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THE DIRECTOR OF CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE
WASHINGTON, D. C. 20505

25 May 1976

MEMORANDUM FOR: The Honorable Henry A. Kissinger
The Secretary of State

FROM : George Bush

SUBJECT : Interagency Intelligence Memorandum: The Military
Threat to Zaire

The attached interagency intelligence memorandum concludes that Zaire does not face external military attack during the next year or so. It points out that the major problem facing President Mobutu is an internal one stemming from the country's parlous economic situation. This could lead to subversive or insurgent activities in Zaire as well as to external meddling in the situation.


George Bush

Attachment

Classified by 036960
Exempt from general
declassification schedule of E.O. 11652
exemption schedule 5B (1), (2), (3)
Automatically declassified on
Date Impossible to Determine

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**Interagency
Intelligence
Memorandum**

The Military Threat to Zaire

~~Secret~~
NIO IIM 76-023
May 1976

Copy No 228

25 May 1976

INTERAGENCY INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM*

SUBJECT: The Military Threat to Zaire

KEY POINTS

- Despite President Mobutu's fears and Zaire's vulnerabilities and weaknesses, we do not believe that Zaire faces a major military attack by any of its neighbors during the next year or so.

- The regime in Angola, potentially the most hostile of Zaire's neighbors, is currently concentrating on establishing and consolidating its own control. Without the participation of Cuban forces, the Angolan forces have only limited conventional military capabilities.

- The Cubans will almost certainly eschew regular military action against Zaire for several reasons, including the negative impact that this would have on the rest of Africa and the likelihood that the Soviet Union would disapprove.

- Congo, Uganda, and Tanzania pose no conventional military threat to Zaire.

* This memorandum has been prepared jointly by the Central Intelligence Agency, the Defense Intelligence Agency, and the Bureau of Intelligence and Research of the Department of State.

- Public unrest in Zaire stemming from the country's deteriorating economy could encourage subversive or insurgent activity, perhaps by the exiled Katangans now in Angola.
- The Angolans and Cubans might provide some assistance to such activity.
- Zaire's military capabilities are limited, as are those of its neighbors -- with the exception of the Cubans in Angola. In a few years, however, Angola could develop a significant military capability in regional terms.
- Zairian forces could not cope with the commitment of the Cuban forces now in Angola.
- Zaire's security forces can contain a small-scale insurgency, but they would be hard put to cope with significant insurgent activity, particularly since the insurgents would probably find ready sanctuary and support in neighboring countries.
- Zaire will continue to be surrounded by potentially hostile neighbors, but over the next year the chances of a major external threat to the regime in Kinshasa are low. Since the primary threat to the Mobutu government is an internal one, however, an increase in internal unrest could create opportunities for external meddling in the situation.

THE DETAILS

Introduction

1. Developments during the past year in southern Africa and within Zaire itself have made President Mobutu extremely nervous about Zaire's security. Although Mobutu does face a number of serious problems, largely emanating from within Zaire, we believe that his fears of an external threat are overdrawn.

2. A number of factors account for Mobutu's nervousness:

- The establishment of a Soviet and Cuban-backed regime in Angola and the attendant collapse of the Zairian-backed National Front (FNLA) as a credible counterforce to the Popular Movement regime in Luanda.
- The presence in Angola -- in addition to 13,000-15,000 Cubans -- of about 4,000 anti-Mobutu Zairian dissidents, supporters of the late Moise Tshombe's Katangan separatist movement, who have solicited Angolan support in order to oust Mobutu.
- The presence of relatively sophisticated military equipment in neighboring countries, particularly in Angola.
- A fear that Angola will take military action to cut off Zaire's access to the sea.
- A loss of confidence in the Zairian army, stemming largely from the poor showing of Zairian troops supporting the National Front during the Angolan civil war, but also as the result of a general lack of discipline within the army.*

* See Annex for a description of Zaire's military capabilities.

