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JEFFREY H. MICHAELS

Breaking the Rules: The CIA and Counterinsurgency in the Congo 1964–1965

A good deal of recent scholarship and official discourse on the role of United States intelligence in the area of counterinsurgency has focused on the finer points of intelligence analysis in support of large-scale military operations.¹ The assumption underlying this perspective is the idea that intelligence services will play a subordinate role to the military in the conduct of counterinsurgency operations. This assumption is understandable, given the level of attention devoted to the ongoing operations in Afghanistan and Iraq, which itself is due in large part to the amount of national resources devoted to these two conflicts. One chief consequence of this focus is to marginalize the study of cases in which the U.S. government wanted to assist a friendly government's counterinsurgency efforts but has been unwilling to consider a significant military intervention.² In such

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cases, the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) has served as an important “tool” of foreign policy. In many respects, its counterinsurgency role differs considerably from that which it would perform if subordinate to the military. Indeed, throughout the Cold War, the CIA was involved in many counterinsurgency operations. And in many cases, the Agency rather than the U.S. military took the lead. Despite the recent surge of interest in counterinsurgency generally, many of these cases have yet to receive scholarly attention. Instead, the overwhelming focus has been placed on the one case where large-scale U.S. military intervention occurred, namely Vietnam, most likely because that conflict is viewed as having the most “relevance” for Iraq and Afghanistan in terms of historical interest and “lessons learned.”³

But a “successful” case of U.S. counterinsurgency that has yet to receive much scholarly attention is the CIA’s effort to counter the “Simba rebellion” in the Congo in 1964–1965. Among historians, interest in the CIA’s role in the Congo primarily concerns its connection to the assassination of Congolese Prime Minister Patrice Lumumba, as well as the Agency’s relationship with Joseph Mobutu.⁴ Although many instances of CIA activities during the Simba rebellion have been discussed in relation to other events, such as the role of both pro-Castro and anti-Castro Cubans fighting in Africa, the Agency’s involvement has not been studied either as a subject in its own right, or through a counterinsurgency lens.⁵ This lack of interest is all the more surprising given the increasing amount of declassified material and number of memoirs becoming available on the subject.⁶

Yet this case is noteworthy from a counterinsurgency perspective in several important respects. First, it represented a case where the U.S. government was supporting a weak and diplomatically isolated friendly government against an insurgency supported by numerous outside powers, including the Soviet Union and China. Second, the Congo’s enormous physical size and the diverse nature of its population of fifteen million, combined with a weak administrative apparatus, worked against the imposition of central authority. Third, the insurgency itself, though rife with internal divisions, nevertheless numbered in the tens of thousands of men under arms, a figure that was at least equal to, if not greater than, the government forces, and within a matter of months the insurgents conquered more than one-third of the Congo. Fourth, the duration of the conflict defied expectations of being a long war, with the insurgency effectively defeated within two years. Last, the CIA’s activities in the Congo broke all the rules often discussed in relation to the role of intelligence in contemporary conflicts. Most notably, rather than the CIA being used to enable U.S. military forces to conduct counterinsurgency, the CIA was used to ensure that the U.S. military would not become involved. Consequently, one of

the chief functions of the CIA in the Congo was to support proxy forces who would fight the insurgency on America's behalf.

THE SIMBA REBELLION

Among the many reasons an insurgency erupted in the Congo in 1964 were government corruption and incompetence, poor economic conditions, and a lack of opportunity. The insurgency itself was not a unified uprising, but instead consisted of several loosely coordinated components. The first rebellion, began in January 1964 in Kwilu Province, was led by Pierre Mulele, who had previously served in Lumumba's government as Minister of Education. Following Lumumba's death, Mulele served as an ambassador for the secessionist Stanleyville-based regime of Antoine Gizenga, though this had ceased to exist by early 1962. As a political exile, Mulele traveled to China, where he was given instruction in guerrilla warfare, before returning to the Congo in July 1963. Based in Kwilu Province, with a population of roughly one million, Mulele spent the remainder of the year organizing a rebellion. The Kwilu rebellion reflected a mix of Maoist approaches to guerrilla warfare, Communist indoctrination, and traditional magic. Mulele's poorly armed followers believed he was invulnerable to bullets, and would rush into battle shouting "mai Mulele" (water of Mulele) in the belief that the bullets fired at them would turn to water.⁷ Within a month after starting the rebellion, Mulele's guerrillas controlled an area roughly the size of Belgium.⁸ Although measuring the size of this insurgency is difficult, estimates from that period suggest it numbered between 10,000–20,000 insurgents, supported by about one-tenth of the Kwilu population.⁹ In the first months of the rebellion, the insurgency scored several notable successes against the Congolese National Army (ANC). This prompted the Congolese government to dispatch reinforcements, who subsequently proceeded to wage a scorched-earth campaign against the rebels. By April 1964, the ANC slowly regained the tactical initiative, although another year-and-a-half would pass before the rebellion was defeated.¹⁰

While a significant amount of ANC resources were being committed to Kwilu, rebellions broke out in other areas as well. Following the closing of the Congolese parliament in 1963, a number of Congolese politicians fled to Brazzaville, across the river from Leopoldville, and formed a government-in-exile known as the Comité Nationale de Liberation (CNL).¹¹ Beginning in April 1964, the CNL, headed by Christophe Gbenye, would become the political and diplomatic face of the insurgency based in the eastern Congo. Among the senior CNL officials were its "Defense Minister" Gaston Soumialot and "Foreign Minister" Thomas Kanza. Laurent Kabila, then in his mid-20s, was also working for the CNL.

Beginning in May 1964, the CNL was reportedly responsible for conducting a succession of anti-government plastic-bomb explosions in Leopoldville. But their true achievement was to take advantage of widespread grievances in the eastern Congo in order to recruit thousands of supporters to wage an insurgency. From his base in Burundi, Soumialot launched a rebellion in the Uvira region of Kivu province. At about the same time, Kabila organized rebel forces from among the towns on the western shores of Lake Tanganyika.¹² These two CNL-led rebellions would later merge with the "Popular Army" headed by "General" Nicolas Olenga. Initially, Olenga's "Popular Army" lacked a political organization. Following their capture of Stanleyville in early August, however, Gbenye and Soumialot simply attached themselves to Olenga's forces and created the "People's Republic of the Congo," with Stanleyville its capital.¹³

Unlike Mulele's rebellion in Kwilu province, the rebels in the eastern Congo were considerably better armed. Numerous accounts suggest this force was equipped with a multitude of different weapons, ranging from spears to automatic rifles, machine guns, mortars, and anti-tank weapons. Due to their geographic proximity to countries that were sympathetic to the rebel cause, they were able to receive foreign arms shipments.¹⁴ From April through September 1964, the eastern rebellion would gradually take control of more than one-third of the Congo. Yet, the rapid growth of the insurgency also meant that the rebel leaders did not have time to form an organization capable of administering the conquered territory. Having initially gained enormous support by exploiting popular grievances, the rebellion brought with it "terror and maladministration far surpassing the misdeeds of past Congolese administrators."¹⁵

The fall of Stanleyville, and specifically the capture of five U.S. consular personnel working there, three of whom were CIA employees, convinced U.S. policymakers that urgent action was required to reverse the situation. The degree to which the situation was viewed as a crisis was evident in a 6 August 1964 National Security Council (NSC) memo that stated: "Stanleyville is in rebel hands. All of Eastern Congo may go in next several days; Katanga, Leopoldville, and entire Central Government may collapse in next several weeks."¹⁶ From that point on, American and Belgian military assistance would be increasingly forthcoming, and with the arrival of foreign mercenaries, the rebellion would be gradually driven back.¹⁷

THE JOHNSON ADMINISTRATION AND THE CONGO

Unlike President John F. Kennedy, who sought to raise the profile of Africa in U.S. foreign policy, President Lyndon B. Johnson sought as best he could to keep Africa "off the agenda."¹⁸ Prior to the rebel capture of Stanleyville,

the Congo had received significant attention, particularly in the State Department, but had not reached a point of political crisis in which the Johnson administration feared it could have negative connotations for the upcoming 1964 presidential elections.¹⁹ Similar to the Dwight D. Eisenhower and Kennedy administrations, U.S. policy toward the Congo under Johnson was predicated on the perceived need to maintain a pro-Western government in power, fearing that a Congolese government that had close relations with the Communist bloc would have negative repercussions for the West. This concern over the Congo was not simply a fear that its mineral resources could be denied to Western markets.²⁰ Rather, the principal fear was that a “radical” takeover of the Congo, following the rise of other “radical African” governments, would have a domino effect that would undermine Rhodesia and the Portuguese hold over Angola and Mozambique, and isolate South Africa. Similar to Vietnam, the Congo was discursively constructed as the key “domino” in Africa.²¹

By August 1964, the Vietnam-style domino thinking was quite evident in the discourse of senior U.S. policymakers. At an 11 August NSC meeting dedicated to the Congo crisis, one of the main concerns expressed was that, even if the rebellion were principally rooted in tribal conflict, the Chinese and “Communists” would profit from their victory.²² The head of the U.S. Strike Command, General Paul Adams, expressed even more extreme views. He wrote that the Congo’s “loss to communist control would be a political catastrophe. The impact of such a loss could jeopardize U.S. national interests throughout all of Africa south of the Sahara, and could in time lead to a communist dominated black Africa.” Adams even went so far as to suggest that the Communist backing for the insurgency “is evidencing itself as a double envelopment of the Congo.”²³ As CIA paramilitary officer Richard Holm noted, “The Simbas, a ragtag bunch of illiterate dissidents, certainly weren’t communists. But they posed a threat to the pro-Western [Moise] Tshombe government in Leopoldville. Thus they gained the support of the Soviet Union, China, and their minions. And that prompted determination from the United States and its allies to provide all support possible to Tshombe and his government. It was that simple...”²⁴ Indeed, despite evidence from the Intelligence Community suggesting that the rebels were not “Communist-controlled,” senior policymakers continued to act as if they were.

