Zaire - General

1998
Congo mine's value rises to $75bn

BRUSSELS — Gecamines, the state-owned mining firm in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, said at the weekend that a huge copper and cobalt deposit was now estimated to contain metal worth $75bn and the estimate would probably rise.

In view of the doubling of estimated reserves, methods for extracting maximum value from the Tenke Fungurume project would have to be "re-examined and adapted to the new data, in the interest of the state", Gecamines said in a communiqué published in the Belgian financial newspaper L’Echo.

This should be done in accordance with the "policy of rapid development of the country's natural resources set by the government," Gecamines said.

The Tenke Fungurume project is a joint venture between Gecamines and Canada's Tenke Mining Corp which signed a deal to exploit the deposit in 1996.

Gecamines said recently that results of prospecting in the DRC, between Tenke and Fungurume, showed a large increase in reserves from those taken into account at the time the joint venture contract was signed.

Estimated reserves had now doubled to 18.4-million tons of copper and 896,000 tons of cobalt from the previous estimates of 9.8-million tons of copper and 456,000 tons of cobalt, it said.

"This doubling of reserves... shows that the Tenke-Fungurume deposits together with those of DRC are gigantic and unique in the world," the mine said.

The new reserves would enable annual production to be increased or the project's life to be extended beyond what had been agreed to in the contract, Gecamines said.

The value of the metal reserves would probably increase with the future exploration of other deposits at DRC and the Fungurume zone where deep deposits had not yet been explored, it said.

In a separate notice in L’Echo, Gecamines gave details of its decision to cancel an international tender for a huge copper-cobalt project in the Congo.

Gecamines confirmed on Friday that it was cancelling the tender, launched in November 1995, for the Kolwezi concentrator tailings project in Katanga province.

America Mineral Fields had signed an agreement worth $1bn with Zaire's rebels in April to buy the Kolwezi project.

Gecamines said that apart from building a factory, substantial revenues and creating jobs, it had expected bidders to make a significant cash payment to compensate it for partially giving up its rights to the tailings. It estimated the value of the metal in the tailings at more than $10bn.

Gecamines said the tender had been cancelled to safeguard the interests of the country. New arrangements would be made "so that the project contributes more effectively to the country's development goals", it said. — Reuters.
Pretoria: Three former Zairian generals who were detained at the Pretoria Central Prison's maximum security division after they fled to South Africa before President Mobutu Sese Seko's regime was overthrown were freed from jail yesterday.

This followed an urgent application by generals, Kapena Kamolo, Mudimu Mavua and Nghale Ntimbi to the Pretoria High Court for their release.

Judge B.R du Plessis ordered that their detention be set aside as unwarranted and unreasonable and that they be released from custody immediately.

The generals were arrested by the Aliens Investigation Unit last month and detained from December 13.

They said in court papers they fled to SA as the civil war in the then Zaire was reaching its end and under the regime of President Laurent Kabila they feared for their lives.

They said they were refugees who were entitled to political asylum. — Own correspondent.
Congo rulers vow to punish corrupt judges

Kinshasa - The government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo has vowed to upgrade the judiciary and punish corrupt magistrates as part of efforts to install the rule of law in formerly Zaire.

Government spokesman Raphael Ghenda yesterday said measures to revamp the sector would cost about $24 million (R120 million).

"Upgrading the judiciary is one of our top priorities. We are committed to a state of law," Mr Ghenda said.

"The government has adopted all these measures to eradicate corruption within the judiciary. The judiciary we have inherited is rotten."

When Africa's third-largest nation collapsed under three decades of corrupt rule by ousted dictator Mobutu Sese Seko, judges were widely regarded as puppets in the hands of the rich.

Mr Ghenda said magistrates' monthly wages would be increased substantially to remove the temptations of corruption. The government would improve magistrates' working conditions and promotion would be based on competitive examinations, he added. Reuters
Congo accuses US group of altering documents

Washington — Congo accuses the U.S. government of altering documents.

The Congolese government accused the United States of altering documents to support the argument that the former Congolese president, Joseph Kabila, was still in power. The documents, which were produced as part of a legal dispute, were said to show that Kabila was still in control of the country.

The Congolese government said that the documents had been altered to make them appear more favorable to the U.S. government. The documents were said to show that Kabila had resigned and that the government was now in control.

The Congolese government has been critical of the U.S. government in recent months, accusing it of supporting the government's efforts to suppress dissent.

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Gecamines allows mining in Kolwezi area

Anglo joins Congo mine consortium

Johannesburg — Anglo American, South Africa’s largest corporation, had signed a consortium deal with Gecamines, the Democratic Republic of the Congo’s state-owned mining company, to mine in the African country’s Kolwezi area, Anglo said yesterday.

It was not clear whether the consortium deal would roll over to other operations in the Kolwezi area, where a contentious high-grade copper tailings project has become the subject of a $2 billion legal battle between American Mineral Fields (AMF) and Anglo.

AMF is suing Anglo, claiming that Anglo interfered with its contracts in the Congo by offering to buy the Congo government tens of millions of dollars to squeeze out the US mining company.

The lawsuit has been seen by analysts as a final attempt by AMF to salvage its dealings with the Congo after the early-January cancellation by Gecamines of a $1 billion agreement to purchase the Kolwezi copper-cobalt tailings project.

Charmaine Russell, an Anglo spokesman, said the company was very positive about developments in the Congo and looked forward to doing business there.

Details of the Kolwezi Group West consortium deal, which is subject to a confidentiality agreement because of its sensitive nature, have not yet been disclosed, but the mining rehabilitation project is expected to cost more than $1.2 billion.

Foreign mining companies from Australia, Asia, Belgium, Canada, China and Europe have also signed the deal. Anglo is expected to take a 15 percent stake.

The deal is said to cover 22,000km² of the copper-rich Katanga area and involve the rehabilitation of large open-pit mines and dumps.

John Clemmow, an analyst at Investec Securities, said the ore reserve for the Group West was running at about 5 percent copper, and some areas showed up to 2 percent cobalt.

"It is obvious that Anglo is a favoured investor in the Congo," said Clemmow.

"Signing the consortium deal has given the Group political favourability in the Congo."

In the interim, Toronto-listed AMF was expected to meet Gecamines officials this week to re-open talks and clarify the validity of its decision to renegotiate the Kolwezi project.

AMF said it had carried out multimillion-dollar feasibilities on the projects it was awarded and $15 million had already been ploughed into the project.

Earl Young, the vice-president of AMF, said he was very optimistic and was sure that the company would be pleased with the resolution.

Gecamines said yesterday AMF never had exploitation rights to the copper tailings in Kolwezi and said bidding for the project would start from scratch.

The Kolwezi mine workings hold about 1.44 million tons of copper and 275,000 tons of cobalt — worth about $10 billion.

While Gecamines accused AMF of altering documents to secure the mineral rights from Laurent Kabila’s rebel alliance before the alliance took power last year, it has invited AMF to tender in the next round.

Young denied the charge that AMF had in any way altered the agreement.
Democratic Congo to privatise 'lame duck' firms

KINSHASA — The government of the Democratic Republic of Congo planned to privatise unprofitable state-owned companies and would publish a list of the 'lame ducks' soon, the economic and oil ministry of the former Zaire said on Sunday.

State-owned firms have been run by provisional boards since last July, two months after President Laurent Kabila came to power.

In another development, the ministry of mines has decided to withdraw licences issued to a dozen companies allowing them to prospect in unspecified 'exclusive zones' as they had failed to act within six months after the issue of the permits.
With the scrapping of another 12 mining deals, investor confidence in Congo is shaky, reports Madeleine Wackernagel

Laurent Kabila's honeymoon with the investment community is going through a rough patch.

Hard on the heels of the cancellation of the America Mineral Fields (AMF) Kolwezi copper reclamation project, the government of the new Democratic Republic of the Congo has announced the scrapping of another 12 mining research deals signed five months ago.

Kabila's Ministry of Mines says the 12 foreign companies involved are dragging their feet instead of starting the work. Other firms have been given until February 10 to start research work or have their preliminary agreements scrapped too.

That, say insiders, is very bad for investor confidence.

"Big international mining companies will not commit large sums of money upfront for greenfield exploration in a hurry," says one. "The government is going about things in the wrong way. First, there have to be reassurances that due process will be followed. You don't encourage investment with ad hoc agreements that can be cancelled at any time."

Investing in the Congo is not for the faint-hearted, but with high risks come huge rewards. And for that reason alone, believes BofA NatWest analyst Barry Sergeant, the money will keep coming.