- Zaire's deteriorating economy, which holds the potential for sparking internal unrest.
- The activities in eastern Zaire of the People's Revolutionary Party, a small rebel band with a potential for embarrassing the Mobutu regime, as shown by its kidnapping of American students in Tanzania in 1975.
- Fears of military or subversive operations from Congo, Uganda, and Tanzania.

The Angolan Factor

3. Angola heads Mobutu's list of potential external threats, despite the accord he reached with the Neto regime last February. His fear is largely based on the belief that Angola has fallen under Soviet and Cuban tutelage and will become the cockpit for subversion in central Africa and particularly against Zaire.

4. Although Neto may be willing to lend support to Zairian subversives, the regime appears to be far more absorbed in securing its own political control and maintaining internal stability than in mounting adventures against Zaire. The Popular Movement does not appear to be supporting, or even encouraging the exiled Katangans, although their presence in Angola is useful to the Popular Movement regime as insurance against Zairian adventures.

5. The threat to Zaire from Angola cannot be entirely ruled out, however, because the staying power of the Neto regime is not assured. Factional rivalry between militants and more pragmatic figures like Neto within the Popular Movement hierarchy appears to be strong, and a power struggle could lead to a new leadership that would support Mobutu's enemies. Any successor to Neto would be constrained from taking major military action against Zaire by the same internal problems as confront the present regime. Such a regime, however, might be more willing to support subversive or insurgent activities.

The Cuban Factor

6. Cuban hostility toward the government of Zaire dates from the mid-1960s when Che Guevara led a group of Cubans and local dissidents in an unsuccessful attempt to seize power through guerrilla warfare. At the end of that decade, Cuba began winding down its program for overthrowing governments and sought to achieve its foreign policy goals through conventional political and diplomatic means. A drive began in late 1973 to expand relations with African countries, eventually leading to the establishment of diplomatic relations with Zaire on April 11, 1974.

7. Zaire's backing of the FNLA in the recent civil war in Angola caused considerable strain on relations between Havana and Kinshasa and probably revived in Havana unpleasant memories of the mid-1960s. The Cubans, however, have not broken relations and apparently are willing to follow Zaire's lead in developing a modus vivendi that, while marked by wariness and suspicion, makes the best of an embarrassing situation.

9. Although Havana -- and perhaps Moscow -- would favor President Mobutu's being ousted in favor of a leftist regime, it will almost certainly not attempt to do this through direct military aggression by Cuban troops based in Angola. The Cubans realize the negative impact this would have on their relations with the rest of black Africa, and they would judge the prize not worth the cost. The Cubans are also wary of further irritating Moscow through precipitate military action in Africa. For at least the next year or so, Cuba (and the USSR) will concentrate on helping the MPLA regime establish and consolidate its authority in Angola. As a result, the Cubans will almost certainly eschew a policy of attempting major military action to oust Mobutu.

10. The Cubans, however, may be less cautious about supporting indigenous groups bent on ousting Mobutu. They probably would be willing to provide arms, money, training, and technical assistance, but

their support would be contingent on the strength and political leanings of the group to be supported. Unless the prospective beneficiary had the organization, size, leadership, and opportunity necessary to seize and consolidate power, the Cubans would probably withhold large-scale support for fear of backing a loser. At this time there is no group in Zaire which has the muscle to pose such a serious threat to Mobutu.

The Ugandan Factor

11. Despite the unpredictability and irrationality of Uganda's General Amin, a military threat from Uganda seems unlikely. Amin's main security concerns center on Tanzania, Kenya, and Sudan.

The Congo Factor

12. Any conventional military threat to Zaire from Brazzaville per se is miniscule. Congo's military capabilities are extremely limited, and the government is beset with constant political and economic problems. Nevertheless, Mobutu regards Congo as being in the Soviet "camp," and he fears that Brazzaville could become a base for subversive activities.