Interestingly, the domino thinking evident in high-level discussions on the Congo was accompanied by a strong desire by these officials to avoid “another Vietnam.” Despite the talk of falling dominoes, U.S. policy to maintain the stability of the Congo in the early 1960s was limited, and consisted mainly of CIA political action activities, which in 1963 were expanded to include a paramilitary program to supply a handful of pilots

for the Congolese air force. U.S. policy also consisted of a relatively small military assistance program aimed at improving the quality of the Congolese Army. By the start of the Simba rebellion, however, the ANC was not considered fit for that purpose. Whatever value Joseph Mobutu may have later had as President of the Congo, his tenure as ANC chief was considered to be somewhat disastrous. The U.S. Army attaché described Mobutu as “doubtfully militarily capable to simultaneously command two platoons.”²⁵

At this time, the Johnson administration was reluctant to commit U.S. military forces. In August, a request by Congolese Prime Minister Tshombe and ANC head Mobutu to deploy three U.S. airborne battalions to retake Stanleyville, Albertville, and Uvira, and to dispatch U.S. Special Forces, was rejected out of hand.²⁶ At the 11 August NSC meeting, one senior official expressed the view that “direct American military involvement in the Congo should be considered only as an extreme last resort.” Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) General Earle Wheeler concurred, noting that was also “the long held view of the JCS.” Despite taking serious military action off the table, Johnson nevertheless observed that “time is running out and the Congo must be saved.”²⁷ In due course, a U.S. military task force was deployed, consisting of four C-130s, three troop-carrying helicopters, and some fifty paratroopers from the 82nd Airborne Division who were mainly used to provide logistics support to the ANC.²⁸ Additional military options were also considered, though even in the worst-case scenarios being contemplated, U.S. military intervention was to consist of indirect advisory efforts rather than direct combat. For instance, General Adams wrote to Wheeler that “This command appreciates current U.S. policy to maintain American support and assistance in the Congo at a minimum level and to insure that U.S. military personnel do not become intentionally involved in combat and combat support operations.” Yet Adams also believed that dispatching six to twelve U.S. military teams numbering ten to twelve officers and enlisted men each “could rapidly change the current military situation.”²⁹ In other words, from the U.S. military’s point of view, waging counterinsurgency in the Congo was to consist of a very small military commitment, certainly in comparison with Vietnam, but not too dissimilar from U.S. counterinsurgency assistance elsewhere.³⁰

In August 1964, the U.S. was still months away from deploying combat troops to Vietnam, though it did have a significant advisory presence at that time. And yet, even at this early stage, Washington’s policymakers felt that even the U.S. advisory presence in Vietnam was too great a commitment to be replicated elsewhere. Throughout this period, numerous references were made by U.S. officials that the Congo did not constitute an “African Vietnam.”³¹ The shadow of Vietnam hung over U.S. policy

towards the Congo in two principal ways: first, U.S. counterinsurgency efforts were to consist of an “austere program” due to the perceived limited military resources available for deployment to the Congo.³² Second, U.S. public opinion was hostile to the notion of potentially getting involved in a “long drawn out indecisive campaign such as we have in South Vietnam today,” and this had a negative impact on U.S. policymakers who might otherwise have considered military intervention as a legitimate option.³³ The upshot of this attitude was that policymakers were more willing to opt for a covert intervention in which the CIA, rather than the U.S. military, took the lead.

Given the ANC’s weakness, and not wanting the U.S. to get directly involved, the Johnson administration was initially quite willing to accept a Belgian military intervention to stabilize the situation. When it became evident that the Belgians were unwilling to undertake a military intervention, the decision was taken to support the creation of a unit of foreign mercenaries. While Washington policymakers realized the inevitable fallout from supporting white mercenaries in Africa, this option was still preferable to a U.S. military intervention. As one policymaker noted in early August 1964, the situation “is basically power vacuum, could probably be retrieved by small security force (ideally white, at a minimum white-led and, if really good, as few as 1,000).” He went on to say that the U.S. should help the “Congolese in every way to organize a mercenary-led force.”³⁴

THE CIA’S COVERT INTERVENTION IN THE CONGO

From the Congo gaining its independence from Belgium in 1960 to the start of the Simba rebellion in 1964, CIA political action activities in the new country can be divided into two distinct periods: the overthrow of Patrice Lumumba and the events leading to his execution in January 1961, and the Agency’s efforts thereafter to “support the legitimate Congolese Government in the hopes of bringing stability to the Congo and frustrating Communist efforts.”³⁵ Throughout these years, CIA covert operations in Africa were still “relatively new,” and because the Congo was a Belgian colony, both a new American Embassy and a new CIA station had to be developed after independence.³⁶ In due course, U.S. consulates would be opened in Stanleyville and Bukavu, with the vice-consul position being occupied by a CIA officer.³⁷ The CIA’s Africa Division was also in its infancy at this time. Although by the 1970s it would eventually grow into a large organization, in the early 1960s, its “successes” in the Congo were the result of a handful of operatives.³⁸

The CIA’s role in the overthrow of Lumumba, including the part played by CIA Station Chief Lawrence Devlin, has been well covered elsewhere, and

doesn't need further elaboration here.³⁹ Particularly in the period that followed Lumumba's death, the CIA established close relations with several key figures in the Congolese government, informally referred to as the Binza Group, and also played an important role in establishing Cyrille Adoula as Lumumba's successor as Prime Minister.⁴⁰ The Agency provided covert funding for Adoula to buy the support of political and military leaders.⁴¹ In terms of the CIA's dealings with Mobutu, who was initially head of the Congolese army and subsequently President of the Congo (Zaire) from 1965–1997, the relationship was quite close.⁴² According to Devlin, "I met Mobutu almost daily, often over breakfast on the terrace of his home."⁴³ Even the CIA contract aviator Ed Dearborn had a close relationship with Mobutu.⁴⁴ Similarly, the CIA also worked quite closely with Victor Nendaka, the head of Congo state security. Thus, at the time of the Simba rebellion, the CIA's Congo station had direct access and a close working relationship with the leaders of the Congolese military and security forces.⁴⁵

Within weeks of the rebel capture of Stanleyville, and at the instigation of Washington and Brussels, Tshombe began hiring a mercenary force to bolster the ANC's counterinsurgency efforts. In the course of the following year, the CIA would work closely with the mercenaries. Former British Army officer and ex-Katanga mercenary Mike Hoare was hired to lead this mercenary force, which he named "5 Commando."⁴⁶ The Congo counterinsurgency campaign that followed can be broken into three phases in which Hoare's mercenaries spearheaded ANC attacks against rebel-held areas, all the while being supported by the CIA. In the first phase, the counterinsurgents set out to recapture Stanleyville, culminating in Operation Dragon Rouge in November 1964. In the second phase, the gains from the first phase were consolidated, with the mercenaries pushing into the northeast Congo and capturing towns along the Ugandan and Sudanese borders that had been used by the rebels to bring in supplies from abroad. The final phase consisted of the government's attack on the rebel-held Fizi Baraka pocket in the autumn of 1965. The CIA played a crucial role in each of these phases of the counterinsurgency.

Relationship with Mercenaries

Over the course of the Simba rebellion, both the CIA and the U.S. military attaché in Leopoldville developed a close, albeit covert, working relationship with the mercenaries, especially with Hoare. Throughout the course of the conflict, Hoare's 5 Commando never amounted to more than several hundred mercenaries at any one time, the majority of whom were South Africans and Rhodesians. Technically, the unit was subordinate to the ANC command structure, with Hoare's nominal superiors being ANC

head Joseph Mobutu and Colonel Frederic Vandewalle, a Belgian Army officer on loan to the Congolese government.⁴⁷ In practice, Hoare was given significant leeway to conduct his own operations, though within a strategic framework developed by Vandewalle. A separate French-speaking unit called “6 Commando” was also formed, but its main duties were to garrison captured towns and bolster the ANC’s ranks. While U.S. officials maintained contacts with this unit as well, the CIA’s relations with 6 Commando ranked considerably lower than its relations with 5 Commando, which was at the forefront of the counterinsurgency operation.

