaises*, 1994

2: *Sergent, Division Spéciale Présidentielle*, c.1990

3: French mercenary, *Groupe Alfa*, Jan 1997



THE GREAT AFRICAN WAR,
1998–2002

1: 'Kadogo' of Kabila's forces

2: Cabo, Angolan Cdo Bde,
guard order

3: Infantryman, *Armée Patriotique
Rwandaise*



THE GREAT AFRICAN WAR,
1998–2002

1: Major, FAC; service dress, 2001

2: WO II, Zimbabwean infantry,
2002

3: Infantryman, Ugandan PDF, 2000



Chinese Type 62 tanks was said to be little more than 20 per cent of the inventory. By the early 1980s the army had also acquired a small number of M113 APCs and some BTR-152s to supplement its 60-odd World War II-vintage M3 half-tracks.

Police units

The Gendarmerie had been merged with the Garde Républicaine in 1972, though reports continued to distinguish between Garde and Gendarmerie units. While there were only four Garde and six Gendarmerie battalions in 1978–79, the total had jumped to 40 by 1984, as security deteriorated and provincial bosses raised what were in reality their own private armies. A new Garde Civil was also formed in 1984; this was to have been trained by West Germans, but Egyptians took over after it was put under one of Mobutu's ethnic compatriots and tribalized in the usual way.

The crisis of the early 1990s

In September 1991 Mobutu's misgovernment led to widespread violence, in which elements of 31e Bde Para were pitted against the DSP; both sides indulged in looting, which spread to other formations, including elements of 41e Bde at Kisangani. The French ambassador was killed, and both France and Belgium flew in troops to protect their citizens and restore order. This task accomplished, the Belgians, French, Israelis and Chinese all withdrew their training teams. This had an adverse effect on the 21e, 31e Para, 41e and Blindée brigades, which until then had retained at least some measure of operational readiness. By then 31e Bde Para had gained the reputation of siding with the demonstrators, earning it the unofficial title of 'the People's Army' – and thus Mobutu's disfavour. Its parachute training was discontinued, partly because of lack of equipment but largely out of fear that its men might drop over the presidential palace in a coup attempt.

THE AFDL REVOLT, 1996–97

The final collapse of Mobutu's regime was precipitated by ethnic war in neighbouring Rwanda. There is no space here to discuss the bitter conflict between that country's majority Hutu people and the minority Tutsi, but matters came to a head in 1994 when the former embarked on a genocidal massacre of the latter. After a few months, the Forces Armées Rwandaises (FAR) were routed by an invading force made up of Tutsi exiles from Uganda, the Armée Patriotique Rwandaise. (Several of the APR's leaders had previously held senior rank in the Ugandan army of Yoweri Museveni.)

This defeat led, in late 1994, to former FAR troops and hundreds of thousands of other Hutu refugees crossing the border into eastern Zaïre, where they clashed with a significant local population of *Banyamulenge* ethnic Tutsis. Foreign unwillingness to send peacekeeping troops limited the international response in Zaïre to a Camp Security Operation to protect refugee camps in January 1995, with three Zaïrean DSP battalions supervised by Dutch police officers. However, other local FAZ sided



Officers of Mobutu's FAZ c.1990. Uniforms of two different camouflage patterns are visible; though both show dark green over red-brown on a sand-khaki base, the more sinuous cloud-like pattern on the right also has small black 'worms'. The officer second from left has a dull red beret, and a large gold star on a crimson shoulder-strap slide. The man in the service dress cap (right) has what appears to be air force-style shoulder ranking: a narrow stripe with a diamond-shaped 'curl' over two wider stripes, all in silver on blue. For cap badge design see Plate E2. The web belts are now of US type. (Private collection)



The Rwandan civil war provided the tinder that set the eastern Congo ablaze. In this posed photograph, Tutsis of the victorious Rwandan APR (left) are shown 'fraternizing' with defeated Hutu troops of the FAR in 1994. The APR men wear plain green or khaki fatigues with green or black berets respectively. The camouflage-clad FAR are Gendarmerie, with maroon berets bearing a similar oversize badge to that of the Army – see Plate F1. (Associated Press)

with the ex-FAR Hutus in launching attacks on the Banyamulenge, who, predictably, fought back.

Remarkably, the FAZ had no overall regional command, and units were simply accumulated in the east on an ad hoc basis: they included 500 men of 3e Bn Para, 150 from 1er Bn Para, 150 more from a 2e Bn (it is unclear whether these were paras or not); a battery of 130mm recoilless rifles; 411e & 413e Bns from 41e Bde; an unidentified battalion near Kalamié, and another at Fizi in Baraka district. There were also some Gendarmerie, Garde Civil and SARM.

In the second half of 1996 Banyamulenge resistance turned into outright rebellion,

which was discreetly aided by the new Rwandan Tutsi government and by Uganda; the former wanted to get at the Hutu '*génocidaires*' and eliminate the threat they posed to Rwanda's own security. The conflict then developed in three distinct stages:

- The first phase, during October–November 1996, began when Banyamulenge launched pre-emptive attacks on FAZ posts. In October some SARM attacked Banyamulenge near Bukavu, but were put to flight. Kinshasa sent a mixed force of DSP and 21e Bde troops with at least two batteries of field artillery, but these apparently resorted to simple pillage. Goma, Uvira and Bukavu all fell to Tutsi rebels supported by Rwandan APR troops.
- Stage two saw the conquest of eastern Zaïre by a newly formed Alliance des Forces Démocratiques pour la Libération du Congo (AFDL), headed by a Katangan named Laurent Kabila. It began in early December 1996 with a thrust northwards, and another westwards towards Kisangani. Bunia, defended by the Garde Civil reinforced by men from 31e Bde Para, was taken easily by a combined force of AFDL, Rwandan APR and Ugandan troops. Kinshasa tried to launch a counter-offensive, but the forces available were uncoordinated. (Reportedly, some troops from Centrafrique, Togo and the Sudan came in to help the FAZ, but if so they were unsuccessful.)

Mobutu's most effective allies were the Rwandan Hutu exiles, and UNITA rebels from Angola who were protecting their bases in Zaïre. Some of the ex-Katangan gendarmes had returned to the Congo and been integrated into the Garde Civil, and Mobutu formed these into a battalion of 500–700 men. He also recruited some white mercenaries, but this 300-strong 'white legion' of Frenchmen, Belgians and Britons only lasted a month or so and had little success. The AFDL moved against Kisangani, which was taken without much trouble on 15 March 1997.

Mobutu responded that month by replacing the first group of white mercenaries with a number of Bosnian Serbs and some Moroccans, though with equal lack of success. The Serbs manned light aircraft and helicopters and fielded a company-sized infantry unit.

- The third phase saw rapid AFDL advances on Lubumbashi, and on Kinshasa itself. More DSP troops were sent to defend Lubumbashi, but the city fell on 9 April 1997 to a mixture of Rwandan APR and *Tigres* –

Katangan exiles who hated Mobutu – who crossed through Zambian territory in order to attack the city from the south. The poorly paid FAZ troops argued that the favoured DSP should do the fighting; many changed sides to Kabila's AFDL, the garrison 21e Bde doing so *en bloc*.

Angola increased its support for the AFDL, and a five-battalion force equipped with armour and (crucially) bridging equipment crossed into Kasai in April. In response, UNITA rebels were flown to Kinshasa, and a composite FAZ-UNITA battalion briefly delayed the AFDL advance on the capital. Mobutu fled the country on 17 May 1997, and Kinshasa fell the following day. The FAZ had lost its operational field artillery early on, and its rocket-launchers remained in store for want of trained crews; almost incredibly, at one point it had only one mortar on the entire Central Front. It managed to get seven Type 62 tanks moving to defend Kinshasa, but these were abandoned without firing a shot.