But only as long as security of tenure is in place. "At the moment there is no mining code, no tax system. So even if a company did win a tender, it wouldn't know what taxes it would be paying. It's a complex issue which has to be addressed as quickly as possible, otherwise the rebuilding of the country will never get under way."

Only six months ago, politicians and businessmen alike were talking about the Congo as the driving force for the region, with mining the engine. And as the biggest economy on the continent, South Africa was best placed to capitalise on that potential.

But already that vision seems compromised and the new government's credibility is being called into question. AMF, which is suing Anglo American for $2 billion over alleged interference in the Kolwezi contract, believes it held the exclusive rights to the project. Gecamines, the state-owned mining company, disputes this, even going so far as to accuse AMF of fraud.

Robert Stewart, the new chair of AMF, is in Congo this week, attempting to clear up the issue. Says AMF representative Earl Young: "We believe the tender was handled in a transparent way. The government said we'd won it and that we had been awarded the property. We are now trying to determine why they changed their minds. There is a lot of confusion, but we are very optimistic that the talks will be fruitful."

The AMF delegation is hoping to go straight to the top in its attempts to reopen negotiations; a meeting with Kabila is on the cards. But analysts believe they are in for a rough time, having failed to satisfy the financial conditions laid down by the Gecamines authorities first time around.

Meanwhile, the Kolwezi project is in limbo. Anglo has said it is no longer interested in tendering. Instead, Anglo will concentrate on the Kolwezi Group West project, which is much bigger, but also requires larger capital investment to get off the ground. Industry sources estimate that more than $1 billion is needed.

Anglo is co-leader, with 15%, in an eight-company consortium, a move that has raised eyebrows in the mining industry. Not only because it marks a significant turnaround in Anglo's popularity stakes in the country (it was forced to abandon the Tenke Fungurume copper cobalt investment in the 1970s because of political pressure), but because such groupings are difficult to manage.

Anglo, however, is optimistic. Says representative Glenn Finnegan: "It has enormous potential — more than 400,000 tons of copper per annum. The task team working on the feasibility study is up and running."

But Anglo's involvement raises other questions about the government's policy. On the one hand, the new order has lambasted the mining companies for profiting for years from the former regime; on the other, Kabila has hailed the consortium as one that will spearhead the revival of the country's mining industry.

As a result, some observers believe the industry is still in a massive state of flux, with the government all too frequently moving the goalposts, with new rules and new visions. In the short term, the fear is that such volatility puts any deal done either with Gecamines or the government in jeopardy.

The new Minister of Mines, Kambutu, will no doubt use next week's African mining conference in Cape Town to set the record straight. Much of the problem, according to people operating in the Congo, is lack of experience.

"They're beginning to realise that they haven't been too hot on the public relations side. They've created certain misperceptions that they are now keen to correct. And no doubt the minister will set out to do just that next week, making it clear that the government will indeed honour all agreements," says one observer.

But with the legal battle between AMF and Anglo hanging over any further developments, the minister may be in for some tough questions.

Mining is a rough game so a bit of jostling for position is par for the course. The concern now must be that the industry will be tied up in litigation for years to come, with dire consequences for the economy as a whole.
Anglo faces R3bn US lawsuit

Following allegations that it interfered in a tender awarded to a US firm, a damages suit has been filed against Anglo, reports Stefaans Brimmer

Anglo American and its associated companies are facing a $3 billion lawsuit in the United States after allegations that it “interfered” in a tender already awarded to another mining company in the Democratic Republic of Congo’s fabulously rich copper belt.

On Wednesday, the Arkansas-based junior mining company Americas Mineral Fields (AMF) filed the damages suit against Anglo, De Beers and Moiseo in a Dallas, Texas, court.

This came a week after Congo authorities announced they had cancelled a tender awarded to AMF to reclaim copper and cobalt mine dumps at Kolwezi in the Katanga province estimated to be worth $10 billion.

Many analysts agree Congo President Laurent Kabila’s handling of the matter has damaged investor confidence in his country, reinforcing the image of a government inexperienced in economic matters. Kabila’s rebel alliance was tender to AMF last April — a month before the rebels ousted dictator Mobutu Sese Seko and swept to power in Kinshasa.

The relationship between AMF and Anglo — who formed a partnership when Mobutu’s government first invited tenders — soured towards the end of 1996 when AMF decided to go it alone. The companies bid separately.

This stood AMF in good stead with Kabila’s group to be victorious forces in early 1997: the rebels were thought to favour AMF because of Anglo’s long-standing relationship with Mobutu’s government.

AMF made no secret of its material support to Kabila during his campaign. Anglo, in turn, hinted it doubted the validity of a tender award by a rebel movement.

AMF chief executive Simon Brownlie said in a statement on Wednesday that his company believed Anglo “has for some time orchestrat-

ed a well-financed campaign to interfere with the company’s projects in Congo”. AMF’s suspicions about Anglo appear to have been raised by a letter dated August 7 — a copy of which is in the Mail & Guardian’s possession — written by Bobby Danchin, president of Anglo’s New Mining Business Division, to Congo’s Minister of Mining Kambila Kabila Mutunsa.

The letter states: “We learnt that Kabila’s project has not yet been definitely assigned and Anglo American New Mining Business Division wishes to have the opportunity to present an alternative offer to the government. We will be delighted to meet in Kinshasa to discuss the matter.”

The letter was also marked for the attention of Victor Mpoyo, who has recently been promoted in a Cabinet reshuffle to Kabila to the super portfolio of minister of state responsible, among other things, for the economy.

Mpoyo is related to Kalua Mpinda, an Anglo director and business development manager in Danchin’s division. Mpinda, who is Congolese, has been intimately involved in Anglo’s ventures in his home country.

Anglo communications manager Glen Finnegan this week confirmed the contents of the letter, but said it had to be seen “in context. It was a letter to seek clarity on the award of the tender. Then we got the reply that AMF had been selected. We simply stood back.”

She said Anglo would not comment on the court challenge, pending consultations with its lawyers in the US, but added that the company denied interfering with AMF’s interests and that it had no remaining interest in the Kolwezi reclamation project.

Innegan added that Anglo was now tendering, acting as part of a consortium involving Belgium’s Union Miniere, for the unrelated Kolwezi West mining reclamation project. It was a larger and more capital-intensive operation, and Anglo would have its hands full with that alone.

Before news of the court challenge, sources close to Anglo claimed Ango’s decision to abandon interest in the Kolwezi tailings project was al-

ready related to Anglo’s realisation that such interest could open the door to legal action from AMF.

Congo state-owned mining company, Gecamines, announced the cancellation of the tender award to AMF last week saying the original process had been flawed — and that it wanted more cash. A communiqué said “new arrangements” would be made, presumably meaning that the tender process would be reopened.

Gecamines would have been AMF’s joint venture partner in the Kolwezi reclamation project.

It is understood Kabila’s government has been squeezing AMF for some time to pay more for Kolwezi.

Mpoyo is alleged to have demanded an upfront payment of around $150 million from AMF, which the company refused.

After Kabila came to power, he never ratified the original tender award, as required by Congolese law.

But AMF appeared secure in its title anyway: the company has sunk millions of dollars into feasibility studies and preparatory work already.

Some analysts judge that if AMF succeeds in establishing jurisdiction in Texas, and the suit goes ahead, the odds will be stacked heavily against the Congolese company.

Investec Securities Africa analyst John Clemmow said Anglo had little to answer for, as Kabila never ratified the original agreement, which was enter-

ed into by a rebel movement that had not formally taken power. Legal opinion appeared to go against the va-

lidity of the contract, he said.

But, warned mining expert Humphrey Harrison: “If AMF can estab-
lish jurisdiction, then any two-bit lawyer can make enough of a prob-
lem for Anglo to make its want to set- tle out of court... What has AMF got to lose in a judicial system where lawyers go on success fees?”
Congo owes Harare Z$300 000 in rent

Michael Hatchak

HARARE — The Democratic Republic of Congo's embassy has run up Z$300 000 in unpaid rent for a house in Harare's exclusive Borrowdale suburb, a spokesman for the estate agents said yesterday.

Only intervention by the Belgian embassy, which pledged the money would be paid by the end of this month, stopped attempts by the house owners to have Congolese diplomatic immunity set aside so the diplomats could be evicted, said property administrator Hunter Nqosi.