The Internal Factor

13. Perhaps the strongest potential threat to Mobutu emanates from within Zaire rather than from across its borders. The deteriorating Zairian economy, due in part to Mobutu's own mismanagement, has made him concerned over the possibility of public unrest if the economy continues to decline. Given the poor discipline of the Zairian army and its traditional heavy-handedness in dealing with the populace, any attempt to use it to suppress public protests probably would only fuel the unrest. The Katangans in Angola and the rebels in eastern Zaire might attempt to capitalize on any such unrest, but it seems unlikely that any other elements -- the Cubans or the Popular Movement, for example -- would do no more than provide small-scale support. This would create additional problems for Zaire, but unless the support became extensive -- which we doubt -- the Zairian military forces could probably contain the threat.

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In Sum...

14. There does not now appear to be any significant external military threat to Zaire. The country will continue to be surrounded by potentially hostile neighbors, but the chances of any direct military intervention against Zaire are low. The primary threat to the Mobutu government is an internal one, and an increase in internal unrest could create an opportunity for external meddling in the situation.

- 7 -

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ANNEX

ZAIRE'S MILITARY CAPABILITIES

1. Zaire's military capabilities have never been good, and in the wake of its poor showing in Angola, the armed forces' capabilities can only be described as poor.

2. The army could defend the country only against isolated, small-scale attacks by most neighboring states, but not against a Cuban-supported Angolan drive. It can maintain internal security except in the case of widespread disorder. It is not capable of eliminating insurgency, but can contain limited opposition.

3. Chronic army weaknesses are many. The army is suffering from disorganization and confusion engendered by a major reorganization begun in early 1975. Large-scale personnel shifts -- forced recruitment and retirement -- have also caused serious morale problems. A major deficiency is the lack of ground transport and the inability to support units after deployment. The logistics system, impeded by a lack of qualified managers and technicians, inadequate storage, and haphazard accounting seriously hampers the force. The varied origins of equipment further complicate the already poor supply and maintenance system. Other problem areas include marginal leadership, lack of discipline, low education levels, shortages of skilled technicians, tribal favoritism, bad rapport with the civilian populace, and corruption.

4. The army, traditionally an infantry force, has begun to acquire armor and artillery capabilities. Tank and armored vehicle and artillery units are currently being formed under the auspices of Chinese advisers; the North Koreans also conducted some artillery training before they departed in March 1976. Zaire's terrain is not well-suited to armored operations, and armor movement would be dependent upon the poorly developed road system. At present, Zaire

has a very limited artillery capability, but the equipment is old, maybe inoperable, and ammunition scarce.

5. The paracommandos (now known as the Special Intervention Force) have long been considered the elite backbone of the Zairian army, but the poor performance of the units that served in Angola has tarnished their image. Their capabilities are low.

6. The new Kamanyola Infantry Division, formed by the North Koreans before they departed, is only partially trained. The training is scheduled to be completed this September, but the division will still not be combat ready. Individual infantry and internal defense force battalion capabilities vary widely, and from company to company within the unit, but may generally be described as poor.

7. Air Force. The air force has no air defense capability but can provide some close air support for the army. The air force is capable of performing its transport role but only with technical and logistical assistance of foreign military and private contract individuals and organizations. Its primary weakness lies in a severe shortage of trained flying and non-flying personnel and the virtual absence of an indigenous technical and logistics base.

8. Navy. The navy (formerly the Coast, River, and Lake Guard) is active only in patrolling Lake Tanganyika. This limited capability suffers sporadic degradation due to careless operation and maintenance and failure to obtain supplies, and personnel misconduct. The unit relies upon four contract mechanics to keep the craft operational. Zaire is in the process of trying to develop a capability to patrol its rivers, seacoast, and other lakes.

The Conventional Military Threat to Zaire*

9. Angola. Angola's capability to take major offensive action against Zaire, without Cuban assistance, is poor at present and probably will remain

* See Table, *Balance of Forces Neighboring Zaire* --
May 1976.

so for at least the next year. The Angolan forces are currently preoccupied with consolidating control over the entire countryside and eliminating guerrilla activity. They are in the process of developing conventional military skills and leadership. An estimated two thousand troops have been sent abroad, mostly to the USSR and eastern Europe, for training, and more are in training in Angola. Sophisticated armaments, introduced by the Soviets and the Cubans during the civil war, are operated predominantly by Cuban personnel. Armed forces administration, training programs, and the logistics system have all been totally dependent upon the Cubans.