The AFDL alliance forces

At first the rebel forces amounted to c.2,500 lightly armed fighters, some two-thirds of them being Banyamulenge led by cadres provided by the new Rwandan regime. These were supplemented by hastily raised *'kados'* or child-soldiers, and supported by 4,000 Rwandan APR troops plus some Ugandans.

During the second and third stages the AFDL forces were expanded by some 10,000 ex-FAZ who changed sides after Kabila's initial victories, together with another wave of *kados* from around Lubumbashi. This reduced the Rwandan and Banyamulenge component to about one-third of the AFDL forces. There were also a number of Eritrean, Ethiopian, Somali, Liberian, and even African-American mercenaries (allegedly recruited with US assistance), but the main support came from Angolan and Rwandan regulars, the Ugandans having by now dropped out. A Rwandan '21e Bde' is said to have served in North Kivu, and Rwanda continued to provide two or three light, mobile, battalion-sized units that formed the backbone of the Alliance forces throughout the campaign. The Angolan contribution consisted of well-equipped Katangan exile *Tigres*; two battalions of these were flown to Rwanda in February 1997, and 3,000 more crossed the border into Kasai in April. The Angolans and Rwandans led the final assault on Kisangani using AFVs and artillery. By then the Rwandan-speaking component of the Alliance had fallen to some 10 per cent of the total, though Rwandans still provided the high command.

The AFDL proper are said to have grown from 3,000 to 50,000 during the course of the campaign. Their structure remained that of a guerrilla army, with a hierarchy restricted to *commandants* and *sous-commandants*. They benefited from overrunning stocks of arms and munitions brought out by the fleeing FAR in 1994, as well as weapons sold to them by members of the FAZ themselves.



Two FAZ three-star generals face the media, 1996; at this time Mobutu's forces in the east were collapsing, but these officers seem to be putting on a brave face. The bare-headed officer at left wears a sinuous camouflage pattern in dark green, dark brown and black on a light green base. The general in the centre wears a green beret, and an old Belgian 'jigsaw'-pattern smock like Plate F1. Both have gold-on-red rank slides. The officer in the background between them has a green beret, and a drab green shirt bearing parachute jumpwings and green shoulder-strap slides. (Private collection)

President Laurent Kabila (the portly green-clad figure in the right foreground) taking the salute. Immediately behind him is the Zimbabwean commander-in-chief of his allied contingents, whose 'brushstroke' camouflage contrasts with the outfits of the Congolese officers on the left; see Plate H2. (Zimbabwe Defence Forces)



Kabila's Congo, 1996–97

Once in power, Kabila renamed Zaïre the 'Democratic Republic of Congo'; he reintroduced the 1961 flag, and the army became the *Forces Armées Congolaises* (FAC). Kabila claimed to want a non-tribally-based army, but he actually put his trust in troops recruited from his own region, Katanga ('Shaba' had got its old name back), which included an 8,000-strong Groupe Spécial de Sécurité Présidentielle (GSSP) trained by Tanzanians. These 'Katangais' and the ex-Katangan *Tigres* formed the army's so-called Swahili-speaking wing. Its second wing consisted of the 'Rwandais' (mostly Tutsi Banyamulenge) who had helped to spearhead the AFDL advance. These remained both powerful and influential; in fact, the first chief of staff of the new FAC was a Rwandan.

The Lingala-speaking remainder of the FAC were paid less regularly than the 'Katangais' and 'Rwandais' and suffered from the customary neglect, even though they included the few specialists capable (albeit barely) of operating the heavy equipment that the new regime had inherited. Their units were purged of officers and men from Mobutu's home province of Équateur.

The dominance of the Tutsi Banyamulenge was particularly marked in the two Kivu provinces of eastern Congo. This aroused local fears of the creation of a Tutsi-dominated 'Greater Rwanda', and led to the revival of local anti-Rwandan militias collectively known as *Mayi-Mayi*. The mixture of armed groups in this region was particularly complex, including Ugandan rebels supported by Sudan in the north, Rwandan Hutu refugees still encamped in the centre, and Burundian Hutu rebels further south. Although these groups clashed with the locals, they also formed anti-Banyamulenge alliances with them.

AFRICA'S FIRST CONTINENTAL WAR, 1998–2002

This conflict began with another revolt in the Congo's troubled east. The rebels there were helped by Rwanda and Uganda, while Angola, Namibia and Zimbabwe would come to Kabila's aid. Every party involved looted enthusiastically, massacres were common, and the humanitarian consequences have been appalling. The main phases of this chaotic war can be identified as follows:

- The conflict began shortly after Kabila replaced his Rwandan chief of staff with an ex-Katangan *Tigre* in **July 1998**, and two weeks later ordered all Rwandan troops still in the DRC to leave. On 1–2 August the FAC's largely Banyamulenge 10e Bde in Goma, and 12e Bde in Bukavu, rebelled. Rwandan and Ugandan troops reportedly crossed the frontier to help them the following day. The rebels attacked the FAC's more recently formed and loyal 222e Bde at Bukavu and killed some of its Congolese officers. Some of the 'Rwandais' troops still encamped on the outskirts of Kinshasa also rose in revolt and launched an unsuccessful attack on Kabila's residence.



New recruits for Kabila's FAC being drilled in 1997. They wear maroon berets without badges, camouflage fatigues in US-style woodland pattern and black rubber civilian 'gumboots', and carry old US .30cal M2 carbines. (Associated Press)

- In a daring coup, the rebels commandeered airliners and flew an elite force, including Rwandan and Ugandan regulars, to Kitona near the mouth of the River Congo to threaten Kinshasa from the west. Rapidly reinforced by further flights, they freed former FAZ troops who were being 're-educated' in a local camp. Their force quickly grew to about 2,500 Banyamulenge, Rwandans and Ugandans, 7,000 former FAZ, and 1,500 ex-DSP who had taken refuge in Brazzaville across the river.

- The 6,000 shaky FAC defending Kinshasa were soon reinforced; some 400 Zimbabwean troops flew in on **20 August**, followed by others. Namibia sent arms, followed by troops at the end of the month. On **22 August** an Angolan armoured column crossed the frontier from Cabinda and attacked the rebels from the rear, recapturing Kitona and cutting them off from resupply. Many of those in the pocket were killed, but the Rwandan and Ugandan regulars were able to fly out back to the east.

- The pro-Kabila Angolans, Namibians and Zimbabweans then agreed to a unified command under a Zimbabwean air marshal. They adopted a strategy whereby the Angolans would advance eastwards into a gap between the Zimbabweans in Kinshasa and another Zimbabwean force that was coming by road to Katanga, having obtained permission to cross Zambia.