In the period of less than a year since Laurent Kabila has been in power, his representatives in Harare have sustained the reputation of their predecessors from Mobutu Sese Seko's Zaire for leaving a trail of unpaid debts. The Zairians exploited the diplomatic status of their premises to resist repossession or attachment of property, but had their water, electricity and telephone cut off.

Kabila's ambassador Benboi Bab refused to comment, referring reporters to Zimbabwe's foreign affairs ministry which, he said, would mediate after receiving instructions from Kinshasa.

Nqosi said Bab had requested a "grace period" when he took over the house from the representatives of the previous regime. "Ever since then he has sought extensions, citing several reasons. We only agreed to let him remain in the house out of respect for the Belgian ambassador. We will proceed with the eviction procedures if the money is not paid within the two weeks."

Belgium, the former colonial power, has been helping Kabila's regime restore administration which virtually disappeared during Mobutu's rule.
Showdown over Mobutu's generals

Stefan Beutler and Ann Evershed

A

n extraordinary legal battle reaching the office of the Deputy President in the High Court next week when ousted Zambian dictator Kaunda seeks to obtain court orders to extradite the brother of Mobutu, one of Africa's most powerful leaders, who is said to be hiding to avoid arrest.

The court is also hearing questions of legal, political, international and administrative law and the case is expected to set a precedent for future legal battles in Southern Africa.

The case is being heard in the Johannesburg High Court.

Two Zambian generals, Kazembe Mulungu and Nkonde Kapata, are facing charges of treason and murder.

Mulungu is said to be hiding in South Africa with his wife and children.

Kapata is said to be living in Botswana.

The generals are being sought by the Zambian government for their role in the 1980 coup against President Kaunda.

The case is expected to last several weeks and is expected to set a precedent for future legal battles in Southern Africa.

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We've cleaned up much of the

South African environment. (That may not

sound meddlesome, however, collecting 1,7

billion used beverage cans in a year makes

a difference that's easy to see.)

But Lesotho, Swaziland,

Namibia, Zimbabwe and Botswana too

have environments to preserve - and why

stop there? We also collect from Angola,

Mozambique, Mauritius, Seychelles,

Reunion and Madagascar.

Together with South Africa's

returns, that makes us third in the world in

steel can recovery.

Our recipe? A unique socio-economic

solution - no

18 000 collect

earn income

A

collect cans

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ment is our people's
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BUSINESS
Congo releases 16 of Mobutu's allies

KINSHASA—At least 16 former allies of the late president Mobutu Sese Seko, accused of embezzlement and corruption, had been released from prison in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, justice ministry officials said yesterday.

The group included Kithima Bin Ramazani, number two in the former Zaire. A dozen other dignitaries from Mobutu's ousted dictatorship were still in jail pending investigations. "They have been released provisionally. It's the (justice) minister himself who decided to set them free," a senior official said.

One of the 16 said they had been asked to confirm lists drawn up previously of their assets before being freed. A condition for their liberty was that they do not leave the country, he said.

More than 30 Mobutu allies, including former ministers and directors of state enterprises, were arrested after Laurent Kabila took power in May last year following a seven-month rebellion. Only one of them has been brought to trial so far.

But in what several local human rights groups condemned as amounting to a ransom demand, Kabila told them they would be set free if they returned money they had allegedly stolen.

Bemba Seolone, a former business association president, who said he paid $300,000 directly into the national treasury last month in exchange for his freedom, was still in jail by Wednesday night.

So far only the trial of general Kikunda Ombala, former head of the national air company, has opened. He was charged with stealing a minibus and jet fuel and the trial is scheduled for next month.

Many of the detainees have said the government has very little or no evidence to convict them of the corruption charges. —Reuter.
US rival now first in line for Kolwezi project

Anglo spurns AMF olive branch in Congo dispute

SHERIEE BRIDGE

Johannesburg — Anglo American, South Africa’s largest corporation, has refused to make any monetary payments to American Mineral Fields (AMF), its US rival, after AMF said it was withdrawing its $3 billion lawsuit in an attempt to settle differences out of court.

The mining giant yesterday stuck to its initial position that it had not “tortiously interfered” with the Toronto-based company’s contracts in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC).

Analysts viewed the “tactical retreat” as an attempt by AMF to kiss and make up as it tried to reconcile its position in the DRC.

It comes after AMF’s $1 billion Kolwezi copper-cobalt tailings agreement was cancelled by the government of Laurent Kabila and the DRC’s mining agency Cencamines at end-December.

John Clemmow, an analyst at Investec Securities, said AMF stood to be re-awarded the Kolwezi tailings project contract after the Congolese government said it would not reopen tenders.

The government planned instead to allow the original bidders to make offers. These include Anglo, which has said it is no longer interested; JCI, which is restructuring; and Iscor, which is already committed to the Kolwezi Group West rehabilitation projects and AMF.

It was uncertain, however, whether the Congolese government would still be seeking higher bids for the project. Clemmow said AMF stood a strong chance now that it had replaced the senior management the Congolese government had accused of being involved in malpractice.

“It makes sense for AMF to withdraw from its lawsuit, at little cost, so as to leave its way clear to proceed with the Kolwezi tailings project,” said Clemmow.

The reversal of legal action also meant Anglo would not be roped into the antitrust case against De Beers in the US.

Anglo and De Beers have avoided sending representatives to the US because the justice department has actions open for alleged antitrust violations, and representatives of either company could be arrested on entry.

AMF alleged that Anglo, De Beers and Minoro had been engaged in an elaborate scheme to “unlawfully monopolise the world’s gold and gem diamond supplies”.

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Kabila shrugs off demands for freedom

Democratic Republic of Congo's president has banned opposition and its leaders, and turned deaf ear to the world

The Democratic Republic of Congo has maintained a stony silence in the face of growing pressure for progress towards democracy, including a fresh demand by Washington for the release of political detainees.

Yesterday, the regime of President Laurent Kabila refused to respond to the US demand, arguing that it had been made by an unnamed official.

"We don’t reply to phantoms... only to officials," Kabila’s communications adviser Dominique Sakombi said when asked about the appeal, made in Washington on Tuesday by a senior administration official who requested anonymity.

The official, speaking ahead of President Bill Clinton’s six-country tour of Africa starting next week, also called on Kabila to lift the ban on political activity.

Washington, while relieved at the overthrow of the dictator Mobutu Sese Seko, who died in exile in September, has professed only cautious support for Kabila’s regime in the absence of clear moves towards democracy.

Kabila has also come under increasing criticism for long stalling the UN probe into reports of the mass slaughter during his uprising of Rwandan Hutu refugees from their own country’s 1994 civil war, and for continuously muzzling the press.

Among those the United States wants released is opposition leader Etienne Tshisekedi, who was banished last month to his home village where he is under house arrest. Tshisekedi’s supporters say he is in deteriorating health.

The 65-year-old head of the Union for Democracy and Social Progress (UDSP) was accused of violating the ban on political activities.

After his arrest, which occurred just 24 hours after a visit to Kinshasa by Clinton envoy Jesse Jackson on a mission to promote democracy in Africa, the UDSP called on Clinton to intervene with Kabila to obtain Tshisekedi’s release.

Jackson was unable to see Kabila or any government officials during his stay.

Three other opposition figures are in detention.

On several occasions, security forces have prevented Tshisekedi’s UDSP from holding rallies, and press conferences called by politicians have been forcibly broken up.

Clinton is scheduled to meet Kabila in Entebbe, Uganda, on Wednesday during a regional summit of east and central African leaders.
Kabila shrugs off demands for freedom

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UN probe team expelled from Congo

Kinshasa - Republic of Congo authorities have expelled a United Nations team investigating alleged massacres by government forces after the team began exhuming graves, state-run television reported.

The team, based in the northwestern city of Mbandaka, was given until March 31 to finish its work and leave. Voice of the People television said yesterday.

"The people of Congo have expressed their desire for the expulsion of the mission," said the television station.

Congolese military authorities were "shocked and indignant," that the UN team had "depraved" several graves at a cemetery in Mbandaka, the station said.

The move came a day after the investigators, working in northwestern Congo, began exhuming the bodies of Rwandan Hutu refugees who were allegedly massacred by forces loyal to Laurent Kabila when he led the campaign to topple the late Zairian dictator Mobutu Sese Seko during the country's seven-month rebellion.

It remains unclear how many died, although some UN officials say the death toll could reach into the tens of thousands.

Two other UN teams - based in Kisangani and Goma in northeastern Congo - have until May 31 to conclude their investigations, the station said. Congolese authorities are reported to have repeatedly blocked investigators from entering areas where massacres took place. - Sape-AP
Ashanti seeks talks over mine dispute

Accra, Ghana — Ashanti Goldfields, the largest African gold producer outside South Africa, is seeking talks with Democratic Republic of the Congo president Laurent Kabila in an attempt to resolve a dispute over the ownership of a gold mine.