Officially, the U.S. government wanted to avoid being seen as having any relationship with the mercenaries. This point was made explicit in an Embassy cable that stated, “For public consumption believe we must continue take ‘no comment’ line on all aspects of mercenary problem . . . Overtly at last, U.S. reps should keep as far away from mercenaries as possible.” At the same time, however, a very different view was to be held internally. According to the same cable, “For purposes of orienting our own thinking, it seems to us important to recognize that security has deteriorated in Congo to [the] point [that] only white mercenaries or direct intervention by non-African military units can save day. Perfect but unlikely solution would be for mercenaries to come in quickly and quietly, re-establish peace, and then get out.”⁴⁸ Once the decision was made to support a mercenary force in the Congo, the question arose of how to pay for them, given the poor state of Congolese government finances. By Vandewalle’s account, CIA Station Chief Benjamin Hilton Cushing offered to covertly finance the mercenaries, although the likelihood is that in the end the funds were made available through an overt increase of the military assistance budget.⁴⁹

The American relationship with the mercenaries that eventually emerged was a covert and highly effective partnership. This was not predetermined however. Indeed, initial U.S. assessments of the mercenary support to the retaking of Albertville in September 1964 were highly critical of Hoare’s competence.⁵⁰ Over time, this view changed completely, and within a few months thereafter, during which 5 Commando conducted a number of successful operations against the Simbas, culminating in their drive to Stanleyville, CIA analysts lavished considerable praise on Hoare. At the working level, a close relationship emerged, reflected in the fact that the CIA had provided air support to the mercenaries, and later maritime support as well, with the U.S. military providing logistical support and strategic lift. To be effective at providing close air support, for instance, a good working relationship was essential. Significant intelligence collaboration also occurred, with the mercenaries providing U.S. officials with intelligence acquired from their operations, as well as supplying them with captured Soviet and Chinese arms. Hoare personally briefed CIA and

military officials on numerous occasions.⁵¹ Moreover, while the CIA air and naval assets were placed under Hoare's command in order to facilitate his operations, Hoare in turn also facilitated CIA intelligence collection in areas controlled by 5 Commando.⁵²

This close relationship was not simply a matter of mutual interest. Significant evidence suggests that both sides viewed the relationship in more personal terms. Both CIA and U.S. military officials based in Leopoldville held Hoare in high regard. In one of his reports, the U.S. military attaché in Leopoldville, Colonel Knut Raudstein, observed: "Tshombe supporters most fortunate in having man of Hoare's temperament, character, and capability in his position. He [is] somewhat amused [at] being tabbed a South African as he claims Brit citizenship and conducts himself as typical upper class Briton proud of Irish extraction."⁵³ Larry Devlin, who in July 1965 replaced Cushing as Station Chief, also enjoyed good relations with Hoare, whom he referred to as a "gentlemen adventurer."⁵⁴ In his memoirs, Devlin wrote, "Well-educated, articulate, a man of tremendous charm, Mike Hoare had proven himself to be a serious and capable soldier, a far cry from the 'Mad Mike' image created by the media. Mike had dash and pizzazz. He read Christopher Marlowe and Shakespeare, he told great stories that made your hair stand on end, and he was a man of integrity and dignity. We became good friends, a friendship that has lasted over the years."⁵⁵ Following Hoare's departure from the Congo in late 1965 after the rebellion had been defeated, the CIA's relations with the mercenaries quickly deteriorated. Not only did the personal connection between the mercenary leadership and the CIA break down, but the Agency's main objective in the Congo, namely to support stability generally, and President Mobutu in particular, took priority, with the mercenaries becoming a source of instability.⁵⁶

The "Instant Air Force"

Arguably the most significant contribution the CIA made to the Congo campaign was the creation of what *The New York Times* called an "instant air force."⁵⁷ The air force itself would ultimately include several types of World War II-era aircraft flown mainly by anti-Castro Cuban exiles. Their contribution to the campaign would include providing air reconnaissance, close air support, air interdiction, and psychological operations missions. Although the CIA's Congo air force did not defeat the insurgency on its own, that the government forces could have succeeded without it is inconceivable.

While little information on the original decision to employ Cuban exile pilots for the Congo is available, there is little doubt about the date. According to numerous sources, the first Cuban exile pilots were sent to

the Congo in 1963, months before the start of the Simba rebellion.⁵⁸ Within the CIA, the air branch of the Special Operations Division in the Deputy Directorate of Plans (DDP) organized this operation. This unit also had experience organizing CIA air activities in Asia and against Castro's Cuba. The Cuban exiles were veterans of the Bay of Pigs, some of whom had also served as pilots for the Cuban Air Force under then-President Fulgencio Batista, while others had joined the U.S. military after the Bay of Pigs and were then given honorable discharges to fight in the Congo.⁵⁹ A CIA proprietary company, the Caribbean Marine Aero Corporation (Caramar), was set up in Miami to hire the pilots, initially to fly unarmed T-6 training aircraft that had been donated to the Congo by Italy.⁶⁰

Hiring the Cubans had two principal advantages. First, they were ideal from a covert operations perspective since they were not U.S. citizens, and therefore the U.S. government could claim "plausible deniability." Second, as it became increasingly apparent, particularly after President Kennedy's death, that the U.S. would not support an invasion of Cuba, and due to the concern that the Cuban exiles would mount rogue operations against Castro if left to their own devices, Washington felt that the Congo was an ideal place to send the exiles, telling them they would be fighting Communism there.⁶¹

Initially, at least two American pilots were contracted to fly in the Congo. As of June 1964, CIA contract aviators Ed Dearborn and Don Coney were flying close air support missions for the ANC. Curiously, even though they were nominally working for the CIA, little attempt was made to keep their presence a secret. An article in *Time* magazine included the real names and background of Dearborn and Coney, suggesting they were not provided with an official cover. The article also noted that after being questioned by newsmen, the U.S. Embassy in Leopoldville at first denied that Americans were involved, and then later admitted that no Americans would be directly involved in fighting henceforth. Both Americans were reassigned to supporting the Cuban exile pilots, but not themselves flying. Embassy officials also disassociated themselves from the Cubans, who they claimed had been hired by the Congolese government.⁶² As one Embassy cable noted, "Although a lot will be said about Cubans being U.S. mercenaries, we will want to continue to say as little as possible and refer all inquiries to GOC [Government of Congo], with whom pilots have contracts."⁶³ Despite the denials, the foreign press, such as the Soviet TASS, accurately reported on the pilots being recruited in Miami and working for the CIA.⁶⁴

Prior to the Congo, the CIA already had some experience and an organizational mechanism that could provide aircraft for this type of covert operation.⁶⁵ As indicated, the unarmed Harvard T-6 aircraft flown by the Cuban exiles were originally donated by Italy. As the rebellion in Kwilu Province gained traction in early 1964, a decision was taken to arm

the T-6s and to fly combat support missions.⁶⁶ The CIA modified the T-6s to carry air-to-ground rockets and .30 caliber machine guns. But because the half-dozen T-6s were not considered sufficient to counter the rebel advance, the CIA proprietary firm Intermountain Aviation, in the spring of 1964 provided T-28 two-seater fighter-bombers that were an improvement over the T-6s in speed, range (300 miles), and firepower. Though nominally a training plane, the T-28s were equipped with .50 caliber machine guns, 500-pound bombs and rockets. Following Stanleyville's capture, CIA officials, including Director of Central Intelligence John McCone and Deputy Director for Plans Richard Helms, decided to increase the CIA air contingent of T-28s and to add B-26K bombers to its fleet. The B-26K, a WWII twin-engine bomber, had greater range than the T-28, thereby allowing it to reach Stanleyville. At its height, the CIA air force in the Congo would include thirteen T-28s and seven B-26K bombers, as well as C-47 transport aircraft, two small twin-engine liaison planes, and H-21 helicopters.⁶⁷

Having provided both aircraft and pilots, the CIA then needed to provide ground maintenance crews to service the aircraft. This was achieved by setting up another proprietary company based in Liechtenstein. This firm, given the name Western International Ground Maintenance Organization (WIGMO), would employ at least 150 European aircraft technicians on one-year contracts. At the height of the rebellion, the WIGMO technicians, based at four or five airfields in the Congo, were overseen by CIA officers. According to a British report, the technicians at one of the airfields were under the supervision of a retired U.S. Air Force colonel. Also stationed at the airfield was a CIA communications man named "Mitch."⁶⁸ Other accounts similarly confirm the presence of CIA air operations officers at forward bases such as Bunia and Paulis.⁶⁹

Despite their different backgrounds, nationalities, and languages, the CIA air controllers and their Cuban exile pilots worked remarkably well with Hoare's mercenaries. Apart from a few cases of friendly fire, Hoare noted that the air-ground coordination was highly effective in supporting 5 Commando spearheads.⁷⁰ Apart from Hoare's memoirs, which give high praise to the CIA air support, a separate analysis of the operation that led to the recapture of Stanleyville in November 1964 noted that "CIA aircraft terrified the Simbas, who learned that their magic did not protect them from .50-caliber machine guns or rockets. Both Tshombe and Mobutu grasped the importance of the close air support in their campaign against the rebels."⁷¹ That the Cuban pilots were earning their pay was evident from the fact that, in November–December 1964, some of the pilots had put in 170 hours of flying time in one month, an amount that was expected to increase rather than decrease after Dragon Rouge.⁷²