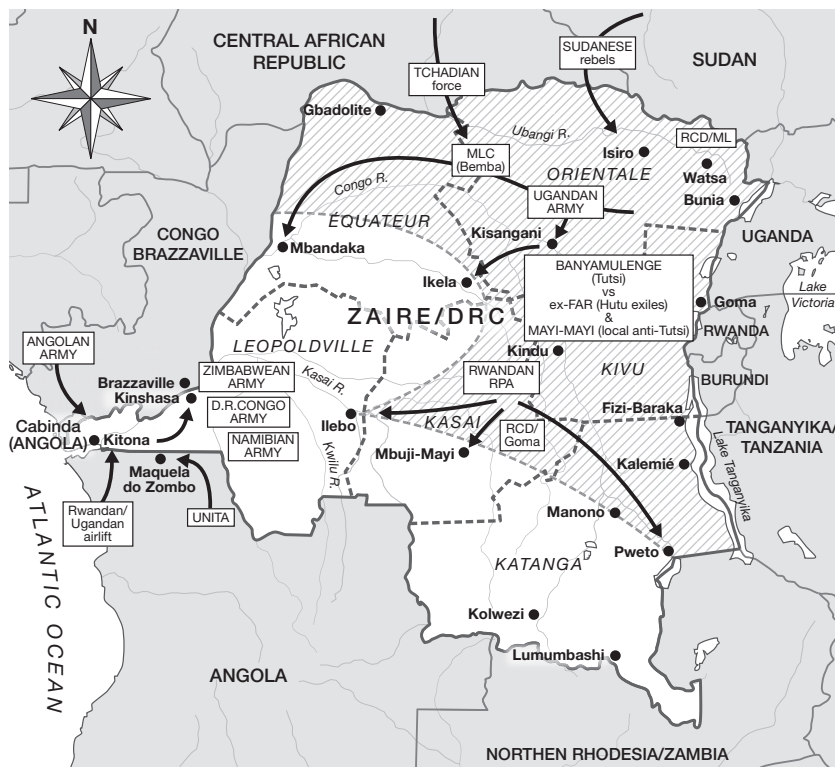
- The war continued to suck in Congo's neighbours. Burundian troops entered DRC territory in pursuit of their own Hutu extremists, and in **September** 8,000 Rwandan Hutu exiles opted to join Kabila, being re-equipped by Zimbabwe. That same month 'Sudanese' troops (actually Ugandan rebels supported by Khartoum) entered northern Congo to fight on Kabila's side.

- The eastern rebels organized themselves as the Goma-based Rassemblement Congolais pour la Démocratie (RCD). Their forces fanned out, and by September they had taken Moba to the south, Manono (south-west), Kisangani (west) and Watsa (north). In **October** Kindu fell, opening the way into Kasai. The defenders there had been 6,000 FAC plus some 'Sudanese': the successful attackers were 9,000 Rwandans and RCD rebels, who in October created a unified command staff. This comprised ten Rwandans, 17 Ugandans and six

Congo during the Continental War, 1998–2002, showing the main armed groups and the approximate areas and directions of their campaigns. The edge of the shaded area indicates the approximate location of the front in 2000, but although the country east of it was theoretically under rebel control a complex struggle continued in the Kivu region just west of the lakes.

Apart from the intervention forces noted, the Congo's other neighbours remained largely neutral. Congo-Brazzaville provided a haven for exiles from Mobutu's DSP, who launched an attack across the river in February 1999. Zambia gave Zimbabwean troops free passage to Katanga. The Tanzanians were said to have 800 troops in Katanga in November 1998, but these do not seem to have taken sides. (Local looting of wealthy mining areas was a leading motivation for many interventions in the DRC.) Despite its rivalry with Uganda, Kenya also remained aloof.

Ten years after the official peace agreement reached in July 2003, and despite the presence of some 19,000 UN 'peacekeepers', at the time of writing the situation in the eastern Congo remains chaotic. (Map by JB Illustrations)



Congolese, and was led by a Ugandan general with a Rwandan colonel as second-in-command. At this point there were nine Rwandan battalions in the field, and seven Ugandan (one armoured).

- In **November** a new Uganda-backed rebel Mouvement de Libération du Congo (MLC) appeared, and drove north-west into Équateur. Its leader, Jean-Pierre Bemba, was a native of that province who attracted genuine popular support, recruiting many ex-FAZ soldiers. In response, some 2,000 Tchadian troops were flown into Équateur on Libyan aircraft to try to stop the MLC advance.
- Meanwhile, the loss of Kindu had provoked a reaction from Kinshasa. Some 7,000 more FAC and 2,000 Zimbabweans were sent to reinforce the 3,000-strong FAC garrison at Mbuji-Mayi, the key to Kasai's mineral wealth. Its ex-FAZ members were withdrawn as unreliable, after which FAC resistance became more stubborn. In **December 1998** Zimbabwean troops advancing from North Katanga retook Moba, but rebel RCD and Burundian troops took it back two days later, and then pushed on south to Pweto.
- In **January 1999** the rebels renewed their offensive along three axes: southwards towards Katanga, westwards towards Mbuji-Mayi, and north-westwards towards Mbandaka. The Zimbabweans poured reinforcements into Mbuji-Mayi; there were major battles near the town between **March and May 1999**, which prevented a rebel encirclement. This rebel offensive into Kasai was supported by two UNITA battalions attacking from the west; these captured Maquelo do Zombo in March, though it was retaken a month later by Angolan government troops operating from within the Congo. The rebels also tried to capture Ilebo, which would have isolated Kasai, and they made further progress in North Katanga. Meanwhile, Bemba's MLC continued to advance in the north.

- A further complication now occurred. In May the RCD split into two: a pro-Rwanda wing remained in Goma, while its former leader opted for Ugandan protection in Kisangani, and formed the RCD-Mouvement de Libération (RCD-ML). This agreed to cooperate with Bemba's MLC. Moreover, there was growing popular resistance to the RCD-Goma regime in Kivu, led by local Mayi-Mayi and refugee Rwandan Hutus, both of whom feared Tutsi domination.

- Nevertheless, the rebels resumed their attempts to capture Mbuji-Mayi in **July**. The Rwandans sent 10,000 reinforcements, but their advance remained blocked for the rest of the year. In the north, Bemba's MLC recruited more ex-DSP exiles from Congo-Brazzaville, and was aided by 12,000 Ugandans and some UNITA. They managed to cut off 2,000 Zimbabweans at Ikela, who were finally freed after direct negotiations between Uganda and Zimbabwe. In another instance of dissension, Ugandan and Rwandan troops came to blows in Kisangani in **August 1999**; the Rwandans had the better of it, but there would be another clash in May 2000.

- In **January 2000** the FAC, Namibians and Zimbabweans counter-attacked to retake Ikela; 700 more of them were cut off by the rebels, but this encirclement was broken in **February**. Meanwhile, the rebels persisted at Mbuji-Mayi and Ilebo, but without success. Further north, Bemba's MLC continued to make progress towards Mbandaka. Some 300 North Koreans had arrived in **June** to train the FAC.

- In **October 2000** Kabila's forces launched a drive northwards from Katanga. This made some progress up the shores of Lake Tanganyika, but then RCD-Goma forces counter-attacked and retook Pweto in **November**. Pweto changed hands twice more: in **December** there were reports that 2,000 Angolans, 600 Zimbabweans and 3,000 FAC were involved, against a garrison of six RCD-Goma battalions with two Rwandan brigades in reserve.

- By the end of 2000 the fighting had settled down into old-fashioned trench warfare on the critical fronts, with the rebels unable to make any further progress, but capable of stopping any FAC counter-offensive.

Diplomatic efforts to end the conflict had been under way since it started. A ceasefire was agreed in November 1998, another in April 1999, and a third at Lusaka in July 1999, but none of these were honoured. In August 1999 the UN agreed to send a military mission (MONUC), but its deployment was blocked by Kabila.

The stalemate was finally ended in **January 2001** when Laurent Kabila was assassinated. His son Joseph took over, and proved to be less intransigent; he accepted the UN mediators' terms, and a ceasefire came into force. In **February 2001** Rwandan troops began to evacuate Pweto, and the Ugandans started to leave the north. Negotiations continued, and in mid-2002 agreement was reached whereby all the other countries involved undertook to withdraw their contingents. The war officially came to an end in **July 2003**.

FAC strength and command

At the start of the conflict the FAC was variously reported to number from 30,000 to 140,000 men (though the latter figure was almost certainly inspired by Kabila's optimistic announcement that he 'planned to create' an army of that size, and was far from representing the reality). More

immediately, Kabila tried to recruit a People's Militia of some 15,000 as a response to the crisis. His army was described as being a heterogeneous mixture of former FAZ whose loyalty and efficiency were questionable, child-soldiers, and Mayi-Mayi tribal militia. It had little or no *esprit de corps* and put up little resistance to the rebels during the early stages, apart from the Tanzanian-trained GSSP and other Katangan units. However, the fighting is said to have included some tank and artillery duels, suggesting that some of the old ex-FAZ tankers and gunners may have been involved.