Ashanti says last June it paid several million dollars for an 86 percent stake in the Kmin mine in Congo from Mindev, a Belgian-controlled company, and then invested more in the project in a partnership with Okimo, the state-controlled mining company.

But Sam Jonah, the Ashanti chief executive, said that late last year, without Ashanti’s knowledge, the rights to the project were granted to a joint venture between Okimo and Russel Resources International, a little known unlisted company.

“Our rights were trampled on. Our employees were told to leave the property, and let me say they weren’t provided with champagne to do so,” Jonah said.

This is the latest in a series of disputes over mining rights in the Congo since Kabila came to power. The US’s America Mineral Fields said three months ago a deal it had to develop a cobalt reserve had been terminated by Geamines, Congo’s state-controlled mining company.

Canada’s Falconbridge, the nickel producer, said in January it pulled out of talks to develop Congo’s mining industry because the government wanted commitments without providing adequate information.

“We had a very warm welcome from the president and the minister of mines when we first went in, but now the situation is puzzling, to say the least,” Jonah said. He said it was the first time the firm had faced such a problem in Africa. Ashanti had 42 exploration sites in 15 African states.

Congo state officials could not be reached for comment.

Jonah said Ashanti was, through its lawyers, seeking talks with Kabila to resolve the dispute.

The Kmin mine at present produced only a few thousand ounces of gold a year, but it had the potential to be much bigger, Jonah said.

The Africa Energy & Mining newsletter said last November Russel was an unlisted company created by Gad Raviv, a businessman based in Australia.

Meanwhile, America Mineral Fields said last week it had withdrawn a $3 billion lawsuit against Anglo American related to its dispute in the Congo. It had charged Anglo American, the world’s biggest producer of gold, with undermining its contract with Geamines. — Bloomberg
Putting a push

With our constant
Kabila’s constitution to outlaw opponents

KINSHASA — The Democratic Republic of Congo would bar 248 individuals — including opposition leader Etienne Tshisekedi — from politics if a draft constitution was approved, its framers said yesterday.

The list of 248 names was submitted on Monday to President Laurent Kabila as an amendment to the draft constitution, sources in the constitutional commission said. Those listed faced accusations of embezzlement or murder.

Kabila has banned all political activity for a two-year “transition period” ahead of promised elections.

Meanwhile, his finance minister, Fernand Tala-Ngai, said yesterday that a pledge to resume payments to the International Monetary Fund (IMF) in March was “null and void”.

Tala-Ngai said that he had promised the IMF on March 18 that Kinshasa would pay back $5m in debt arrears. But he said yesterday it was impossible to pay back such a sum “in the absence of a formally drawn-up budget for 1998”. — Sapa-AFP.
Congo calls for review of foreign debt repayments

KINSHASA — The Democratic Republic of Congo yesterday called for a review of agreements signed during the reign of former president Mobutu Sese Seko and pleaded for leniency on foreign debt repayments.

Government spokesman Raphael Ghenda said no decision had been made on paying arrears to the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. "The government cannot be held accountable for the actions of the old regime."

The government on Tuesday backed down on a pledge it had made to pay $6m in arrears to the IMF by the end of last month. Kabila recognised last December the country's $14bn external debt from his predecessor's 32-year rule, but asked international financial institutions to be "patient". Congo will be able to stand by its commitment towards financial institutions only if it is economically strong," Ghenda said.
Kabul's Crown Dancers

unindrusted in face of coup plots
Red tape delays Iscor deal

IRON and steel firm Iscor said yesterday a R400m deal to refurbish the Democratic Republic of Congo's Kamoto copper and cobalt mine had been delayed by bureaucracy.

Iscor executive chairman Hans Smith said he expected Laurent Kabila's government to approve the deal, to be signed by the end of March, in "a matter of days or weeks".

Iscor has a definitive agreement with state-owned Gecamines to refurbish the Kamoto mine, but the deal requires government approval.

Smith said the refurbishment of Kamoto, destroyed by years of mismanagement and neglect under toppled dictator Mobutu Sese Seko, would start soon after the deal was sealed.

How the new government dealt with foreign investors was being closely monitored.

Smith said the Kamoto project would determine the outcome of separate plans by a consortium of international mining firms — of which Iscor was a member — to develop resources in the Group West section of the Congolese copperbelt.

"Kamoto is approximately 20% of the greater Group West in which we want to get involved ... The rate at which Group West is developed depends on Kamoto getting up and running. All the other consortium members are looking at us."

Smith said Kabila's government deserved a little patience. "Once they sign that agreement it is not just Kamoto ... they are signing a principle of development, a very hefty decision."

Kamoto was at the heart of Iscor's strategy to grow in sub-Saharan Africa. "We have done a lot of preliminary work already and for us it is important in the sense that it will be the first of a very big change in investment philosophy." — Reuter.
Kishanga worried by UN move
Kabila fears coup bid by ‘Three Musketeers’ as

Rwandan vice-president Paul Kagame is the person most responsible for supplying the military muscle which brought Kabila to power.

The Interahamwe militiamen responsible for the 1994 genocide in Rwanda are said to be still mobilised and supported by President Deniz Sassou-Nguesso’s Cobra militias in Congo Brazzaville.

Their presence there as well as that of the former Zaïrean DSP is causing concern to the Kinshasa government who fear that the three generals will liaise with those active troops on Congo’s doorstep.

The coup plots come at a bad time for Kabila whose relationship with the International community continues to deteriorate.

First it was the UN Human Rights Commission, then the IMF and the U.S. Children’s Fund (Unicef) and now the list of organisations and countries with a grievance against Kabila has grown to include Belgium and other human rights organisations.

The government angered the IMF by brushing off its proposals to repay the huge debt left by the Mobutu administration, after Finance Minister Fernand Tulanganji promised to start monthly payments from the end of March.

President Kabila branded Unicef and other UN agencies based in Kinshasa province as “terrorists” mail boxes, alleging that their camps and operations were being used by dissident forces to mobilise against his government.

It infuriated the UN Commission on Human Rights (CHR) by delaying one of its inspectors investigating allegations that Kabila’s forces massacred Hutu refugees in Democratic Republic of Congo in 1997.

The CHR was due to visit Kinshasa on the last weekend of March, but the government refused to let its inspectors visit the country.

But the government has been forced to back down after the CHR threatened to suspend its work until the Belgian-LibyanDaraya programme to evacuate the refugees is put into practice.

This week’s crisis is the latest in a long line of difficulties for Kabila, which has been involved in a series of disputes with foreign governments.

It has threatened to suspend the CHR’s work until the Belgian-LibyanDaraya programme to evacuate the refugees is put into practice.

And now the CHR is threatening to suspend its work until the Belgian-LibyanDaraya programme to evacuate the refugees is put into practice.

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Truth about massacres, has come to light.
Kabila announces first Congo budget

William Walls

Kinshasa — President Laurent Kabila’s government pledged to spend more than $744 million in the Democratic Republic of the Congo’s first formal budget since the fall of the late dictator Mobutu Sese Seko in May 1997.

Raphael Ghenda, the government spokesman and information minister, announced the 1998 budget on Thursday, making a slide-swipe at the international donor community for doing too little to help the former Zaïre.

Ghenda said state revenues were projected at $744 445 511 and spending would match that. The last Mobutu budget was for around $390 million.

Ghenda said 77 percent of the budget would go towards the running costs of the state while capital expenditure to reconstruct the shattered country would make up only 12.7 percent. The government announced a $6.5 billion programme last year which includes ambitious plans to rebuild 28 000 km of roads.

Ghenda said a large portion of the 1998 budget would help pay the vast civil service and settle salary arrears. He made no specific mention of defence allocations, but said 8 percent would go towards “order”.

The Congo has an external debt of $14 billion. Ghenda said servicing public debt would absorb 6 percent of the budget, some $4 million a month. He made no specific reference to arrears owed to the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

Jean-Claude Masangu, the central bank governor, said last week the government would “in the very near future” begin paying arrears to the IMF. He said payments would be determined by budget constraints.