Benefits of Air Support

The importance of the CIA air force to the counterinsurgency cannot be understated. First, it provided the counterinsurgents with an air reconnaissance capability, both from a tactical perspective in support of advancing columns, as well as being able to supply intelligence from which to plan operations.⁷³ Second, it gave the ANC and 5 Commando a close air support capability.⁷⁴ Without this capability, the counterinsurgency campaign could not conceivably have succeeded, at least not in the relatively short time period it did. As Hoare makes quite clear in his book on the Congo campaign, the “flying artillery” provided to 5 Commando by the Cuban exiles proved a decisive force multiplier in many battles, given his own unit’s modest strength. During Dragon Rouge, the dropping of Belgian paratroopers from U.S. C-130s was preceded by two B-26Ks that conducted strafing runs on Simba positions.⁷⁵ In this sense, the air force facilitated counterinsurgent battlefield successes, and did so in a way that minimized casualties among the counterinsurgents. Third, the CIA planes not only conducted psychological warfare through the traditional means of dropping leaflets, but their very presence was a psychological weapon in its own right. As the senior NSC official responsible for Africa noted, the “relatively heavily armed B-26Ks represent such an escalation of anything ever experienced in this part of Africa that they have caused a profound psychological shock.”⁷⁶ Che Guevara also noted that despite the planes being “antiquated,” that “this little air force is sowing terror among the Congolese comrades.”⁷⁷ Fourth, it allowed the counterinsurgents to conduct interdiction missions against insurgent supply lines.⁷⁸ For instance, the T-28 that crashed on 17 February 1965 with CIA paramilitary officer Richard Holm on board was conducting an air reconnaissance search for rebel arms crossing the Sudan border.⁷⁹

Negative Side Effects

Among the ironies of the CIA air force’s “success” against the rebels was its possible provocation or at the very least exacerbation of the Stanleyville hostage crisis. Substantial evidence indicates that not only did the rebels blame the air attacks on the United States, as opposed to Belgium, and that the Americans captured in Stanleyville were treated worse than the Europeans as a result, but also that the hostages may have been released in exchange for assurances that the air force would be grounded.⁸⁰ An internal NSC memorandum noted that the “rebel leadership has made it clear that the official Americans are hostage against air attacks on Stanleyville (they apparently don’t blame or threaten Europeans).”⁸¹ Michael Hoyt, the U.S. Consul in Stanleyville being held hostage, was allowed to send a cable warning Washington that further air

reconnaissance of the Stanleyville area would provoke rebel retaliation against the American hostages. Similarly, following air strikes against rebel targets in October, the rebels repeatedly threatened to kill the hostages, and in some cases did execute European hostages.⁸² Also noteworthy is that rebel Foreign Minister Kanza suggested the rebels might free the hostages if the U.S. grounded its air force.⁸³

Clearly, the air attacks had proved a considerable irritant to the rebels, and for the U.S. leadership, their success was a troubling conundrum. The CIA's air force was a "deniable" covert operation, and a very successful one at that. To have withdrawn the air force at that time would almost certainly have changed the course of the conflict, allowing the rebels to regain the initiative. Yet, continuing the air operations increased the risk to American lives. In the end, the U.S. decided that both the Congo and the hostages could be "saved," and that a short-term military operation to free the hostages could remove them from the equation and allow the air operations to proceed.

Following Dragon Rouge, the CIA air force continued to increase in size, adding additional B-26Ks, and they remained an integral part of the counterinsurgency until the collapse of the rebellion in late 1965. In the aftermath of the rebellion, the air force remained in place, most likely as a deterrent and hedge against the possibility of a resurgence in rebel activity. By mid-1966, the air force had been reduced to approximately twelve Cuban pilots and 100 WIGMO personnel. The operation was finally closed down in mid-1967. By this time, the need for foreign pilots declined as Congolese pilots started returning from European military schools.⁸⁴

STANLEYVILLE

The capture of Stanleyville created a crisis for policymakers in Washington. Although the rebellion was not initially directed against foreigners, "General" Olenga was fixated on the idea that U.S. planes and mercenaries were fighting with central government forces. Consequently, the American consular officials at Stanleyville would be held as hostages. Shortly after their capture, the CIA began contemplating different methods to secure their release or escape, and the CIA's former Congo chief, Larry Devlin, was recalled to assist in these efforts.⁸⁵ The first attempt at a rescue, known as Operation Flag Pole, called for the CIA and military personnel based at the Embassy in Leopoldville to participate in a helicopter rescue mission. To be staged out of Lisala, a T-28 would strafe the area around the U.S. consulate in Stanleyville with machine gun fire and rockets, after which helicopters would extract the consulate staff. But, before it could be put into effect, this operation was canceled. The town of Lisala was about to be taken over by the rebels, making its use as a

forward operating base untenable. Also, Consul Hoyt informed the Embassy that one of the CIA communications men was not at the Consulate but hiding elsewhere in the city. Furthermore, Olenga had just arrived in Stanleyville and demanded a meeting with the consular corps, thereby raising the prospect that Hoyt could negotiate the release of his staff, although it soon became apparent that Olenga had no intention of releasing them.⁸⁶

A more diplomatic method involved the dispatch of Devlin in late August to meet with rebel political leader Christophe Gbenye, whom he had known while station chief. Gbenye was traveling abroad at the time. The hope was that Devlin could meet him while he was transiting Burundi back to Stanleyville. Devlin traveled from Washington to Bujumbura and briefly met with Gbenye. However, Gbenye was non-committal to the idea of pushing for the release of the US officials, most likely because he wielded little influence over General Olenga, the man responsible for incarcerating them.⁸⁷

In the course of the next couple of months, the CIA considered additional rescue options and ensured that the assets to conduct a rescue would be in place. As noted, the decision to dispatch the B-26Ks was influenced by the need to have an aircraft capable of flying to Stanleyville. The CIA also dispatched a team of seventeen Cuban exiles led by paramilitary officer William "Rip" Robertson. During this period, the Agency developed numerous plans for a rescue attempt, but DCI Helms expressed the opinion that the chances for success were "lousy."⁸⁸ One of the plans, called Operation Low Beam, envisaged Robertson's team going up the Congo River in motorboats and conducting a nighttime rescue, but it was abandoned as impractical.⁸⁹

The result of these failed attempts at rescue, combined with a lack of success in negotiating the hostages' release, led the Johnson administration to reluctantly support a military operation. In late October, as government forces gradually drove back the insurgents, hundreds of Belgians and more than a dozen other Americans residing in Stanleyville were placed under arrest, joining the U.S. consular officials in captivity. This action led both the U.S. and Belgian governments to formulate a combined rescue plan. The military operation they devised, codenamed Dragon Rouge, consisted of U.S. C-130s transporting a battalion of Belgian paratroopers to Stanleyville who would attempt to rescue the hostages. This airborne operation was to be coordinated with a ground advance by the ANC spearheaded by 5 Commando. Colonel Vandewalle was given the overall command of this force. One of the ANC columns would include Robertson and the Cuban exiles, whose assignment was to enter Stanleyville and rescue the American hostages. By one account, all the Cuban exiles had beards and were wearing dark wool caps. Vandewalle

observed that the Cubans brought their own vehicles, and had an impressive amount of firepower, with at least three personal weapons for each man.⁹⁰ As they were expected to be among the first in the column to enter the city, they were placed under Hoare's command immediately prior to the final advance on Stanleyville. According to Hoare, "I stopped to talk to a truckload of Cubans who had just joined me. I called them 58 Commando and they were proud of the title. They were as tough a bunch of men as I have ever had the honour to command. Their leader was a remarkable man and the most dedicated soldier I have known."⁹¹

On 24 November 1964, Dragon Rouge commenced. Following airstrikes by the B-26Ks, Belgian paratroops were dropped from the C-130s and secured the airport before entering Stanleyville. By the time the paratroops had fought their way into the city, the Simbas had killed some fifty of the hostages, including an American missionary. The ground force that contained the CIA unit arrived shortly thereafter. Having secured the American consular officials, Robertson and the Cuban exiles set about rescuing other U.S. missionaries in the area. In the aftermath of the rescue, this unit was withdrawn from the Congo.⁹² Although the risk was present of American missionaries elsewhere in the Congo being killed by the Simbas, the White House record noted that President Johnson "doesn't want to get tied in on the Congo and have another Korea, another Vietnam, just because of somebody wandering around searching for 'Jesus Christ.'"⁹³ As such, he was unwilling to sanction further American involvement in rescue operations, apart from the transport of the Belgian paratroops to the city of Paulis as part of Operation Dragon Noir.