According to one authority the FAC had some 60,000 troops by early 2000, though others state that even in early 2001 it numbered 55,000 at most. Recruits were trained by Chinese and Libyan instructors as well as by Kabila's Angolan, Zimbabwean and Namibian allies. North Koreans trained the re-formed and supposedly elite river-mobile 10e Bde, and possibly others.

During the conflict Kabila seems to have made sporadic attempts to impose a coherent structure on the FAC. In September 1999 he instituted eight military regions (No 1 Kivu, No 2 Orientale, No 3 Maniema & E. Kasai, No 4 Katanga, No 5 Équateur, No 6 W. Kasai & Bandundu, No 7 Kinshasa, and No 8 Bas-Congo). The rank structure also became more conventional. The report on the capture of Kitona mentioned above makes it clear that the FAC's officers were then still designated as *commandants 'de bataillon'* or *'de compagnie'*, which confirms that it remained a guerrilla army with a relatively simple hierarchy. However, Kabila replaced this with a regular rank structure in May 1999.

FAC units

Only partial information on the organization during this period can be gleaned from the available accounts. One report on the 1998 rebellion in the east describes how Bukavu became the seat of a new 222e Bde after 1996. Initially there was only one battalion there, but Kinshasa sent two more (Bns 'Zoulou' and 'Nkourouma'), composed of Rwandans or Banyamulenge. Further 'anarchic' recruitment led to the raising of several more units from non-Tutsi Congolese. The 222e Bde ended up with 12 units: the 1er Bn de Bukavu (possibly the original unit); Bns 'Zoulou' and 'Nkourouma'; 1er Bns de Walungu, Kavumo and Uvira (the latter also called 'Yankee'); Bns de Baraka, Bagira and Nyangezi; 1er Bn de Police Militaire, and two unidentified former FAZ battalions. These were then retitled according to their stations within the brigade's four Operational Zones (OZs), as follows:

OZ Bukavu: Bns Police Militaire, de Bagira, de Nyangezi

OZ Kavumo: Bns de Kavumo, de Bunyakiri, de Nyabibwe

OZ Walungu: Bns de Walungu, de Kamitungu

OZ Uvira: Bns de Uvira, de Baraka, de Lulimba, de Mboko

Also: Bn d'Artillerie (2x 37mm AA and 1x 85mm Chinese guns); Bn de Génie; and two small naval detachments, one each on Lake Kivu and Lake Tanganyika.

Two more battalions of 700 men each were subsequently formed, and commanded by a mixture of Rwandans and Congolese. The report alleges that the units were deliberately dispersed and left without arms so as to facilitate the Rwandan intervention.

Taken in 2001, this photo shows how variously the Congolese government's soldiers were clad, though they had standardized on Soviet-bloc small arms, RPGs and mortars. The bareheaded man at left, with a PK light machine gun, wears woodland-pattern camouflage. The right-hand man, carrying a folding-stock AK with a drum magazine on an improvised blue rope sling, wears plain khaki drab, with a beret of almost the same shade. Both wear anklets made from camouflage fabric over their high combat boots. The man obscured in the background wears khakis and a red beret. (Wikicommons)



An account of efforts to defend Kindu during the early stages of the war tells us that the initial garrison was the recently formed 315e Brigade. One of its units was the Bn 'Kilo', which was composed of Katangans; this foiled an attempt by the brigade's Rwandan commander to subvert the formation, and he and the other Tutsi Rwandans fled. In August 2,000 FAC troops arrived from Kamina, followed by a few 'Stalin organs', cannons of all types and some armoured cars.

In mid-September, 3,000 Gardes Présidentielle arrived in Kindu from Kinshasa, half of them former child-soldiers and the rest ex-FAZ commandos chosen for the assignment because they knew Swahili. However, this contingent announced that they had no confidence in the Kindu high command, hijacked a train, and left for Katanga. A contingent of 300 Ugandan rebels led by a son of Idi Amin had already arrived in early September, and was followed by a 'Sudanese battalion' which was charged with guarding the airport. There was also 'a battalion of heavy artillery' and a company of former Gardes Civils. The garrison's best troops, however, were a contingent of former FAZ paratroopers; Kabila had dispersed these throughout the FAC, but then hurriedly reassembled them and sent them to Kindu.

Although some outside accounts speak of 'divisions', the highest formation mentioned in any of these semi-official reports was the brigade. Those noted were the 10e, 14e, 22e, 50e, 93e, 222e, 223e, 225e, 315e, 511e and 512e, though there were undoubtedly others. Their constituent battalions bore a variety of designations. One report on the rebel capture of Kitona indicates that the initial garrison consisted of Bn 'Zoulou', which was then reinforced by Bn 'Alpha'; a later report on disturbances in Katanga in November 2002 identified the 93e Bde's Bns 'Requin' ('Shark') and 'Chaméléon'. Taken together, this suggests that the FAC was organized into somewhat arbitrarily numbered brigades, many consisting of named rather than numbered battalions.

Kabila's allies

The exiled **Rwandan Hutus** formed the Forces Démocratiques de Libération du Rwanda (FDLR). In late 1998 they amounted to one brigade split between Kamina and Lubumbashi (Katanga), another at Mbuji-Mayi (E. Kasai), and two battalions in Équateur province. In September 2000 they became the Armée de Libération du Rwanda (ALIR). In 2001 this was reported to consist of two 'divisions', the first with 8,000–9,000 men based in N. Kivu, the second with 7,000 in S. Kivu. To judge from their insignia, these appear to have been integrated into the FAC.

There were said to be 4,000 **Angolans** in the DRC in November 1998, and 6,000 in February 1999. They were well equipped, with armour and artillery. However, their commitment to the Congo allowed their own rebel movement UNITA to launch an offensive at home; many troops were withdrawn to counter this, and much of Angola's later support for Kabila seems to have consisted of tactical air strikes. There were between 2,000 and 5,000 Angolans present in January 2001, but by 2002 they had been reduced to a token force.

The initial contingent from **Zimbabwe** was made up of paratroopers and commandos, reportedly numbering some 600–1,000. By August 1998



Dramatically posed photo showing the Namibian Army's field dress when it sent a battalion group to the Congo. The beret remained in the dusty 'South-West Africa green' shade of the Border War era, but now bore a new infantry badge of crossed bayonets on an open-topped oakleaf wreath, all in oxidized silver. The camouflage pattern was a national design of horizontal dark green, light green and mid-brown streaks on a sand-khaki base; this soldier displays a national flag patch at the left shoulder. Note the camouflage-painted web equipment. (Zimbabwe Defence Forces)

The Continental War was extremely costly not just in civilian lives, but also in financial terms. It saw the use of relatively sophisticated AA and AT missiles and heavy weaponry, mostly purchased from either Ukraine or China. The Angolans and Zimbabweans on one side and the Rwandans and Ugandans on the other all used armour and artillery, including T-55 tanks and 122mm guns, and both sides acquired tank transporters to move their AFVs. The Angolans and Zimbabweans made particularly effective use of air power, stopping the RCD/Rwandan offensives towards Mbuji-Mayi with repeated strikes using BAE Hawks, MiG-23 and Sukhoi fighter-bombers and Mi-25 attack helicopters. The rebel coalition also employed Soviet-bloc aircraft, but there seem to be fewer references to their playing a decisive role.

two more battalions had arrived, apparently from Zimbabwe's 5th Bde; they were accompanied by some tanks, and 'Cascavel' armoured cars flown to Kinshasa in Angolan planes. Further troops were sent by road across Zambia to Katanga. The contingent grew to 3,800 by November 1998, and numbered perhaps as many as 12,000 in January 2001, but it was thinned out during 2002 and withdrawn completely towards the end of that year. Before the conflict, Zimbabwe had built up a brigade-size all-arms combat force with air support and operational experience, but deployment in the Congo is said to have damaged this capability.