Western diplomats said that should the amount fall well short of an initial IMF bid for $6 million monthly, the IMF may begin procedures to suspend Congo by a deadline of June 23. — Reuters
Disillusion is mounting in Kabila's Congo.
Kabila says 'no' to aid

FOREIGN SERVICE 1998

Kilamba - Celebrating the first anniversary of his rule over the Democratic Republic of Congo, Laurent Kabila has pledged to legalise political parties, but said he would not use a proposed World Bank trust fund - because donor countries demanded he improve the human rights situation in Congo.

"Mr Kabila's Congo is not yet an international pariah, but he seemed during a sometimes rambling two-hour speech yesterday to be preparing Congo for life on the diplomatic and financial outside."

"Regarding a trust fund set up by the World Bank to allay fears that funds would be mismanaged, Mr Kabila said:"

"We are not going to touch that money. There are conditions that we have to solve the human rights problem, but we are the ones who came to chase out the regime that caused human rights problems."

"They gave that regime a lot of money without conditions."

The speech was his first public commitment to urban political parties prior to elections next year - but he implied that a constituent assembly would impose restrictions on the number or type of parties.
African leaders snub Kabila

KINSHASA: More than 12 invited African heads of state stayed away from celebrations yesterday marking President Laurent Kabila's takeover of power in the former Zaire, officials said.

Senior government officials said privately the apparent snub underlined serious differences between Kabila and key regional allies who helped him topple veteran leader Mobutu Sese Seko.

The ceremony opened with a military parade in the Chinese-built Martyrs' Stadium here—but there was no sign of delegations from Rwanda or Uganda, power brokers in Central Africa's turbulent Great Lakes region.

Uganda and the Tutsi-led governments of Rwanda and Burundi supported Kabila's seven-month bush war that culminated with his rebel troops entering the capital on May 17 last year. Kabila renamed the former Belgian colony the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC).

"There are serious differences between Uganda, Burundi and Rwanda on the one hand and the DRC on the other over how to restore peace to the Great Lakes," said a senior Kabila aide.

"The DRC favours a negotiated settlement to the conflict between Hutu and Tutsi. That's the only way we can put an end to cross-border attacks in the region. But the ethnic minority in power in Uganda, Burundi and Rwanda does not accept negotiations and advocates a military solution."

The historic Hutu-Tutsi rivalry that exploded in massacres in Rwanda in 1994 has had serious repercussions for the former Zaire and partly led to Kabila's war.

The Tutsi leadership that emerged in Rwanda after the genocide accused Hutus who fled into Zaire of staging attacks from their refugee camps. The refugees were disarmed by Kabila's war and most returned voluntarily to Rwanda.

However, Hutu and Ugandan rebels still operate from eastern DRC.

Of the 16 African heads of state who had been invited, only President Robert Mugabe of Zimbabwe and President Ange-Felix Patasse of the Central African Republic arrived on Saturday, officials said.

On Friday, Kabila called off a two-day Great Lakes security and development summit convened to coincide with the anniversary of his victory.

Officially, Kabila's administration blamed the cancellation on a border dispute between Ethiopia and Eritrea, but regional government officials and diplomats dismissed this as a farce.

The DRC's statement said Ethiopia and Eritrea had played a full part in organizing the summit. An official said Kabila was willing to mediate in the dispute.

Regional diplomats said Uganda and Rwanda had pressed him to cancel the summit. Uganda said President Yoweri Museveni would not attend but that nothing should be read into this.

"We understand that Uganda and Rwanda voiced strong objections to the summit's being attended by countries harbouring forces considered to be their enemies," a diplomat said.

He said the objections related to Congo Republic, Central African Republic and Gabon—all accused of harboring Hutu soldiers ousted from power in Rwanda after the 1994 genocide.

Diplomats and regional officials said Kabila's erstwhile allies, including Ethiopia, were deeply disappointed and concerned.

A major complaint was Kabila's failure to bring stability to eastern DRC, which borders Uganda, Rwanda and Burundi.

Those invited to Kabila's celebrations included the leaders of Angola, Kenya, Mozambique, Tanzania and Zambia. — Reuters
Mbeki in SADC bid to restart Congo talks

Whirlwind - Deputy President Thabo Mbeki has announced a major initiative by the Southern African Development Community (SADC) to help reestablish the peace process in the troubled country. Mbeki, who met the Congo's President Mr. Kabila earlier this week, has declared that he is confident that the country will be restored to political and economic health.

Mr. Mbeki, who met the Congo's President Mr. Kabila earlier this week, has declared that he is confident that the country will be restored to political and economic health.

The Congolese government has already begun preparations for the election process, which has collapsed completely. Mr. Mbeki said that Mr. Kabila had agreed to allow a UN human rights inspection team to return to the Congo to continue its human rights verification. The government has also committed to a process of truth and reconciliation, which had been stalled by the conflict.

The Southern African Economic Summit, held in South Africa, Botswana, Namibia, and Zimbabwe, would initially be the column which would act as a unifying force.
Kabila celebrates one year in power but few are impressed

While its name has changed, the former Zaire remains an economic wreck

KINSHASHA — Some things change: Zaire is now Congo. Dictator Mobutu Sese Seko is out and rebel Laurent Kabila is in. An official commitment to fighting corruption has replaced wholesale "kleptocracy". Other things stay the same: Congo remains an economic wreck.

Kabila, like the late Mobutu, rules from a privileged high. And erratic policy-making keeps Congo estranged from the international community.

One year after the fall of the Mobutu regime, Congolese are beginning to say Kabila just picked up where his predecessor left off.

"Nothing has changed the way we expected," said Mpoyi wa Mpoyi, a teacher with two children. "The people aren't happy. There are no jobs, and we have no rights." Over and over, the same sentiments are repeated in the streets of Kinshasa, the potholed and garbage-strewn capital where estimates say unemployment still runs as high as 75%.

On May 17, 1997, those streets were filled with hope as thousands of people poured out to welcome Kabila's conquering rebel army.

Waving palm fronds and dancing in celebration, residents greeted the soldiers with chants of "We're free!" Today, hope is fading amid continued economic despair.

Kinshasa, with its sprawling shantytowns, remains a sad relic of Mobutu's 32 years of mismanagement and graft.

Along June 30 Boulevard, a construction crane idles since 1990 looms over a half-built building. Foreign backing slowly ebbed away in Mobutu's last decade, while the dictator's greed chewed away at the country.

While Mobutu sold Zaire to foreign investors and lined his pockets, Kabila has done the other way, wavered on whether to allow outside investment for fear of foreign exploitation.

Freedom also is elusive in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Opposition politicians, human rights workers and journalists have been jailed, newspapers shut and reporters beaten. Political opposition is outlawed by decree.

The African Zone Association for the Defence of Human Rights says Kabila's Congo is subjected to more repressive policies than during the years of Mobutu's rule.

Critics say Kabila's first year in power has yielded change only on the surface, while endemic corruption, nepotism and authoritarian rule persist. The government set up an office to investigate the theft of government funds under the old regime, but fired its boss on suspicion of misappropriating money.

Others, however, say Kabila needs time to implement his policies. "Mobutu had 32 years to destroy this country," says Kalala Ngeli, an auto mechanic. "Kabila is trying to rebuild it, and we should give him time to lay down the foundations."

The international community is growing tired of waiting and it has been irritated by Kabila's less-than-diplomatic demeanour — from detaining UN officials and deporting Belgian embassy staff to snubbing Jesse Jackson, Washington's envoy to Africa.

To Kabila's credit, the annual inflation rate has dropped from a pre-civil war high of about 660% to 14% and rampant lawlessness in Kinshasa and elsewhere is down.

"Everyone knows that one could no longer talk of the economy in Zaire," Kabila has said. "What we have done is to stabilise the currency, eliminate fluctuations, job insecurity and continuing uncertainty." His assurances often don't accord with reality. He has done little to create jobs or begin rebuilding the country.

Mpoyi, the teacher, considers Kabila's rebellion a failure. So does unemployed Mohammed Mubungu and shop owner Freddy Kimbeni, who can't afford to restock his shelves.

A majority of Congolese surveyed in an independent poll said they would not vote for Kabila if presidential elections were held — something Kabila had pledged to do by 1999, but is now backing away from. — AP
Kabila gives investors hope

BY PETER FABRICUS

Windhoek

Democratic Republic of Congo President Laurent Kabila began the process of restoring his international reputation yesterday, announcing in Windhoek that he would hold elections in June next year.

He received an encouraging welcome from investors at the high-level Southern African Economic Summit.

Kabila told a press conference in Windhoek that he would allow political activity now suppressed, to resume six months before the elections. He would shortly announce the composition of a constitutional assembly to revise the constitution.