MARITIME ASSISTANCE

With 5 Commando and the ANC having closed off the Congo border with Uganda and Sudan in the spring 1965, the one major supply route that remained for the rebels was from Tanzania across Lake Tanganyika. As the number of supplies reaching the rebels along this route steadily increased, the CIA was determined to interdict the arms flow. To do so would necessitate creating a maritime patrol for the Congolese government. This task was given to Thomas Clines, the deputy head of the DDP's Special Operations Division maritime branch. Clines faced two problems: how to transport suitable maritime craft into the middle of Africa, and to find crews to man them. The first problem was solved when an idea, proposed by CIA contract agent Edwin Wilson, was to cut the boats into sections, transport them by C-130s to the lakeside city of Albertville, and then reassemble them.⁹⁴ The type of boat that was eventually sent was the U.S. Navy patrol craft called the Swift boat. Several of these boats were being used at the time by Cuban exiles based

out of Nicaragua. This boat was fifty feet long and was armed with three heavy machine guns as well as an 81 mm mortar. Due to the absence of trained Congolese to operate the boats, the CIA contracted sixteen Cuban exiles who had previous experience launching seaborne attacks against Cuban targets and also took the boats they were using.⁹⁵ An additional thirty sailors from 5 Commando were given training by the Cubans. U.S. Navy SEAL Lieutenant James Hawes was brought from Vietnam and placed in charge of this unit, which reported directly to the CIA station in Leopoldville.⁹⁶ In addition to the half dozen or so Swift boats, the maritime patrol included several troop-carrying barges. The CIA also provided radar and armaments for the Belgian steamer *Ermans*, the ship that would eventually become Hoare's "flagship."⁹⁷

Although the maritime patrol had been constituted nearly a year after the rebellion began, it became increasingly effective in preventing Simba traffic on the lake, whereas this traffic had previously been relatively unencumbered apart from the occasional air attack.⁹⁸ Nevertheless, when attempting to prevent Ernesto (Che) Guevara's force of Cubans and other Simbas from crossing into the Congo from Tanzania, the maritime force was clearly inadequate to the task, though Che noted that the maritime presence did cause them some difficulties in making the crossing.⁹⁹ In addition to the lake patrol, the maritime force played a critical role in the last months of the war, when operations were conducted to eliminate the Simba mountain bastion known as the Fizi-Baraka pocket, which was defended by some 5,000 rebels plus more than 100 Cubans under Che Guevara.¹⁰⁰ Because its excellent defensive location made a land operation "impracticable," Hoare decided to launch a combined air, amphibious, and land operation, in which the maritime force boats, including the *Ermans*, would be employed for an amphibious landing of 200 mercenaries to the enemy's rear, with the B-26Ks providing air cover.¹⁰¹

INTELLIGENCE COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

Apart from the reconnaissance carried out by its "air force," CIA intelligence collection in the Congo was reliant mainly upon its intelligence relationships with senior Congolese officials such as Mobutu and Victor Nendaka, thus giving it access to intelligence collected by the ANC and the Congolese Sûreté. The CIA also worked closely with Vandewalle and the Belgian military mission, and with Hoare and 5 Commando. Prior to the capture of Stanleyville, the CIA chief there, David Grinwis, had a close working relationship with the ANC's intelligence section. He also appears to have had a number of agents reporting to him, but with the city's fall, this network collapsed.¹⁰² No evidence indicates that the CIA was able to recruit any spies within the Simba ranks, or that this constituted a high

priority for the CIA station. Indeed, as a station priority, intelligence collection seemed to rank below the paramilitary operations being conducted, or put slightly differently, intelligence collection was often treated as being necessary to support operational activities rather than to enhance policymakers' understanding of the conflict.¹⁰³

The recruiting and running of agents does not seem to have been a significant function of the Station, almost certainly because the Agency Station was itself quite small and its officers were preoccupied mainly with handling the burgeoning paramilitary operations. To the extent that agents were run, they were officials in the Congolese government, rather than in the rebellion.¹⁰⁴ Moreover, many of the CIA officers assigned to the Congo in 1964–1965 had little or no experience working in Africa. Richard Holm, assigned in late 1964 to replace Grinwis as the CIA chief in Stanleyville and tasked with collecting intelligence on the “presence, activities, and supply lines of the Simba units,” had just returned from a paramilitary posting in Laos and Thailand, after which he served a short period of time working on North Africa issues.¹⁰⁵

This lack of Africa background was true, not only for the operations officers assigned to the Congo, but also for the analysts working on the Congo at CIA Headquarters in Langley, Virginia. For instance, the lead analyst working on Congo issues during the rebellion was Sam Adams, a junior intelligence officer with no Africa background. Fortunately for the CIA, Adams proved to be a first-rate analyst who was able to keep policymakers regularly informed of Congo developments.¹⁰⁶ Immediately after Stanleyville's fall, the Congo desk was tasked with producing a daily situation report, although this later changed to a weekly report.¹⁰⁷ These reports covered a full range of topics, such as Congolese political developments, the Congo's relations with other countries and with the Organization of African Unity (OAU), updates on military operations, information on the rebels both inside the Congo and abroad, information on the Congolese military and mercenaries, and reporting on arms deliveries to the rebels, among many other issues. In addition to providing analysis of developments inside the Congo, other country desks were also tasked with providing intelligence on outside support to the rebels.

CIA Priorities

A key intelligence task was to track arms shipments to the rebels. Intelligence on this subject was used not only for assessments of rebel strength, but perhaps more importantly, to target the supply convoys. By knowing when arms shipments had arrived in neighboring countries, the CIA's air force could be given warning and directed to intercept them once they entered the Congo.¹⁰⁸ But the Agency's success in tracking these shipments is

questionable. For instance, as of late February 1965, a senior State Department official attached to the Congo Working Group requested intelligence from Britain on arms supplies arriving via Tanzania and Uganda, complaining that U.S. intelligence on this subject was thin.¹⁰⁹ Ultimately, the arms shipments ceased, not because of any CIA action, but after 5 Commando and the ANC closed off the border with Uganda and Sudan. Having closed off this main supply route, rebel supplies had to be ferried across Lake Tanganyika from Tanzania.¹¹⁰

Several additional collection and analysis priorities should be mentioned. Tracking diplomatic support for the rebels and the negotiations that were being brokered by the OAU were topics that feature prominently in CIA analyses.¹¹¹ Prior to Dragon Rouge, another top collection priority was to ascertain the location and condition of U.S. consular personnel in Stanleyville, as well as to collect intelligence on Simba defenses in that area.¹¹² A number of intelligence reports generated on this topic were used in the planning of various rescue operations, including Dragon Rouge.¹¹³ Finally, throughout the course of the conflict, another of the CIA's main intelligence collection priorities was to determine whether or not foreign advisors were assisting the Simbas. Numerous intelligence reports suggested the presence of Chinese, Algerian, and other advisers operating inside the Congo or in one of the neighboring countries, although these mostly proved false.¹¹⁴ The fear among U.S. officials was that the rebels' single disadvantage related not to the quality of their armaments, but instead to the absence of any formal training in guerrilla warfare. The belief was that only a small number of advisers would be needed to transform the Simbas into an effective military force that could defeat the government forces. Therefore, CIA collectors and analysts tracked this issue closely.

Shortcomings and Failures

Despite the CIA's best efforts to accurately assess the conflict, several notable intelligence failures occurred. First, policymakers were apparently caught unprepared when rebel forces captured Stanleyville. Agency analysts were also overoptimistic prior to Dragon Rouge, believing that the rebellion was on its last legs, whereas in fact it would continue for another year, not for the least of reasons that the U.S.–Belgian intervention had resulted in increased diplomatic and military support for the rebels from abroad.¹¹⁵ In this regard, the intelligence failure most often associated with the Congo was the CIA's inability to learn of the presence of the contingent of Cuban advisers led by Che Guevara.¹¹⁶

Following an official trip on behalf of the Cuban government, in which Guevara visited eight African countries and also traveled to China from 17

December 1964 to 14 March 1965, he subsequently disappeared from public sight.¹¹⁷ Despite growing evidence of the presence of Cubans in the Congo in the summer 1965, such as the acquisition of the diary of a Cuban killed during a raid against the mercenaries, the idea that a large number of Cubans were operating in the Congo found few supporters in Washington. Not until September 1965, shortly before the start of operations against the Fizi-Baraka pocket, did the evidence become overwhelming, and this view changed.¹¹⁸

Regardless of the improved military performance enabled by the Cuban advisors, the rebels were quickly defeated in the Fizi-Baraka pocket. This military defeat, combined with a newfound desire on the part of the Congo's neighbors to drop their support for the rebels, particularly following the 13 October replacement of Tshombe—who was disliked by most African leaders because of his use of white mercenaries—effectively ended the insurgency. In late November, Mobutu would launch a *coup d'état* and assume the presidency. He would remain president, backed by the U.S., until himself overthrown in 1997 by the former Simba leader Laurent Kabila.

RELUCTANT INTERVENORS

Simultaneous to Washington policymakers' consideration of augmenting the U.S. military's advisory presence in Vietnam with combat troops was the perceived need to respond to the deteriorating situation in the Congo. The concern about falling dominoes in Asia led to similar concern about Africa. With a key ally on the brink of being overthrown, threatened by an insurgency supported by the Soviet Bloc, China, Cuba, Egypt, Algeria, and the "radical African" states, a costly and potentially open-ended U.S. military intervention may have seemed the only plausible option of "saving" the Congo. Instead, despite facing such a grave situation, U.S. policymakers from the start ruled out American military intervention. Wary of taking on too many military commitments, they also feared being tarnished with the "neo-colonialist" brush. Consequently, less overt means were required to achieve the policy objective of maintaining a friendly government in Leopoldville. Opting for a covert CIA paramilitary operation, rather than an overt U.S. military intervention, allowed the Johnson administration to not only limit U.S. liability from a political, diplomatic, and military perspective, but also ensured that the costs of the counterinsurgency mission would be minimized. Moreover, avoiding overt U.S. military intervention was predicated on the fear that countries such as the Soviet Union or China would respond to this escalation by also becoming heavily involved in the conflict, thus creating a quagmire. As it happened, only following the U.S. airlift of Belgian paratroopers during

Operation Dragon Rouge did foreign powers begin to make the Congo a major political issue and to radically increase their previously modest support to the rebels.