The **Namibian** contingent numbered 1,000 in February 1999 and 2,000 in mid-1999. Given the size of the Namibian army, a battalion plus staff and logistic units appears most likely. The Namibians withdrew in 2001.

Two battalions of **Tchadian** troops tried to stop the MLC in the north in November 1998. Skilled desert warriors, they had no experience in forest fighting, and after taking heavy losses they were withdrawn in May 1999.

Up to 2,000 '**Sudanese**' troops were said to have entered northern Congo to fight for Kabila in September 1998, but both governments denied that regulars were involved. They seem to have been either Ugandan rebels, or ex-FAZ soldiers who had been integrated into the Sudanese army after 1997, but the truth remains unclear.

Initially **Centrafrique** helped Kabila, allowing the FAC and the Tchadians free passage. Some of its para-commandos were meant to mount a counter-offensive against the MLC, but they do not seem to have done so, and Centrafrique later developed close ties with Bemba.

Rebel forces and allies

The UN estimated that the Rwandan-orientated **RCD-Goma** had 20,000 troops in April 2000. It has been credited with 12 infantry brigades, but otherwise little has emerged regarding its organization. One report referred to a '6e Bde' based in Bukavu; another in 2003 alleged that this had Rwandan cadres, but many Congolese mistook Tutsi Banyamulenge for Rwandans. A 2003 UN report stated that some 350 foreigners (Burundians, Rwandan Hutus, Sudanese and Ugandans) who had been part of an 'RCD-Goma foreign legion' were being demobilized at Kitona. There appears to be no detailed information on the forces of the breakaway **RCD-ML**; the UN's April 2000 report gave it only 3,000 troops.

The same UN estimate gave the Ugandan-orientated **MLC** 10,000 men, scaled down in January 2001 to 6,000–9,000; it has been credited with five infantry brigades. Unusually, its leader Bemba has given a reasonably detailed account of the development of his force. By May 1999 it had some eight battalions; of these the 1er and 2e were composed of ex-FAZ and FAC personnel, while the 3e, 4e and others were made up of new recruits. Most were numbered sequentially, but one was known as the Bn 'Simba' instead (it may have been formed by duplicating 4e Bn). We know that three of the brigades were designated 'A', 'B' and 'C'. They were essentially light infantry, but were supported by the heavier weapons of their Ugandan allies, which included both artillery and armour. They themselves acquired 82mm mortars and 75mm and 107mm guns as the conflict progressed. By early 2001 the MLC's strength had risen to 23 battalions, and this number appears to have gone on increasing, because Bemba states that in May of that year its 28e Bn crossed the Ubangi river to help President Patassé of Centrafrique defeat an attempted coup.

The MLC recruited many former FAZ men, notably ex-DSP who had taken refuge in the Central African Republic and Congo-Brazzaville. Its best-known battle was the rout of a waterborne attack launched by Kinshasa in July 2000 up the Ubangi river, with six converted civilian vessels mounted with guns and manned by the FAC's North Korean-trained 10e Bde. These were ambushed by an MLC force including elements of its 3e, 8e and 14e Bns, supported by the tanks and guns of a reinforced Ugandan battalion, and four of the six river craft were destroyed.

The situation within the rebel-held areas was complicated by the existence of **local militias** with their own agendas. In 1993 the Congolese Hutus in N. Kivu had formed one known as the *Combatantes* to oppose the local Banyamulenge, whose numbers were being swollen with Tutsi refugees from Rwanda. The Congolese Hutus made common cause with the Rwandan Hutu exiles after 1994 to fight the Mayi-Mayi, a non-Hutu local defence militia dating back to the 1960s. They then fought against the RCD-Goma, but were subsequently largely integrated into the latter's army, apart from a small group of irreconcilables known as the *Mongols*. Similar tribal militias surfaced in other regions whenever central control weakened.

The **Rwandan** Tutsis acknowledged that 200 of their APR troops were involved soon after the revolt began, but there were certainly many more. There were something like a dozen battalions within DRC territory soon after the revolt started, and the Rwandan expeditionary force was estimated at 17,000–25,000 strong in January 2001. The Rwandans officially withdrew in September 2002, though some elements allegedly remained behind to stiffen the RCD-Goma's forces.

The **Ugandan** troops used in the daring strike at Kitona in August 1998 were said to have been drawn from the elite 23rd and 31st Bns, which had received US training. Other Ugandan battalions mentioned included the 3rd, 5th, 7th, 19th and 71st. The total strength was estimated at 10,000–15,000 in January 2001. The Ugandans reportedly planned to use three brigades (the 325th, 327th and 329th) to support the MLC's drive on Mbandaka; clearly, they had committed substantial forces to the conflict. **Burundi** played little part in the war, but its troops did attack Burundian Hutu exiles in eastern Congo, and helped the RCD advance southwards. They numbered c.1,000 in January 2001, though later UN reports put them at five battalions.

PLATE

COMMENTARIES

A: INDEPENDENCE & CRISIS, 1960

A1: Soldat, Force Publique/Armée Nationale Congolaise

The *Force Publique*'s M1955 *tenue de combat* jacket had a collarless neck with only the top brass button showing above a fly front, and shirt-type cuffs; the matching trousers had a large patch pocket on the outside of the left thigh. (This jacket was soon replaced by a shirt.) The headgear was

a khaki-brown beret or a plastic helmet-liner copying the US M1. The Belgian webbing equipment, including anklets, was copied from British 1937 Pattern, here worn with the 'small pack' on the left hip. The FN FAL rifle started to replace the Belgian M1952 bolt-action Mauser in about 1957, but the latter was still carried by units in the Gendarmerie role.

A2: Honour Guard, Gendarmerie

New states often feel the need to create a colourful ceremonial unit to embody the idea of national sovereignty. This costume appeared in the early 1960s; the light blue, red and gold came from the 1963 version of the national flag, but the original cream-coloured fez was soon replaced by this

white *képi* with a crimson feather plume on the left side. The trefoil shoulder cords were interwoven gold and crimson, and the two gold-on-crimson cuff chevrons and crimson aiguillettes were worn by all enlisted ranks. Although unclear, one source seems to show the waist sash with the central part of its depth striped vertically white and crimson. Some examples of this Belgian M1949 SAFN semi-automatic rifle began to be issued in 1957.

A3: Soldat, 1er Régiment de Grenadiers, Belgian intervention force

The contemporary Belgian tropical uniform was a light khaki shirt and slacks. Officers also had a pale fawn 'palmbeach' (*sic*) service uniform, or a slightly different one of British pattern. In field order a drab olive fly-fronted bush jacket was worn with battledress-style trousers and short wrap-around puttees. The stitched-fabric bush hat resembled the M1949 French pattern; it bears here the brass grenade of the parent regiment. The berets worn by the '*marche*' companies included infantry khaki-brown, Chasseur d'Ardennais dark green and artillery dark blue, all with regimental badges. He carries the Belgian FN FAL rifle, but his minimal web equipment – a 37 Pattern belt and braces with brace-attachments – suggests local duty close to camp.

B: UN CONTINGENTS, 1960–64

B1: Indonesian paratrooper, Batalyon 330 Para-Raider

UN contingents arrived in their own service dress but were quickly issued with UN-blue M1 helmet-liners, and blue berets and peaked field caps with the UN's white-and-bronze badge. They also received three sets of Japanese-made green cotton shirts and trousers, but some retained their own issue clothing.