Deputy President Thabo Mbeki appears to have played a major role in extracting these political concessions from Kabila. Mbeki met him in Kinshasa last Friday and said at the summit yesterday morning that Kabila would hold a referendum by December to seek public approval for the draft constitution before next year's elections.

But Mbeki expressed grave concern that Kabila was setting himself a target that was too demanding and that, if he failed to meet it, the democratisation of Congo could be harmed.

Kabila, however, said he saw no problems with the timetable although he admitted he was responding to international pressure and "propaganda".

Kabila completely dismissed a report by Amnesty International that his forces were killing and torturing innocent civilians. He said this was propaganda by supporters of ousted President Mobutu Sese Seko.

Kabila assured investors that their investments would be safe in the Congo and that they could repatriate all their profits except for a withholding tax of 10%. — Star Foreign Service
Congo continues on Kabila’s winding path

Under equally nert leadership
lives of people remain watched
Mobutu is dead and gone, but the
"people’s president"?”
ne for the same
alive

The current national""...not making a difference.

BY THE STEANNER

only a country in name.
What challenges are we facing in transforming our economy?

Kabila tells of steps to integrate regional economy

World Economic Forum

Mbeki expresses SA concern at short time frame for polls in Congo

Windehok — Catapulting our economy

Anita van der Westhuizen
Will the real Kabila please
A year on, many wonder whether

INSIDE STORY

Ross Herbert of the Foreign
Service revisits Kinshasa, and finds
Congo leader Laurent Kabila
struggling to fulfill his early promise

Rights Watch, Amnesty International
and the United States government
have all accused Kabila's government
of significant, continuing human
rights violations, including torture,
illegal detention and extrajudicial
killings. The list of such acts has
become long enough that the pattern
is no longer open to dispute.

In his two-hour speech commemo-
rating his first anniversary in power,
Kabila spent most of his time defend-
ing himself against international
human rights criticism. He argued
justifiably, that it was a significant
accomplishment to have an army
that no longer looted the population
nor harassed people for bribes.

Before Kabila, people would not
walk the streets at night for fear of
soldiers. Taxi drivers, shopkeepers
and foreign journalists were rou-
tinely shaken down by Mobutu's
security forces.

Recent rights might have been
easier to ignore by diplomats if it
were not for the United Nations probe
into alleged massacres of Rwandan
refugees by Kabila's forces during the
war to oust Mobutu.

After the 1994 Rwandan genocide,
the killers settled along with some
two million Rwandan refugees in UN-
funded camps in then-Zaire.

Every diplomat in the region
knew that Rwanda's Tutsi army was
the driving force behind Kabila's
rebellion and few would be naive
enough to believe that the Rwandans
would not aggressively pursue the
killers deep into Congo.

All Kabila had to do was allow the
UN to investigate, agree that mas-
sacres are bad and attribute them to
rogue elements. But instead of pro-
voking this diplomatic figleaf, Kabila
obstructed the UN probe at every
turn, finally arresting one of its mem-
bers and photocopying the investiga-
tion documents he had with him.

On April 17, UN Secretary-General
Kofi Annan withdrew the investiga-
tors, who are now compiling a partial
report based on their work to far.

"A lot of us are hoping the report
will blame Rwandans for the mas-
sacres so we can get on with things,"
said one Western diplomat.

But it may be too late. By defiantly
rejecting any form of conditionality
attached to aid, Kabila has made it
virtually impossible for the major
powers to deliver meaningful assis-
tance. He complained of Mobutu's
lack of transparency, but when
pressed by donors to deliver a nation-
al budget, he produced one that pro-
vided no accounting of key revenues,
such as diamonds, or details on mili-
tary expenditures, which consume a
huge portion of public funds.

Effectively, he demands a blank
check from the world, arguing that
the West gave massive aid to Mobutu
even though it knew most of it went
into his pocket. The world's emphasis
on good governance and human
rights have been ignored.

Talking tough: Laurent Kabila pro-
claims public confidence that his
government will not yield to West
pressures. He has not, however,
shown himself to be intolerant of
dissent and quick to use security
forces to stamp it out.

The United Nations, Human
Rights Watch and Amnesty
International have all accused
Kabila's government of
human rights violations under
his leadership.

In his first year in power, Kabila
marked by a deliberate and calculat-
ed policy to still, main, torture, and
arbitrarily arrest untold numbers of
innocent civilians.

Opposition political activity has
been criminalized, and the popular
politician and most determined
Mobutu opponent, Etienne Tshisekedi,
has been compelled to his remote
village after meeting US envoy Jesse
Jackson.

Last week prosecutors called for
the death penalty for three men
accused of organizing a coup, includ-
ing Amseline Massasu, one of the four
main founders of Kabila's AFDL
movement and one-time chief of army
staff under Kabila. One of the AFDL
founders disappeared during the war,
and a Western diplomat said the lat-
et trial was little more than an effort
to get rid of a rival for power.

When it comes to Congolese citi-
zens voicing their opinion or forming
opposition groups, there has been a
clear reversal of the gains achieved
since April 1991 when opposition
were formally recognized," Amnesty
International said.

- Paul Nseng and Sabine Banza, lead-
ers of the Ligue des electeurs (Elec-
torate's League), were arrested on
April 27 on their way from a meeting
at the Belgian Embassy in Kinshasa.

Earlier in April, Kabila's govern-
ment had accused Belgium of being a
terrorist state.

On April 8, the Zaïrian Associa-
tion for the Defence of Human Rights
was banned.

Other human rights workers have
been arrested, including one last
friday.

Newspaper editors have been fre-
quently arrested, often for petty
reasons.

Ipalka Abeeye Mobiko, editor of
La Reference Plus newspaper, was

ROSS HERBERT
FOREIGN SERVICE

Kinshasa - The world has found ways
to accommodate nations with human
rights records worse than the Democ-
ratic Republic of Congo. So why has
Laurent Kabila received such a chilly
reception since taking power?

One reason is the contrast between
his articulate democratic promises
and his record of intolerance.

Amnesty International released a
report asserting that Kabila's first
year in power had been

bila please stand up?

whether Che Guevara was right

Talking tough: Laurent Kabila preaches democracy — but practices intolerance

XAVIER KANTZ


talks between the

military

and

pro-

Kabila's

rebels

remained

impossible

without

Kabila's

personal

permission.

Kabila had

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Swiss

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runway.

Kabila hosted last

week's

disaster.

invited

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state.

Foreign

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agenda.

Journalists

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conference

hotel.

Kabila was

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Unhappy

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Kabila's

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Rwandans

Ugandans

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summit;

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Guevara's.

rds as foes face a crackdown

April 27 on their way from a meeting at the Belgian Embassy in Kinshasa. Earlier in April, Kabila's government had accused Belgium of being a terrorist state.

On April 1, the Zairian Association for the Defence of Human Rights was banned. Other human rights workers have been arrested, including one last Friday.

Newspaper editors have been frequently arrested, often for petty reasons. Inskal Abelye Mobiko, editor of news magazine "Alternatif" was arrested, released and rearrested a few days later. Former government spokesman Haitou Mwanza was arrested in late March and released in April.

The killings took place in the context of joint operations by forces of the three governments against their armed opponents.

Kabila's government has not specifically replied to the accusations.

However, during talks last week with South Africa's Deputy President Thabo Mbeki, Kabila pledged to draft a new human rights policy.
Kabila impresses, but without convincing circumstances.

Windhoek — Democratic Republic of Congo President Laurent Kabila made an impression with his big pitch for investment at the World Economic Forum’s southern African summit. But he still had some convincing to do before the big money flowed, mining sources said yesterday.

“The experience of many potential investors is that when you get to the Congo, things are much more difficult,” said one South African mining executive.

Kabila made a two-pronged pitch for investment. First he promised free political activity in six months, before elections next June, thus unblocking donor assistance.

Second, he marketed his “sound macroeconomic policies”, investor-friendly regulations such as full repatriation of profits, and his efforts over the past year to begin rehabilitating ruined infrastructure.

The Congo is denied financial assistance from the Bretton Woods institutions because of various differences, not least the probe by the United Nations (UN) into alleged massacres of refugees by Kabila’s forces.

Kabila vowed “to improve communications with the Bretton Woods institutions, bilateral and multilateral financial institutions ... and other donor countries”.

He said the UN human rights team that had recently left the Congo, citing obstruction from officials, was welcome to return.

Doug Taylor, Iscor Mining’s African business development manager, praised Kabila for making “small but significant changes” under difficult circumstances. But others were less convinced.