10. Without the Cuban presence, Angolan ground forces have little offensive capability despite their impressive array of equipment. The navy is only an embryonic force with minor patrol capability near Luanda and some limited sealift capability. The navy is totally dependent on foreign advisers, personnel, and materiel. The air force can provide limited support, including tactical air, to the ground forces, and could probably carry out limited air strikes against strategic Zairian facilities, but it, too, is almost totally dependent upon outside assistance for aircrews and training and maintenance personnel as well as for aircraft, spare parts, and air defense battery personnel.

11. Angolan forces will improve their military capabilities, but this will be a slow process and will necessitate substantial foreign advisory support for a considerable period of time. As a result of training programs now underway we can expect to see qualitative improvement over the next year. Angolan personnel should be able to replace some Cuban troops in the Angolan armed forces and thereby upgrade indigenous capabilities. Over the next few years, as Angolans learn to operate jet fighters, tanks, armored vehicles, artillery, and heavy rocket launchers, and as they improve their administrative and logistical systems, they may become a power to be reckoned with in central and southern Africa.

12. Cuba. The presence in Angola of 13,000-15,000 Cubans, including at least 10,000 military personnel, provides a significant military capability in place at this time. Cuban armored units, backed by mobile rocket launchers, constituted the key element in the successful offensive against the FNLA and UNITA forces. Even where the Cubans were operating as part of a joint force under nominal MPLA command, their leadership role tended to shape and guide the course of action in most aspects of the recent campaign. There are also strong indications that Cubans are commanding most Angolan battalions, companies, and platoons in the field. With Cuban assistance and involvement, Angola would have a good offensive capability against Zaire and could probably succeed in defeating the Zairian military forces in fairly short order.

13. Congo. At present, Congo has little capability to mount offensive operations against Zaire because of internal problems, weaknesses of its armed forces, the need for external assistance to conduct such an operation, inadequate amphibious transport capability, and lack of fighter aircraft for use in an offensive role.

14. The Congolese army is a small, well-equipped force. The majority of its troops are concentrated in and around Brazzaville. Steps have been taken to improve the army's capability by weapons training and firing exercises as well as by regimental level field maneuvers. The army is handicapped, however, by insufficient numbers of technically qualified personnel, low educational standards, and tribal rivalry. In addition, the army's command and control capability and its tactical artillery skills are poor. Although the Congolese army has increased its potential over the past few years through the acquisition of new artillery and armored vehicles from communist sources, it is capable only of coping with minor disorders within the country and could not sustain any offensive action against neighbors unless greatly assisted by external sources.

15. The southern Congo would, however, be an excellent base from which to launch subversive, terrorist, or insurgent activities against Zaire. Strategic Bas-Zaire facilities, for example Inga Dam, could be sabotaged by infiltrators operating out of the Congo.

16. Tanzania. Presently, Tanzania has no capability to mount an effective military operation against neighboring Zaire. At best, Tanzania could launch air strikes against Zairian border towns and mount limited amphibious operations across Lake Tanganyika. The enormous planning, operational, and logistical obstacles facing an offensive against Zaire would likely limit any activity to border skirmishes. Significant offensive military operations against Zaire would be limited by Tanzania's lack of efficient, well maintained transport equipment, the sparse road network in and leading to the border area, and very limited logistical support capabilities.

17. Lake Tanganyika poses a natural obstacle to offensive operations. The lake covers the full length of the border and it ranges from 10 to 50 miles in width. Amphibious operations across the lake would require troop carrying vessels, landing craft, combat-support air and naval craft, and logistical support facilities in the border area. Tanzanian fighter aircraft could strike targets in Zaire's border regions, but the need for maintenance, fuel, and other logistical support facilities would limit such operations.

18. Uganda. The Ugandan armed forces are not capable of mounting a significant offensive military operation against Zaire. Ugandan operations against Zaire would be limited to border skirmishes, or, at best, would be confined to Zaire's extreme northeastern regions.