Swedish UN troops patrolling near Léopoldville, 1960; compare with Plate B3. They seem to wear a mixture of UN green fatigues and their own fawn M61 tropical uniforms – note the shoulder-strap insignia. They have donned M1 steel helmets over the flimsier liners, and note the large pouches of their Swedish belt equipment. (UN Photo)



On all types, the circular white-on-light-blue UN patch was worn on the right shoulder. The Indonesian 'Garuda II' contingent came from this elite battalion, which had adopted the 'duckhunter'-style camouflage fatigues worn earlier by the Dutch *Speciale Troepen*. These were originally American war surplus, but copies of the green-sided version were manufactured in Java from c.1948 onwards. This one-piece overall seems to have been standard, but a two-piece version was also worn; the green shades faded quickly in use. The national patch on the left shoulder (**detail B1a**) may be an early pattern, replaced later with a yellow-on-green 'Garuda bird' design. This 'Yon 330' trooper has exchanged his green Raider beret for UN blue; he wears a US web pistol belt, and carries the Beretta M1938/49 Star sub-machine gun in 9mm Parabellum.

B2: Company Sergeant Major, 5th Battalion Queen's Own Nigerian Rifles

The Nigerians arrived in their own khaki flannel shirts and khaki drill battledress trousers, but quickly adopted the UN's green fatigues worn with their own boots and short wrap-around puttees. They initially displayed a brass 'NIGERIA' title above the right breast pocket in addition to the 'QONR' shoulderstrap title, but later replaced the former with a green-white-green flash on the left shoulder (**detail B2a**). The shade of the UN blue beret varies in colour photographs, and is sometimes quite pale; a blue hackle appears in one reconstruction, but the author saw Nigerian UN troops at the time and can confirm the green-over-black QONR pattern. This warrant officer 2nd class wears his British-style brass wreathed crown rank insignia on a right wristlet, and the scarlet sash of his appointment as CSM; he was photographed in Elizabethville in 1962 being decorated by the Austrian consul with that nation's Medal of Merit. The rifle is the British L1A1, carried with bayonet fixed for this parade.

B3: Swedish infantryman, off duty

In addition to the UN green fatigues the Swedes were also issued an early version of their own *Tropikuniform m/61*, and most wore these fawn shirts and slacks for preference. The shirt bore a national patch (**detail B3a**) on the left upper sleeve. Privates wore on the shoulder straps a small gold badge of the Swedish crown above crossed swords, and other ranks their appropriate rank insignia.

C: CONGO'S BREAKWAY PROVINCES, 1960–63

C1: Sous-lieutenant, Prévôté Militaire Katangaïse, 1961

Formed from Military Police of the old *Force Publique* with Belgian officers, this company launched early road-opening and rescue columns from Elizabethville in October 1960. In January–February 1961 the survivors spearheaded the successful Operation 'Banquise' from Lubudi to Bukama, with Groupes Mobiles C and D. Some of the cadre sported a black satin neckerchief with a crimson hand motif. The bush hat bears the enamelled brass badge of the *Gendarmerie Katangaïse*. This Belgian copy of the

British Denison smock is in 'brushstroke' camouflage; note the white-on-black framed 'KATANGA' shoulder-sleeve titles. The officer's PM shoulder-strap slides are red, with a brass grenade on a white disc, and display the single copper 'Katanga cross' of his rank (see detail C1a). The drab green trousers have patch pockets outside both thighs; the boots, web anklets and belt are British style, but the pistol holster is Belgian. The helmet liner is painted with the PM's red identifying stripe.

C1b: Shoulder-strap slide of *Gendarmerie Katangaise*.

The printed insignia shows the central motif of C1's hat badge; this is from an actual example, but photos also show the white backing cut shield-shaped.

C2: Capitaine-Commandant Bob Denard, 1er Commando, 1962

'Bob Denard', born Gilbert Bourgeaud (1929–2007), was a former French Navy petty officer who had served in Indochina (1948–50), and in the French colonial police in Morocco (1953–56) and Algeria (1956–58). Arriving in Katanga in December 1961, he led a mortar platoon; promoted captain, in 1962 he commanded the mixed mercenary/Katangan 1er Cdo (aka 1er Bn Para-Cdo) based at Kabondo-Dianda. In January 1963 Denard and his men withdrew from Kolwezi into Angola. This image, from a photo taken at the Kipushi training camp, shows Denard wearing the French airborne-issue camouflage 'Bigeard cap' and jump-trousers with a dark khaki shirt. The lanyard of his holstered pistol is whitened, and the *Gendarmerie Katangaise* cap badge is pinned to the flap of the Belgian holster, worn with a British-style belt and pouch. The green shoulder slides show the Belgian rank insignia of 'first captain' (three gold stars in a triangle over a 30mm bar), and the shoulder title appears to have a red 'frame' and lettering '1 COMMANDO' on green. The use of the diamond-shaped French left sleeve *ecusson*, in black with double red edging and a two-digit gold unit number, is unexplained; three other mercenaries in the photo wear the same.

C3: Secessionist gendarme, South Kasai, 1960

Little is known about the dress of this short-lived force except that it wore khaki-drill clothing and (reportedly) green berets, with web equipment of British 37 Pattern. However, some are known to have been given British M1915 steel helmets acquired by the *Force Publique* during World War II. No insignia are known other than a large 'V' from the state flag, painted on the helmet front in yellow; one English volunteer says he bought an ex-Belgian bush jacket and sewed on a small red 'V', but does not say where. The weapon is the Belgian M1924/30 Mauser carbine.

D: THE 1964–65 REBELLION

D1: Squad leader, Belgian 1er Bataillon Parachutiste, Régiment Para-Commando, Stanleyville

Belgian para-commandos continued to wear tropicalized Denison combat smocks in several different camouflage patterns, including the 'brushed' one shown here, and an early version of the 1968 'jigsaw' design with fine white dividing



Oriental rebels posing in Stanleyville, 1964. They have whitened belts, and on their khaki shirtsleeve uniforms they wear the red shoulder-strap slide of the *Prevoté Militaire* with a red grenade on a white disc; this suggests that they may be from the 3e Grpmt MP company. Two wear the ANC general-issue khaki-brown wool beret, and the weapons appear to be Belgian M1924/30 Mauser carbines. (J.P. Sonck Collection)

lines (see F1). Paratroopers had maroon berets and this 'SAS'-style badge, commandos green ones with an upright dagger-between-scrolls device. Web equipment was normally of British 37 Pattern, but note here the pair of added Belgian-made magazine pouches for this junior leader's Vigneron M2 sub-machine gun. The trousers are confined by short wrap-around puttees, and the pack is the French airborne troops' 'TAPsac'.

D2: Adjudant, 5e Commando

The mercenary units were supposed to wear standard ANC uniforms with commando-green berets and shoulder-strap slides. The 5e Cdo's CO Mike Hoare insisted on 'a decent soldierly appearance', but the French mercenaries serving with 6e Cdo had a more relaxed approach, mostly wearing French 'lizard' camouflage uniforms complete with the 'Bigeard cap'. Many photos show 5e Cdo in khaki shirts and Belgian drab green 'battledress' trousers, with British-style webbing; in the field they wore complete green fatigues and M1 helmets. The Katangan units of 5e Bde Méc had French camouflage combat dress with scarves in various colours, notably red and yellow; Hoare and his senior subordinates wore a black scarf. Badges and Belgian-style ranking were worn in gold by officers but in silver by warrant officers, as here. The ANC's cap badge, shaped like an African shield, bore a five-point star above a leopard mask within a wreath of small leaves. The *adjudant's* short bar and six-point star are pinned to the shoulder-strap slides outside the commando



Major Mahele, who commanded the FAZ 311e Bn Para in the 'Shaba II' fighting outside Kolwezi in May 1978. His narrow-brimmed bush hat is in a 'duckhunter' camouflage pattern, but his fatigues are the French all-arms type in 'lizard' pattern. Note the belt made from paracord and a carabineer. (ECPA)

dagger badge (**detail D2a**); some photos also show a unit shoulder title like that in C2. The unit used the usual Belgian small arms, but one photo shows two British mercenaries with new West German Walther MP-L sub-machine guns.