One executive, who did not wish to be named, said although many mining companies were exploring business in the Congo because the resources were too big to ignore, the government had not yet created the conditions for them to commit to large-scale investment.

He said the Congo was still reluctant to offer private mining companies majority shares in joint ventures with the government. Mining houses were unlikely to commit huge resources without a controlling interest.

A businesswoman who had been importing beef into the Congo from Uganda said her cold storage rooms had been shot up by soldiers, forcing her to close the business. She asked Kabila whether he could guarantee that did not happen again.

Kabila’s response was merely to insist that security in Kinshasa was “better than Pretoria or Johannesburg”. — Independent Foreign Service
Yabjela seems stuck in time warp

Some observers doubt if he understands his position as the head of the Star Foreign Service in Khamba.
Congo detains ministers for corruption

A source close to the country's office of public prosecutor confirmed to the Associated Press that the government had arrested six ministers over allegations of corruption.

The source said the ministers were detained in connection with a 130 million CFA francs (213,000 euros) fraud case involving a state-owned company.

The source did not provide further details.

The government has been investigating the case since last year.

The case involves allegations of bribe-taking and mismanagement.

The government has said it will take all necessary measures to ensure accountability and transparency.

The source added that the ministers would be held for a week and then appear before a judge.

Congo, a central African country, is known for its rich natural resources, including diamond and gold.

The government has been under pressure to address allegations of corruption and mismanagement.

The source said the detention of the ministers was a step towards accountability and transparency.

The government has been implementing reforms to address corruption and improve governance.

The source added that the detention was part of a broader strategy to tackle corruption and improve public service delivery.

Congo is a member of the African Union and the Economic Community of Central African States (CECAS).

The government has been working to attract foreign investment to boost its economy.

The source said the government was committed to tackling corruption and ensuring good governance.

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The source added that the detention was part of a broader strategy to tackle corruption and improve public service delivery.

Congo is a member of the African Union and the Economic Community of Central African States (CECAS).

The government has been working to attract foreign investment to boost its economy.
Laurent Kabila makes his debut to cheers

Democratic Republic of Congo President Laurent Kabila received an ambivalent reception at the World Economic Forum in Switzerland last week, where he is hoped to bring stability and development to his war-torn country. Kabila, who has been in power since 1997, faced criticism from some quarters for his policies, including human rights abuses and allegations of corruption.

Kabila, who grew up in the Democratic Republic of Congo, assumed power following the assassination of his father, Mobutu Sese Seko, in 1997. He has been praised for his efforts to bring an end to the country's civil war, which has lasted for more than two decades.

However, Kabila's government has been accused of human rights abuses, including extrajudicial killings and torture. The International Monetary Fund has also criticized the government's handling of the economy, with some analysts predicting that the country may default on its international debt in the near future.

Despite these challenges, Kabila remains popular among many Congolese, who see him as a symbol of hope for a brighter future. His government has also received support from international donors, who have pledged billions of dollars in aid to help bring stability to the country.

Kabila's visit to the World Economic Forum was seen as an opportunity to showcase his government's efforts to bring stability to the country, and to rekindle interest in the country's potential for economic development.

The two-day forum, which concluded on Saturday, brought together leaders from around the world to discuss the global economic landscape and the challenges facing emerging economies. Kabila's participation was seen as a significant step forward in the country's efforts to attract foreign investment and to establish itself as a player on the international stage.
Kabila bars Mobutu men from Constitution-writing assembly
on trying in Kabila’s Congo

Business in Kabila’s Congo is riddled with problems, writes Helen Vesperini in Kinshasa.

JUST days before the first anniversary of his arrival in Kinshasa, President Laurent Kabila announced his intention to build a road and rail bridge over the mighty Congo River that separates the Democratic Republic of Congo from its smaller neighbour, the Republic of Congo.

For many businessmen, Kabila’s announcement is typical of his government’s approach — announce an ambitious project and then do nothing. “It would be far more advantageous for any country, but for now, where they cannot fill in a hole in the main street, forget it,” one entrepreneur said.

The reconstruction of the vast central African country, whose infrastructure is crumbling, is a three decades of corrupt rule by Kabila’s predecessor Mobutu Sese Seko, should have been a dream of opportunity for entrepreneurs in all sectors.

But investors complain that with the notable exception of Economy Minister Pierre-Victor Mpeso, few cabinet members have any business background. Many are academics. Some businessmen say they would never engage but that the incompetence coupled with an arrogant refusal to heed advice is an exasperating mixture. “If they would just sit down with us and listen to suggestions,” said a former head of Unilever Congo before deciding he had enough and retiring to Australia.

An Asian businessman familiar with eastern Africa agreed. He said that even though he badly wanted to believe in Kabila’s regime, as long as ministers in Kinshasa refused to honour appointments, the situation was hopeless. “I employed 400 people here,” he said. “In Uganda that would be enough to get me a meeting immediately with any minister. Not here.”

A problem, too, was that ministers who do receive businessmen show little interest in their suggestions. “You meet (Ugandan President Yoweri) Museveni, and he has people taking notes. Museveni is saying all the time: ‘That is interesting, note that down.’ Here they can meet dozens of people without having so much as a notebook on their desk — what can they possibly remember at the end of the day?”

Others recent having to deal with a plethora of different ministers for one contract. The manager of a public works company building a small bridge near the capital complained that he is now on the sixth version of his contract and that every modification, however minor, must be approved by four different Ministries: planning, public works, transport and labour. Not surprisingly he is sceptical about the government’s plan to build up 20,000km of road over a three-year period.

Confused signals

Payment terms are another stumbling block. “Talks tend to end in deadlock when they (the government) start asking for 100% credit when I want a 30% advance and the rest by letter of credit,” an eastern European in Kinshasa said.

The business community was not reassured by Congo’s handling of its relationship with the International Monetary Fund. Finance Minister Farandula Tafoingi sent out confusing signals saying that the government had agreed to pay $35m a month towards IMF arrears. Then, shortly after returning from talks in Washington, he backed down on that commitment on the grounds the government had not yet voted a budget. Since then, the Central Bank has said Congo will indeed resume IMF payments, and the government has come up with a budget of sorts, setting revenue and disbursements at $744m — without saying where it will come from or how it will be spent. To achieve the projected monthly revenue of more than $60m, the government will have to almost double current income.

The big test now for Congo’s economy, diplomats say, will be the introduction of the country’s new currency, the Congolese franc, which is not due for the end of June. Parity will be 100 000 New Zaires (N2) for 1 new franc, with N21.60 000 currently worth $1.

The most familiar complaint to those who know Zaire under Mobutu is corruption. The new ruling party tried to promote a sense of civic responsibility, but it failed to do was to ensure that all ranks and file public servants received a living wage, and corruption practices flourish.

Yet, despite the catalogue of complaints, Congo’s immense mineral wealth and large population continue to attract businessmen looking for deals and new foreign trade associations keep popping up — proof that many are still prepared to give the Kabila authorities another chance.
Kabila includes war ally in new Congo cabinet

KINSHASA — President Laurent Kabila of the Democratic Republic of Congo has reshuffled his government, sacking six ministers under investigation for irregularities and bringing in a key ally from the war that brought him to power.

The new 37-strong government, announced late on Monday, includes Deogratias Bugara, the powerful secretary general of the Alliance of Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Congo which toppled dictator Mobutu Sese Seko in May last year following a seven-month bush war.

Bugara has been given the job of minister in charge of the presidency. "Maybe Kabila wants him (Bugara) to be more visible with elections drawing nearer," one political analyst said.

Kabila, who has banned politics and rules by decree, has promised national multiparty elections for April next year.

Many of the obscure new cabinet members come from society at large and have not held ministerial positions in the past.

Kabila sacked six ministers, five of whom are in detention during a probe of the financial management of their ministries.

The five are Etienne Richard Mbayi (planning), Lokombe Kitete (energy), Raphael Ghenda (information), who was also government spokesman, Kambale Musafiri (public enterprises), and his deputy, Biselele Kamutambi.

The president, who declared war on corruption shortly after taking over, has on numerous occasions warned his cabinet that anyone abusing their positions for personal gain would be punished.

Asked about the reasons for the reshuffle, he said earlier on Monday: "We want to have a more efficient team." He was speaking on his return from a three-day trip to Lubumbashi, where he met internally exiled opposition leader Etienne Tshisekedi.