The Congo venture represents only one of many “successful” CIA-led efforts designed to bolster a pro-U.S. government faced with an insurgency without committing a large American military force. Admittedly, the Congo “success” can be attributed in large part to a combination of the military victories achieved by 5 Commando and the ANC, and to the ineptitude of the insurgents in securing their gains. Yet, without CIA assistance, conceptualizing how the insurgency could have been defeated is difficult. The CIA provided critical force multipliers that would have been unavailable to the counterinsurgents, short of a large military intervention. From the perspective of Western counterinsurgency theory, the Congo case breaks many of the rules that were considered the norm, in both the early 1960s and the current context of Afghanistan and Iraq. This theory is predicated on several principles, such as the need to “win hearts and minds” by “protecting the population” in the face of insurgent “intimidation.” These principles were scarcely, if at all, in evidence in the Congo.

The Relevance of Counterinsurgency Theory

Counterinsurgency theory is also predicated on the idea that large numbers of security forces are required. In the early 1960s, the ratio of 10–20 counterinsurgents for every insurgent was often touted as the baseline for success. More recently, the official metric has been 40–50 counterinsurgents per 1,000 people. Again, the Congo proved an exception to the rule, with the counterinsurgents numbering in the tens of thousands rather than the hundreds of thousands. Then as now, counterinsurgency was believed to be a process that took many years. Yet, in the Congo, the insurgency lasted less than two years before it was defeated.

By the logic of counterinsurgency theory, the “success” achieved in the Congo would seem unthinkable. How then to account for it? Can the results be attributed merely to the fact that the contest occurred in Africa rather than Southeast Asia, and that perhaps a cultural component to counterinsurgency exists that means that there are no “one size fits all” approaches? Likewise, can geographic or technological factors be said to have played a role? Did the lack of an overbearing bureaucracy mean that the CIA officers in the field could “innovate” faster than could a large military organization, or at least not be hamstrung by a complex chain of command? Were the counterinsurgents merely lucky?

Rather than seeking to answer these questions the main purpose here has been to show that counterinsurgency theorists must first ask these questions

before suggesting that large-scale U.S. military intervention is the only means by which “success” in counterinsurgency can be achieved, or that “success” is impossible if the intelligence services play a leading role as opposed to a subordinate one.

As with any large-scale intervention involving the U.S. military, theorists must account for the problems created, rather than solved, by taking such an approach. The cases of Vietnam, Iraq, and Afghanistan have demonstrated that large military commitments not only increase the national financial burden, risk significant casualties, and make the “winning of hearts and minds” at home and in the host-nation a major issue, but also create otherwise artificial credibility issues and time pressures. By contrast, in cases such as the Congo, where the CIA has taken the lead and worked with proxy forces, the U.S. limited its liability, thereby ensuring that many of these self-generated problems never arose.

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- ² For a discussion of this point, see my article “Agents for Stability or Chaos: Conceptualizing Intelligence ‘Relevance’ in Counterinsurgency,” *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*, Vol. 34, No. 3, March 2011, pp. 212–227.
- ³ This is particularly true for official histories. See Michael Warner, “U.S. Intelligence and Vietnam: The Official Version(s),” *Intelligence and National Security*, Vol. 25, No. 5, 2010, pp. 611–637.
- ⁴ Stephen R. Weissman, *American Foreign Policy in the Congo 1960–1964* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1974); Sean Kelly, *America’s Tyrant: The CIA and Mobutu of Zaire* (Washington, DC: The American University Press, 1993).
- ⁵ Frank R. Villafana, *Cold War in the Congo: The Confrontation of Cuban Military Forces, 1960–1967* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Books, 2009); Piero Gleijeses, *Conflicting Missions: Havana, Washington, and Africa, 1959–1976* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 2002).
- ⁶ Larry Devlin, *Chief of Station, Congo: Fighting the Cold War in a Hot Zone* (New York: Public Affairs, 2007); Richard L. Holm, *The American Agent: My Life in the CIA* (London: St. Ermin’s Press, 2003). Unfortunately, the Foreign Relations of the United States (FRUS) volume dealing with the Congo from 1960–1968 remains classified.

- ⁷ Mulele would shoot himself with blank cartridges to achieve this effect. His followers were mostly armed with spears and poisoned arrows, although they did also employ captured ANC small arms. Because of its isolation, the Mulele rebels were unable to receive arms shipments from abroad.
- ⁸ Stephen L. Weigert, *Traditional Religion and Guerrilla Warfare in Modern Africa* (London: Macmillan Press, 1996), p. 57.
- ⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 60.
- ¹⁰ Stephen L. Weigert, *Traditional Religion and Guerrilla Warfare in Modern Africa*, pp. 54–61; Renee C. Fox, Willy de Craemer, and Jean-Marie Ribeaucourt, “‘The Second Independence’: A Case Study of the Kwilu Rebellion in the Congo,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, Vol. 8, No. 1, October 1965, pp. 78–109; Claude E. Welch, Jr., “Ideological Foundations of Revolution in Kwilu,” *African Studies Review*, Vol. 18, No. 2, September 1975, pp. 116–128; Mark Traugott, “The Economic Origins of the Kwilu Rebellion,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, Vol. 21, No. 3, July 1979, pp. 459–479.
- ¹¹ Leopoldville was the capital of the Belgian Congo and Brazzaville was the capital of the French Congo. Consequently, the two states would be referred to as Congo (Leopoldville) and Congo (Brazzaville).
- ¹² M. Crawford Young, “Post-Independence Politics in the Congo,” *Transition*, No. 26, 1996, p. 39.
- ¹³ Major Thomas P. Odom, “Dragon Operations: Hostage Rescues in the Congo, 1964–1965,” Leavenworth Papers No. 14, Combat Studies Institute, 1988; “The Congo: With Magic Juice and Lucky Grass,” *Time*, 12 June 1964.
- ¹⁴ Memorandum for the President from Brubeck, 15 June 1964. Referring to the rebel victories in the eastern Congo, Brubeck observed, “well-armed troops are being routed by Pygmies carrying spears and machetes.” For more details on the composition of the “Popular Army,” see M. Crawford Young, “Post-Independence Politics in the Congo,” p. 40.
- ¹⁵ Keith Wheelock and M. Crawford Young, “The Congolese Rebellion of 1964,” June 1965, in Ernest K. Lindley Files 61–69, Box #4, Lot 71D273, RG #59, MLR 5441, National Archives, College Park, MD. As this study notes, the Gbenye regime was a “phantom government, replete with titles, but lacking the ability and resources to administer the rebel held areas.”
- ¹⁶ Memorandum for the President from Brubeck, 6 August 1964.
- ¹⁷ “The Congo: Elation for Moise,” *Time*, 11 September 1964.
- ¹⁸ Terence Lyons, “Keeping Africa off the Agenda,” in Warren I. Cohen and Nancy Bernkopf Tucker, eds., *Lyndon Johnson Confronts the World: American Foreign Policy 1963–1968* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp. 245–277.
- ¹⁹ By one account, the White House was very cautious about the effect of the Congo crisis on the 1964 election. Due to the fear of American diplomats and missionaries being killed in reprisal attacks resulting from the CIA air attacks, they ordered all air activity stopped in October. The Stanleyville operation

was also planned to occur after the U.S. election. See Sean Kelly, *America's Tyrant: The CIA and Mobutu of Zaire*, pp. 129, 152.