D3: Officer, *Armée Populaire de Libération*, Orientale province

'Regulars' of the APL were supposed to wear uniform, and an edict tried to reserve local supplies of khaki cloth for them. Their commander Gen Olenga retained his ANC cap badge, but the official APL device was an arrow crossed with a knobkerrie below a horizontal machete. Most officers added fur trimming of some kind to their headgear; one even wore a red star badge on his cap, as here, but nothing is known of any other special insignia (the APL was sponsored by Communist China, which at that period forbade distinctions of rank). This officer is giving the APL's official salute.

E: FORCES ARMÉES ZAIREOIS, 1970s-90s

E1: Paratrooper, parade order, in 'leopard-spot' camouflage dress

This distinctive pattern dates from about 1973; it was issued first to paratroopers, and then to members of the Division

'Kamanyola'. It has open spots of dark green on a base partly of light green, partly of tan-brown in broad vertical patches. Note here the odd appearance of the folded bush hat in matching pattern. Said to have been Belgian-made, this camouflage appealed to Mobutu, who liked to style himself 'the Leopard' and habitually wore a leopard-fur cap. It never became universal, and subsequently tended to be worn side by side with other patterns, including versions of the French 'lizard'. This parading paratrooper wears the FAZ parachute wings on his right chest (**detail E2a**); some photos show officers wearing an embroidered version on service dress. The yellow shoulder-strap loops may identify a sub-unit; there is also a simple white lanyard from his left shoulder into the left pocket. His white accessories, gauntlets, belt, and strapped web anklets, and the elaborate crimson aiguillette with 'flounder' tassels carried across to his right shoulder, show continuing Belgian influence. The weapon is the ubiquitous AK-47.

E2: General officer

FAZ officers could wear 'dress blues' as well as the *abacost* (see E3), but also new camouflaged fatigues commonly in a 'brushed' pattern, like this three-star general (who has also acquired French 'ranger' boots). The red cap band and shoulder-strap slides, and the lavish gold embroidery on the black cap peak (visor), are marks of general rank. The same is probably true of the gilt plate, apparently with the national cockade device, on the US-style web belt. The original ANC cockade worn on the crown of the officers' service cap had been a blue disc with a gold five-point star and outer ring. Mobutu introduced a new Zairean national flag: green, with a yellow central disc bearing a black arm and hand holding a brown burning torch with red flames, and the FAZ cockade likewise changed to show this motif. The background to the main cap badge became green, with a gold-embroidered leopard's face between an upright leafy branch and an elephant tusk, above a scroll.

E3: *Capitaine aide-de-camp*, Commandos, in 'abacost'

This open-necked jacket appeared c.1972; inspired by the smart 'Mao' jackets affected by senior Communist Chinese officials, it took its name from Mobutu's anti-colonialist cry of '*à bas le costume*' – 'Away with the suit!' It could have short or long sleeves, and was worn with a branch-colour cravat, and collar patches with branch devices. Only officers had this order of dress, because in 1972 Mobutu decreed that the troops should wear combat dress only (almost certainly as an economy measure). Note the three rectangular copper stylized 'leaves' of this rank on his shoulder straps; branch collar patches; and what is presumably a unit or organization patch on his right upper sleeve (**detail E3a**). These are all from colour photos of an actual *abacost*, but the details of the beret badge are speculative. The very long aiguillette is from a photo of a general's staff, so for this rank it presumably indicates an ADC.

F: THE LAST DAYS OF MOBUTU

F1: Infantryman, *Forces Armées Rwandaises*, 1994

This Hutu soldier of the FAR is about to surrender his weapon at the Zaire border to marine paras of a French peace-keeping force in Rwanda. In addition to the FN FAL, the FAR also received many AKs after 1990. The pre-1994 FAR wore green short-sleeved bush shirts or Belgian camouflage smocks, with olive-green trousers with two thigh pockets, and high

black combat boots. Various camouflage patterns were seen; here we choose to show the old Belgian 'jigsaw' design. The *Garde Nationale* (Army) wore black berets and used bright blue distinctions, e.g. shoulder-strap slides for Belgian-style ranking; the *Gendarmerie* had maroon berets and distinctions. Both sported an elaborate national beret badge so large that it commonly hung down over the wearer's left eye, in blue (detail F1a) or maroon respectively.

F2: Sergeant, Division Spéciale Présidentielle, c.1990

The FAZ wore a mixture of olive-green fatigues and a variety of camouflage patterns, often side by side within the same unit; NCO rank was indicated by stripes on chest-patches. The DSP troopers who formed Mobutu's praetorian guard remained smartly uniformed, mostly in sharply tailored variants of woodland-style camouflage fatigues, with green berets; note too the russet-brown jumpboots. Many of the DSP's paratroop element, trained by Israeli instructors, seem to have used silver IDF jumpwings as a beret badge. The elite DSP mostly carried US-supplied M16s or South African SAR rifles, but photos also show Uzi SMGs, in this case with an L-clamp for 'duplex' magazines.

F3: French mercenary, Groupe Alfa, January 1997

The first members of Mobutu's 'white legion' to arrive were French, with a few Belgians and others. They were issued with new Serbian weapons, such as this 7.62mm M70AB copy of the AK-47, with fixed or folding stocks. They also received the Serbian tankers' one-piece camouflage overall; this had long, strong black shoulder straps for hauling casualties out of AFV turrets. Some wore camouflage field caps, others green berets. To the latter, some 'old stagers' added their former French Foreign Legion badges, or (as here) that of Bob Denard's Comorien Presidential Guard, in which all the Frenchmen in Groupe Alfa had previously served: a silver-edged black shield, with a gold fasces and a red scroll set on a silver globe of the world. The Krajina Serbs who followed them in Groupe Bravo arrived in their own motley outfits, but all were later issued US camouflage clothing.

G: THE GREAT AFRICAN WAR, 1998–2002

G1: 'Kadogo' of Kabila's forces

In Swahili, the *lingua franca* of the eastern Congo, 'kadogo' means a small thing of little value, and this was the term applied to the child-soldiers recruited by Kabila; when they arrived in the capital the Kinshasans called them 'little green men'. Photographs show that they were outfitted in woodland-pattern camouflage fatigues, green or black rubber civilian 'gumboots', and (often) plain maroon berets, the latter presumably taken from captured FAZ stocks. They seem to have been issued with folding-butt AKS or AKMS rifles – like their clothing, noticeably too big for them. In November 2000, FAC *kadogos* in hard-pressed Pweto deserted after their popular CO had been executed by their own side.

G2: Cabo, Angolan Commando Brigade, guard order

By the late 1990s the Angolan Army was a well-equipped professional force, and this corporal conveys the smartness and pride of an elite unit. As in the Portuguese Army, the *Commandos* wore red berets and the *Pará-quedistas* green (a reversal of normal practice); the badge is as (detail G2a). The insignia, and even the 'parade rest' manner of holding the AKM, also show continuing Portuguese influence. The old 'grey lizard'

camouflage fatigues used during the 'Cuban' period of the army's evolution had by now given way to a four-colour woodland pattern. Two black chevrons on drab green shoulder-strap slides identify his rank; the two gold-on-black shoulder titles ('ANGOLA' above 'COMMANDO') are of thin metal, but the national patch below them is of stiff cloth. The metal unit badge on his left breast is balanced by a similarly shaped qualification badge on his right. Photos also show white gloves and elaborate white boot-lacing added, presumably for ceremonial parade dress. In the field the Angolans retained 'ChiCom'-style chest webbing, although with US belts.