19. Uganda's military purges, due to tribal and regional strife, have stripped the force of many competent, trained personnel. The armed forces are hampered by poor technical and administrative support, an inadequate logistics system, an inept command and control

apparatus, and dependence on foreign sources for equipment and technical expertise. The armed forces' undisciplined behavior further undermines their ability to function efficiently in sustained operations. Inadequate logistical facilities, fuel, and maintenance personnel would inhibit sustained military operations across the Zairian border. The rugged terrain, especially south of Lake Albert, as well as the lake itself, would serve as major obstacles to a ground-mounted offensive. Ugandan jets could probably operate against Zaire, although limited maintenance, POL, and other logistical support would restrict such action. Poor pilot and maintenance proficiency have been key factors limiting the air force's capabilities. The force is dependent on foreign flight assistance.

The Unconventional Threat to Zaire

20. Former Katangan Gendarmes. About 4,000 Katangan troops, who rebelled against Zaire more than ten years ago and have been in exile in eastern Angola since, comprise a force with considerable potential to cause serious disruption in southern Zaire. This force was employed by the Portuguese during its counterinsurgency campaigns and later sided with the MPLA in the civil war. These ex-Katangan Gendarmes are well trained, experienced, and during the Angolan civil war proved to be the best African troops under the MPLA command. They are tenacious soldiers, who would stay and fight, not flee as many MPLA troops tended to do. The Katangans may still be equipped with infantry weapons despite President Neto's promise to disarm them. If the Katangans were to go on the offensive and were provided arms and supplies, they would be able to carry out effective military activities in southern Zaire. In this event, the Zairian military forces would be hard pressed to defeat the Katangans.

21. Other. Small insurgent groups, remnants of the Simba rebellion, are still active in Zaire in the rugged, mountainous area west of Lake Tanganyika. This insurgent activity is no immediate threat to the central government, which therefore has been unwilling to pay the price of an all-out effort to eliminate it.

TABLE
BALANCE OF FORCES
NEIGHBORING ZAIRE - MAY 1976 1/

	<u>Zaire</u>	<u>Angola</u>	<u>Congo</u>	<u>Uganda</u>	<u>Tanzania</u>
Army					
Personnel	20,000	44,000 ^{2/}	5,000	17,000	20,000
Tanks	27	210	23	73	40
Armored Vehicles	100-250	350	65	100	130
Field Artillery/ Rocket Launchers	48/125-250	78/60	60/4	53/--	200/--
Mortars	50-100	40	84	80	150
Antitank	18	unk	10	20	430
Recoilless Rifles	50-150	12	46	36	130
ADA Weapons	76	264	58	80	400
SAM Launchers	---	unk	---	---	unk
Air Force					
Personnel	1,200	500	300	2,000	800
Bombers	---	1	---	---	---
Jet Fighters	5 ^{3/}	29 ^{4/}	5 ^{5/}	56 ^{6/}	20 ^{7/}
Other Combat Aircraft	14	13	---	---	---
Helicopters	18	24	10	9	4
Transports	19	16	13	5	12
Other Aircraft	31	7	4	16	17
Navy					
Personnel	800	500	200	---	700
Major Combatant	---	---	---	---	---
Minor Combatant	11	12	16	---	21
Non-Combatant	17	19	unk	---	6
Paramilitary					
Personnel	30,000	20,000	1,000	500	1,430

1/ Many of the figures below are estimates, especially in the case of Zairian ground equipment and all Angolan figures. Some equipment may not be operable.

2/ Includes at least 10,000 Cuban troops and 4,000 Katangan Gendarmes.

3/ Mirage 5s; expect a total by 17 by the end of 1976.

4/ Includes 10 MIG-21s, 14 MIG-17s, 1 MIG-15, and 4 FIAT G-91s. This figure could easily be twice as high.

5/ Expect to receive 9 MIG-17s and 1 MIG-15 in 1976.

6/ Includes 25 MIG-25s and 15 MIG-17s.

7/ Includes 17 MIG-19s and 3 MIG-17s. Unknown number of MIG-21 aircraft were contracted for in 1974.