- ²⁰ In 1959, the Congo produced 9 percent of the "Free World's" copper, 49 percent of its cobalt, 69 percent of its industrial diamonds, and 6.5 percent of its tin, as well as a number of specialized metals used in the nuclear and electrical industry. See Stephen R. Weissman, *American Foreign Policy in the Congo 1960–1964*, p. 28.
- ²¹ Peter J. Schraeder, *United States Foreign Policy Towards Africa: Incrementalism, Crisis and Change* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 51–77. Throughout this period, there was considerable tension within the U.S. government about supporting African nationalists as opposed to the interests of the colonial and ex-colonial powers.
- ²² Memorandum from Brubeck, 11 August 1964. This document, and all subsequent documents that are not otherwise labeled, were acquired via the Declassified Documents Reference System.
- ²³ Message from CINCSRIKE to JCS, 9 September 1964.
- ²⁴ Richard L. Holm, *The American Agent: My Life in the CIA*, p. 14.
- ²⁵ U.S. Army attaché Leo message, 10 September 1964.
- ²⁶ Major Thomas P. Odom, "Dragon Operations: Hostage Rescues in the Congo," p. 8; and Sean Kelly, *America's Tyrant: The CIA and Mobutu of Zaire*, p. 115.
- ²⁷ Memorandum for the files from Brubeck, 11 August 1964.
- ²⁸ Sean Kelly, *America's Tyrant: The CIA and Mobutu of Zaire*, p. 112.
- ²⁹ Message from CINCSRIKE to JCS, 9 September 1964.
- ³⁰ In the mid-1960s, the U.S. was involved in at least a dozen counterinsurgencies in countries such as Thailand and Colombia. Beginning in 1962, the U.S. Overseas Internal Defense Policy, which served as the U.S. government's counterinsurgency doctrine, laid out an inter-agency approach to counterinsurgency in which the U.S. military's role was mainly limited to indirect supply and advisory functions.
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- ³² "The military chiefs were looking at the growing involvement in Vietnam in the context of their overall resources and their ability to deal with trouble spots around the world. That is why they were not very interested in volunteering to commit any forces in a place like the Congo." Interview of Jonathan Dayton Stoddart, the Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training Foreign Affairs Oral History Project, 19 January 2000. In 1964, Stoddart was serving as Deputy Director of the Near East, South Asia and African Region, Office of International Security Affairs in the Office of the Secretary of Defense. See also cable from Godley to SECSTATE, 30 October 1965.

- ³³ Piero Gleijeses. *Conflicting Missions: Havana, Washington, and Africa, 1959–1976*. The quote referencing Vietnam is from General Adams, 9 September 1964.
- ³⁴ Memorandum for the President from Brubeck, 6 August 1964.
- ³⁵ FRUS, 1964–1968 Vol. XXIV, Africa, Document 191.
- ³⁶ *Ibid.*; Prior to independence, the U.S. maintained a Consulate General in Leopoldville. For more information on this period, see interview of Ambassador Owen W. Roberts, the Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training Foreign Affairs Oral History Project, 11 February 1991.
- ³⁷ Due to the presence of American mining interests in Katanga, the U.S. had maintained a consulate in Elizabethville before independence.
- ³⁸ According to *The New York Times*, at the time of the Simba rebellion, the CIA station in Leopoldville had “mushroomed overnight into a virtual embassy and miniature war department.” See Tom Wicker, John W. Finney, Max Frankel, and E.W. Kenworthy, “How CIA Put ‘Instant Air Force’ Into Congo,” *The New York Times*, 25 April 1966. Upon his return to the Congo as the new station chief in July 1965, Devlin noted that “The CIA office was considerably larger than the one I had left two years previously. Paramilitary operations inevitably mean expansion.” Larry Devlin, *Chief of Station, Congo*, p. 227. By the 1970s, the Africa Division was said to have included 300 officials and would continue to expand as a result of its operations in Angola. Rene Lemarchand, “The CIA in Africa: How Central? How Intelligent?,” *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, Vol. 14, No. 3, 1976, pp. 401–426; John Stockwell, *In Search of Enemies: A CIA Story* (London: Andre Deutsch, Ltd., 1978).
- ³⁹ Devlin covers this period in his memoirs, although numerous other books have focused squarely on this topic. See, for instance, Ludo de Witte, *The Assassination of Lumumba* (New York: Verso, 2002).
- ⁴⁰ These figures included Joseph Mobutu, Victor Nendaka, and Albert Ndele. See also Tom Wicker et al., “How CIA Put ‘Instant Air Force’ Into Congo.” Although figures such as Mobutu had been involved with the CIA prior to Lumumba’s overthrow, these ties became increasingly close in its aftermath.
- ⁴¹ Tom Wicker et al., “How CIA Put ‘Instant Air Force’ Into Congo;” Victor Marchetti and John D. Marks, *The CIA and the Cult of Intelligence* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1974), pp. 117–118; FRUS, Document 191.
- ⁴² Sean Kelly, *America’s Tyrant: The CIA and Mobutu of Zaire*; Jerry Puren, *Mercenary Commander* (Alberton: Galago Press, 1986), pp. 196, 206.
- ⁴³ Larry Devlin, *Chief of Station, Congo*, p. 232.
- ⁴⁴ Christopher Robbins, *Air America: The True Story of the CIA’s Mercenary Fliers in Covert Operations from Pre-War China to Present Day Nicaragua* (London: Corgi Books, 1979), p. 100.
- ⁴⁵ As Lewis Hoffacker, the Chief of the Embassy’s Political section during 1962–1963, later noted, “the CIA was running most of the show” in the

Congo. Interview, Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training Foreign Affairs Oral History Project, 17 July 1998.

- ⁴⁶ Several years earlier, when Tshombe ran the newly formed independent “state” of Katanga, Hoare’s mercenary unit was called “4 Commando.” See Mike Hoare, *The Road to Kalamata: A Congo Mercenary’s Personal Memoir* (Boulder, CO: Paladin Press, 2008).
- ⁴⁷ Vandewalle’s time in the Congo ended following Dragon Rouge.
- ⁴⁸ Cable from Embassy Leopoldville to Secretary of State, 27 August 1964.
- ⁴⁹ Sean Kelly, *America’s Tyrant: The CIA and Mobutu of Zaire*, p. 121.
- ⁵⁰ CIA memorandum on Congo situation, 4 September 1964.
- ⁵¹ See, for instance, Message from U.S. Army attaché Leopoldville, 2 December 1964; Richard L. Holm, *The American Agent: My Life in the CIA*, p. 18; Larry Devlin, *Chief of Station, Congo*, pp. 165, 228–229, 249, 255.
- ⁵² See, for instance, Richard L. Holm, *The American Agent: My Life in the CIA*, p. 18.
- ⁵³ Message from U.S. Army attaché Leopoldville, 2 December 1964.
- ⁵⁴ Larry Devlin, *Chief of Station, Congo*, p. 165.
- ⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 229.
- ⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 253–255; Anthony Mockler, *The New Mercenaries* (London: Sidgwick and Jackson, 1985), pp. 111–161.
- ⁵⁷ Tom Wicker et al., “How CIA Put ‘Instant Air Force’ Into Congo.”
- ⁵⁸ Frank R. Villafana, *Cold War in the Congo*, p. 37. Richard Holm notes that the Cuban exile pilot Juan Peron had been sent to the Congo in November 1963 after receiving training on the T-6. During his Congo service, he also trained in the T-28 and the C-46. See Richard L. Holm, “A Plane Crash, Rescue, and Recovery—A Close Call in Africa,” Center for the Study of Intelligence, Historical Perspectives, Washington, D.C., Winter 1999–2000. In 1963, the CIA also hired Wallace Moessmer to supervise and train pilots in the Congo. “Obituary, Wallace Moessmer, 70; Pilot for CIA, Retired Navy Officer,” *St. Louis (Missouri) Post-Dispatch*, 24 October 1992. Ed Dearborn arrived in the Congo in October 1963. See Christopher Robbins, *Air America: The True Story of the CIA’s Mercenary Fliers*, pp. 99–100.
- ⁵⁹ Frank R. Villafana, *Cold War in the Congo*, pp. 39–51; Sean Kelly, *America’s Tyrant: The CIA and Mobutu of Zaire*, p. 115.
- ⁶⁰ Victor Marchetti and John D. Marks, *The CIA and the Cult of Intelligence*, p. 136.
- ⁶¹ Frank R. Villafana, *Cold War in the Congo*, p. 38. The process of hiring Cuban exile pilots for the Congo would continue until 1967.
- ⁶² “The Congo: Is Anyone in Control?,” *Time*, 26 June 1964; Major Thomas P. Odom, “Dragon Operations: Hostage Rescues in the Congo, 1964–1965,” Fn 11; Sean Kelly, *America’s Tyrant: The CIA and Mobutu of Zaire*, p. 100.
- ⁶³ Cable from Embassy Leopoldville to Secretary of State, 27 August 1964.