G3: Infantryman, Armée Patriotique Rwandaise

The largely Tutsi APR of 1990–2002 wore a variety of camouflage uniforms. These included the East German 'raindrop' pattern, of which the summer variant is shown here being worn with a matching field cap during the early stages of the Continental War; woodland patterns later became standard. When worn, the APR beret was green. The national devices did not change until 2001, but the APR had already developed its own British Commonwealth-style rank insignia in contrast to the Belgian style of the previous regime. The AK-47 was common; this example with 'triplex' magazines is taken (like the civilian T-shirt) from a colour photo.

H: THE GREAT AFRICAN WAR, 1998–2002

H1: Major, Forces Armées Congolaises; service dress, 2001

This grey-green service dress for FAC officers was introduced in May 1999, and the figure is taken from photographs of President Kabila's funeral. Belgian-style rank insignia of stars and *barettes* (since changed yet again) were at that time worn on long shoulder-strap slides in red, black, green or blue for general, field, company and warrant officers respectively. The new cap badge, backed in the blue of the restored national flag, showed a gold-embroidered lion's head between two leafy branches, above 'FAC'.

H2: Warrant officer 2nd class, Zimbabwean infantry, 2002

The Zimbabweans readopted the old Rhodesian 'brushstroke' camouflage patterns during the 1990s, and the troops sent to the Congo wore these. This WO II, relaxing in anticipation of going home, wears a short-sleeved shirt in the wet-season pattern on a light green base, and trousers in the dry-season pattern on a sand-khaki base. Drab shoulder-strap slides bear his black-printed rank, a wreathed 'Zimbabwe bird', above 'ZIMBABWE'. The uniforms as a whole showed a considerable degree of carry-over from the Rhodesian Army, with coloured stable belts and the old brigade patches. The infantry beret had remained rifle-green; for the bimetal branch badge see (detail H2a).

H3: Infantryman, Ugandan People's Defence Forces, 2000

Uganda's PDF used more than one camouflage pattern, including the current woodland type, but most of the troops serving in the Congo wore plain green fatigues, often with civilian rubber boots for the wet terrain. The northern theatre in which they were operating was largely equatorial forest, so green was probably just as effective as camouflage. The infantry beret was green, but most wore the plain field cap shown here. The standard weapon was the 5.54mm AK-74, and 'ChiCom' chest rigs were worn, as were small 'Vietcong'-style rucksacks.

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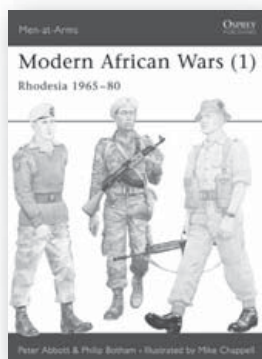
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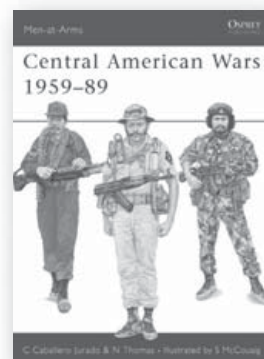
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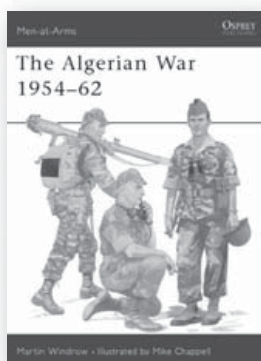
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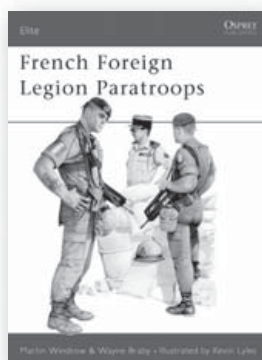
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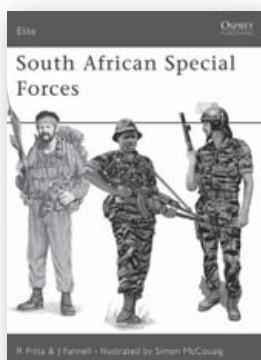
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Main abbreviations used in this text:

AFDL	<i>Alliance des Forces Démocratiques pour la Libération du Congo</i> (anti-Mobutu rebel movement led by Laurent Kabila in E. Congo from 1996; supported by Rwanda, Uganda and Angola)
ALIR	<i>Armée de Libération du Rwanda</i> (2000 retitling from FDLR – see below)
ANC	<i>Armée Nationale Congolaise</i> (government forces 1960–71)
APL	<i>Armée Populaire de Libération</i> /'Simbas' (anti-Tshombe rebel movement, Kivu & Orientale provinces, 1964–65)
APR	<i>Armée Patriotique Rwandaise</i> (mainly Tutsi Rwandan force, at first exiles; defeated and ousted mainly Hutu FAR – see below – in mid-1994). Retitled as Rwanda Defence Force in May 2002.
BSP	<i>Brigade Spéciale Présidentielle</i> (elite FAZ unit under President Mobutu, 1978–86)
DITRAC	<i>Division des Troupes Aéroportées de Choc</i> (elite ANC/FAZ formation under President Mobutu, from 1968)
DSP	<i>Division Spéciale Présidentielle</i> (1986 retitling from BSP – see above)
FAC	<i>Forces Armées Congolaises</i> (government forces after 1997 – formerly FAZ)
FAR	<i>Forces Armées Rwandaises</i> (Rwandan army, mainly Hutu, until 1994)
FAZ	<i>Forces Armées Zaïroises</i> (government forces 1971–97 – formerly ANC)
FDLR	<i>Forces Démocratiques de Libération du Rwanda</i> (1998, mainly Hutu movement in E. Congo, allied to Kabila's FAC from 1998)
FNLC	<i>Front Nationale pour la Libération du Congo</i> (anti-Mobutu rebel movement in Shaba/Katanga province, 1977–78)
FP	<i>Force Publique</i> (Belgian Congo armed force pre-independence, 1960)
GSSP	<i>Groupe Spécial de Sécurité Présidentielle</i> (elite unit of Kabila's army, 1997)
MLC	<i>Mouvement de Libération du Congo</i> (anti-Kabila rebel movement, Équateur province, 1998, supported by Uganda and Angolan UNITA rebels)
ONUC	United Nations intervention force in Congo, 1960–64
RCD	<i>Rassemblement Congolais pour la Démocratie</i> (anti-Kabila rebel movement in E. Congo, 1998, supported by Rwandan Tutsi government)
RCD-Goma	Pro-Rwanda faction after split in RCD, 1999
RCD-ML	Pro-Uganda & UNITA faction after split in RCD, 1999
UNITA	Anti-Angolan government rebel movement, supporting Congolese MLC & RCD-ML (see above) against Kabila in late 1990s

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Author's note

Few of the available sources for the Congo's history over the past half-century deal in any detail with the military side of the various conflicts; moreover, those which do tend to be in French, and are often very inaccessible indeed. For this reason I have not thought it worthwhile to include a select bibliography. Readers who wish to learn more can obtain an overview by consulting Anthony Clayton's *Frontiersmen* (UCL Press, 1999), which deals with warfare in Africa from 1950; and either Gérard Prunier's *From Genocide to Continental War* (Hurst, 2009), or Filip Reyntjen's *The Great African War* (Cambridge UP, 2009), which cover events since 1996. The background to the joint US-Belgian operation at Stanleyville in 1964 is described in detail in Fred E. Wagoner's *Dragon Rouge: The Rescue of Hostages in the Congo* (University of the Pacific Press, Honolulu, 2004); the uncredited photographs in that book are presumed to be from USAF sources.

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