- ⁶⁴ CIA, The Congo Situation, 25 August 1964.
- ⁶⁵ Victor Marchetti and John D. Marks, *The CIA and the Cult of Intelligence*, pp. 137–153.
- ⁶⁶ Belgian Army Colonel Vandewalle attributed the idea to arm the T-6s to the CIA station chief in Leopoldville. See Sean Kelly, *America's Tyrant: The CIA and Mobutu of Zaire*, p. 96.
- ⁶⁷ Adams, in Piero Gleijeses, *Conflicting Missions*, pp. 13, 16; Larry Devlin, *Chief of Station, Congo*, p. 225; Stephen R. Weissman, "CIA Covert Action in Zaire and Angola: Patterns and Consequences," *Political Science Quarterly*, Vol. 94, No. 2, Summer 1979, pp. 263–286. According to Jerry Puren, *Mercenary Commander*, p. 200, the CIA also supplied napalm bombs to the air force, although this is the only source for this information.
- ⁶⁸ FO 1100/12. Note on meeting with aircraft maintenance men.
- ⁶⁹ According to Holm, the air operations officer at Bunia was a former WWII Polish fighter pilot named "Big Bill" Wyrozemski. His unit consisted of a "couple of Cuban pilots, two mechanics, a radio operator, and a logistics officer." See Richard L. Holm, *The American Agent: My Life in the CIA*, pp. 25, 27.
- ⁷⁰ Sean Kelly, *America's Tyrant: The CIA and Mobutu of Zaire*, pp. 96, 133–134. Two cases of friendly fire are referred to in Mike Hoare, *The Road to Kalamata*, pp. 140, 201.
- ⁷¹ Major Thomas P. Odom, "Dragon Operations," p. 40.
- ⁷² CIA Situation in the Congo, 16 December 1964.
- ⁷³ See, for instance, Mike Hoare, *The Road to Kalamata*, pp. 87, 246, and Mike Hoare, *Congo Warriors* (Boulder, CO: Paladin Press, 2008), p. 37. Prior to the Fizi-Baraka operation, Hoare made a personal reconnaissance in one of the B-26Ks in order to select a beach for the amphibious landing, *The Road to Kalamata*, p. 255.
- ⁷⁴ See for instance: Sean Kelly, *America's Tyrant: The CIA and Mobutu of Zaire*, p. 128; Mike Hoare, *Congo Warriors*, pp. 170–171; Lloyd Garrison, "Mercenaries Leading First Big Drive on Stanleyville," *The New York Times*, 6 November 1964; Lloyd Garrison, "Congo Mercenaries Get Supplies, Food and Pay," *The New York Times*, 10 November 1964; "Congo Planes Hit Albertville in Softening Up," *The Washington Post*, 27 August 1964; "3 Congo B-26's Attack Besiegers of a Column," *The New York Times*, 11 February 1965.
- ⁷⁵ Sean Kelly, *America's Tyrant: The CIA and Mobutu of Zaire*, p. 146.
- ⁷⁶ Memorandum for Bundy from Brubeck, 5 October 1964.
- ⁷⁷ Ernesto "Che" Guevara, *The African Dream: The Diaries of the Revolutionary War in the Congo* (London: The Harvill Press, 2001), pp. 184, 229.
- ⁷⁸ CIA Intelligence Memorandum, 30 December 1964; CIA Situation in the Congo Report, 21 April 1965.
- ⁷⁹ Richard L. Holm, "A Plane Crash, Rescue, and Recovery: A Close Call in Africa."

- ⁸⁰ A detailed account of the treatment of the U.S. consular personnel in Stanleyville can be found in: Michael P. E. Hoyt, *Captive in the Congo: A Consul's Return to the Heart of Darkness* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2000).
- ⁸¹ Memorandum for Bundy from Brubeck, 5 October 1964.
- ⁸² CIA Congo Situation, 6 October 1964.
- ⁸³ CIA Congo Situation, 3 November 1964.
- ⁸⁴ Stephen R. Weissman, "CIA Covert Action in Zaire and Angola: Patterns and Consequences," p. 272.
- ⁸⁵ Michael P. E. Hoyt, *Captive in the Congo*, p. 60. Shortly after the city's capture, Hoyt quotes Grinwis as saying "I notice Devlin is back . . . That means they realize this is really serious."
- ⁸⁶ Sean Kelly, *America's Tyrant: The CIA and Mobutu of Zaire*, pp. 110–111; Larry Devlin, *Chief of Station, Congo*, pp. 211–212.
- ⁸⁷ For details, see Larry Devlin, *Chief of Station, Congo*, p. 212; Sean Kelly, *America's Tyrant: The CIA and Mobutu of Zaire*, p. 136; Michael P. E. Hoyt, *Captive in the Congo*, p. 159; and CIA intelligence cable, 14 October 1964.
- ⁸⁸ Sam Adams, quoted by Piero Gleijeses, *Conflicting Missions*, pp. 18–19.
- ⁸⁹ Sean Kelly, *America's Tyrant: The CIA and Mobutu of Zaire*, pp. 141–142. A plan put forward by U.S. Strike Command, known as Operation Golden Hawk, that would involve a rescue attempt by U.S. Green Berets was similarly rejected. See *ibid.*, pp. 123–124.
- ⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 141–142, 148.
- ⁹¹ Mike Hoare, *Congo Warriors*, p. 118.
- ⁹² Sean Kelly, *America's Tyrant: The CIA and Mobutu of Zaire*, p. 148.
- ⁹³ White House record, 25 November 1964.
- ⁹⁴ Edwin Wilson would later gain notoriety as a rogue agent working for Libya's Muammar Qaddafi.
- ⁹⁵ Frank R. Villafana, *Cold War in the Congo*, p. 171; David Corn, *Blond Ghost: Ted Shackley and the CIA's Crusades* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1994), pp. 115–116, 137, 319; Felix I. Rodriguez and John Weisman, *Shadow Warrior* (New York: Pocket Books, 1989), p. 147; Peter Maas, *Manhunt* (London: HARRAP, 1986), pp. 28–29; and Joseph C. Goulden, *Death Merchant: The Rise and Fall of Edwin P. Wilson* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1984), pp. 39–40.
- ⁹⁶ Piero Gleijeses, *Conflicting Missions*, pp. 134–135; and Mike Hoare, *Congo Warriors*, p. 242.
- ⁹⁷ *Ibid.*; Sean Kelly, *America's Tyrant: The CIA and Mobutu of Zaire*, p. 162; CIA situation report, 14 April 1965; Mike Hoare, *The Road to Kalamata*, pp. 33–45. The exact number of Swift boats sent varies depending on the source, but ranges from six to eight.
- ⁹⁸ See, for instance, CIA Intelligence Memorandum—Situation in the Congo, 1 July 1965.

- ⁹⁹ Descriptions of these crossings can be found in Ernesto “Che” Guevara, *The African Dream: The Diaries of the Revolutionary War in the Congo*. On the difficulties caused to the rebels by the maritime force, see pp. 186, 229.
- ¹⁰⁰ According to Mike Hoare, this “pocket” was roughly twice the size of Wales.
- ¹⁰¹ Mike Hoare, *The Road to Kalamata*, pp. 246–262.
- ¹⁰² Michael P. E. Hoyt, *Captive in the Congo*, pp. 30–31, 36–37.
- ¹⁰³ In October 1964, INR specialist Keith Wheelock was dispatched to the Congo to conduct a study of the Simba rebellion. In early 1965, M. Crawford Young of the University of Wisconsin joined him. The preface to their classified report notes the CIA provided “significant assistance to this INR project.” See Keith Wheelock and M. Crawford Young, “The Congolese Rebellion of 1964.”
- ¹⁰⁴ To give two examples: CIA cable, 29 August 1964 includes detailed information on a hit squad run by the Congolese Sûreté. A separate cable discusses coup planning by ANC officers. See CIA cable, 31 August 1964.
- ¹⁰⁵ Richard L. Holm, *The American Agent: My Life in the CIA*, pp. 7, 24.
- ¹⁰⁶ After his stint at the Congo desk, Adams was assigned to do Viet Cong order of battle estimates, during which time he gained notoriety for challenging the estimates produced by Westmoreland’s headquarters in Saigon.
- ¹⁰⁷ Sam Adams, *War of Numbers: An Intelligence Memoir* (South Royalton, VT: Steerforth Press, 1994), p. 14.
- ¹⁰⁸ CIA Memorandum, 14 September 1964; CIA: Situation in the Congo, 17 March 1965.
- ¹⁰⁹ DO 216/55–25 February 1965 Memo from the UK embassy in Washington to Foreign Office. The official referred to here is Curtis C. Strong.
- ¹¹⁰ In addition to the Swift boats, the CIA’s air force also patrolled the Lake and attacked suspected rebel transports. See, for instance, CIA Situation in the Congo, 21 April 1965.
- ¹¹¹ Some examples include: CIA Intelligence Memorandum—Tanzanian Support for the Congo Rebels, 7 April 1965; CIA Special Report—Tanzania Taking the Left Turn, 21 May 1965; CIA Intelligence Memorandum—The Southern Sudan Problem and Its Relationship to the Congo, 28 May 1965; CIA Intelligence Memorandum—Ugandan Prime Minister’s Congo Policy, 17 March 1965; CIA Memorandum, 31 December 1964.
- ¹¹² CIA intelligence cable, 14 October 1964.
- ¹¹³ See, for instance, CIA Intelligence Information Cable, 16 October 1964; CIA intelligence report, 20 November 1964; CIA Congo Situation, 29 September 1964.
- ¹¹⁴ Memo from Denney Jr. to Harriman, 11 August 1964; CIA Memorandum, the Congo situation, 14 September 1964; CIA Memorandum, 31 December 1964; CIA Situation in the Congo, 5 January 1965.
- ¹¹⁵ CIA intelligence report, 17 November 1964.
- ¹¹⁶ Victor Marchetti and John D. Marks, *The CIA and the Cult of Intelligence*, p. 125.

¹¹⁷ Research Memorandum from Hughes to Rusk, 10 April 1965.

¹¹⁸ Piero Gleijeses, *Conflicting Missions*, p. 136. Sam Adams recalled the head of the Congo Desk, upon learning of the Cuban presence, remarking: "This was once a perfectly respectable Cold War confrontation. Now it's the goddamn West Side Story." Sam Adams, *War of Numbers: An Intelligence Memoir*, p. 21. See also CIA report, 4 October 1965.