Tshisekedi has made participation of his Union for Democracy and Social Progress in government conditional on a resumption of political activity. — Reuters.
Congo Republic in June for donor aid package after war

African Business

Our mission is to provide our readers with valuable insights and information on the latest developments in the African continent. We believe in promoting a deeper understanding of the African landscape and in fostering dialogue on the complex issues facing the region.
asking themselves about the one-year-old Democratic Republic of Congo.

To optimists, Mobutu Sese Seko’s former fiefdom is rich, virgin land where the government, frozen out of Western aid, is hungrily looking to South Africa for investment in infrastructure, mines and agriculture.

To pessimists, Congo is an unstable place, headed by a capricious government that might at any time cancel contracts, impose new taxes or arrest uncooperative business people.

Which is the real Congo? The problem for potential investors is that both are true. It is a propitious moment for South African business, but the Congolese market promises to be as difficult and exasperating as any in Africa.

On the positive side, Congo is richly endowed with natural resources and unexploited arable land ideal for such cash crops as mango, coffee, cocoa and palm oil, some of which were exported in significant quantities before kleptocratic rule and nationalisations destroyed commercial agriculture.

Congo has more than 1 million square kilometres of forest, 6 percent of the world’s total. There are abundant reserves of copper, cobalt, gold, precious stones and diamonds. With a vast river network, Congo has the potential to produce 100 000 MegaWatts of electricity, enough for most of sub-Saharan Africa.

There is significant demand for electrical equipment, telecommunications gear and consumer products. As mines and mining exploration get under way, there will be significant demand for mining equipment. So limited is local production that restaurants, oil and mining companies regularly fly in bread, milk, meat, ice cream and liquor from South Africa.

Quick-temped and deeply suspicious of foreign powers, Laurent Kabila’s government has alienated nearly every potential foreign friend, including its once staunch war-time allies, Uganda and Rwanda.

Obstruction of a United Nations investigation of alleged massacres during the war and a declining respect for human rights led almost every major donor to sharply limit foreign aid. An avalanche of bad press created enough doubt to keep away all but the buccaneers and the big mining boys.

"Now is the time that the West is holding back investment. It is the perfect time for South African business to move in," said Rashid Patel, one of the optimists who moved to Kinshasa from his native Jozi 30 years ago.

Well connected in both the Congolese and South African business communities, Patel also is head of the Congo chamber of commerce, known as the Federation of Congolese Employers, a useful stop in making appointments, searching for partners and learning about government.

Sorting through Congo’s negatives last month to try and answer that Cinderella-Frankenstein question.

Diplomats and businessmen say the chief problem in dealing with Kabila’s administration is a governing style that is capricious, flush with prejudices and quick to arrest.

Journalists and human rights workers have been targeted but business is not exempt. Despite Patel’s optimism, his federation’s executive committee was abruptly banned by the government, pending new federation elections. A main reason was business criticism of a government system that try and collect advance income taxes at the time goods are imported rather than when sold.

Due process is a concept Kabila rejects or does not consider a priori. Results from a structure that is highly centralised around Kabila, who is often mired in every petty decision. Ministers and officials have a power to block deals, but only those near the pinnacle have an affirmative power to sweep aside difficulties. The result is an atmosphere of chaos. Both Britain and South Africa are without high commissioners because Kabila’s government lost their accreditation papers.

Everything is backed up the ladder to higher authorities, yet ministries are packed with functionaries whose only apparent duty is to block access to higher authorities.

Theoretically, investors work with the relevant ministry to strike a preliminary agreement, then the minister takes the proposal to an interministerial council on economic matters. Unfortunately almost every one of Kabila’s 36 ministries has an interest in commercial affairs and can weigh in.

A key link are the four ministers of state, Kabila’s closest confidants who control the power ministries of the interior, the economy, planning and the office of the presidency. And Kabila himself must approve major deals.

Some sources said if Kabila could be convinced early on, much subsequent bureaucracy could be cut.

One wild card is the election Kabila promised for next June. Opposition leader Etienne Tshisekedi is as popular as Kabila in polls. A Kabila defeat or instability caused by barring Tshisekedi could spell long-term unrest. Work is under way on a new investment code, labour law, land laws and taxes, but nothing has been formally promulgated.

The lack of clear law is compounded by byzantine lines of authority.

There are separate ministers of commerce, economy, finance, strategic zones of development, public enterprises, industry and small and medium enterprises, energy, mining and transport. Then there are customs, tax, price-control and supposed product-quality officials to deal with.

Businesses variously report that between 14 and 16 departments must deal with in importing goods.
Kabila vows to crush military uprising

KINSHASA — President Laurent Kabila has vowed to take military action against a declared rebellion in the Democratic Republic of Congo. 

Justice Minister Mwenzu Kongolo said after an emergency cabinet meeting yesterday he was optimistic that the government would control the situation. “We have a population to protect and will proceed militarily.”

The meeting followed overnight clashes in the capital between ethnic Tutsi elements of the army and troops loyal to Kabila, and an open declaration of revolt from sections of the army in the eastern Kivu Province. Rebellicus troops said they had withdrawn support from the government in three towns: Goma, Bukavu and Kindu.

Shooting also broke out in Kinshasa, resulting in a curfew.

Senior officials including Foreign Minister Bizima Karaha and Presidential Affairs Minister Deogratias Bugora had fled the country, regional security sources said. They said the two men had left Kinshasa a few days ago but had decided not to return after Kabila started arresting people perceived to be close to Rwandans. “They are clearly on the side of those seeking to remove Kabila,” a source said. The two are reported to be in SA.

Claire Pickard-Cambridge reports that the growing number of SA companies which have moved into Congo were trying to establish yesterday whether their operations would be affected. An SA foreign affairs spokesman said SA was monitoring the situation closely before deciding what to do.

SA companies involved in the country include Anglo American and Icor, which have regional offices in Lubumbashi, and the Katanga Mining Corporation in the Kivu Province near Kolwezi.

Anglo, with America Mineral Fields, is exploiting a Kolwezi copper tailings project and is also involved in exploration. However, its head office was still trying to establish whether operations had been affected. Icor, which has made substantial investments in the country and intends mining copper and cobalt, said there had been no unrest yet near its operations.

Comair, which is 65% held by Spoorset, leases rolling stock to the country. It had a turbulent experience last year when the new government seized its stock. However, a spokesman said last night it was still “business as usual”, with only a limited amount of goods being moved in the area.

SAA spokesman Leon Els said SAA had not yet decided whether to suspend tomorrow’s flight to Kinshasa.

Much of the unrest in the former Zaïre is centred in the same volatile east where ethnic Tutsis launched a revolt in 1996 which snowballed into civil war and the toppling of veteran dictator Mobutu Sese Seko in May 1997. Kabila took power at the climax of the war in which his alliance rebel forces were backed by troops of the Tutsi-dominated Rwandan army.

Diplomats said the chaos in Congo was a direct result of last week’s troop withdrawal by tiny but militarily powerful neighbour Rwanda.

Relations between Kabila and his Rwandan and Ugandan allies haven’t soured, in part over the status of the ethnic Banyamulenge Tutsis and over how to handle persistent insurrection in the volatile east.

The Banyamulenge migrated 200 years ago to what is now Congo but succ...
Kabila’s foreign minister flees Congo

JOHANNESBURG: The rounding up by Kabila of people in his government seen as being close to Rwanda has resulted in the flight of many senior officials, including two ministers.

S ENIOR officials, including Foreign Minister Bizima Kanha, have fled the Democratic Republic of the Congo, where an army brigade in the east has announced a rebellion against President Laurent Kabila, regional security sources said yesterday.

Kanha, a medical doctor who doubled as Kabila’s chief political strategist, called Reuters minutes later in Johannesburg to confirm he was out of the country, but then his phone went dead.

“I am not in the Congo, I am...” Kanha said before the line went down.

The sources told Reuters that Kanha had fled together with powerful Presidential Affairs Minister Degovatsa Bugera.

They said the two men had left the capital Kinshasa a few days ago but had decided not to return after Kabila started arresting people perceived to be close to Rwanda.

They (ministers) had initially left on official duties abroad. But recent events forced them to stay on outside.

“They are clearly on the side of those seeking to remove Kabila,” a source said.

News of the two men’s departure came as shooting broke out in Kinshasa, leading to the declaration of a curfew and an announcement by the Congo’s 10th battalion, based in the eastern Kivu province, that it had rebelled against Kabila.

Kinshasa newspapers reported last week that Bugera had fled. There was no official word from Kinshasa on the whereabouts of the two ministers.

The two men are certainly no longer in the Congo. We believe they have fled because of the chaotic developments in the Congo,” a regional source said.

The sources said Moke Nyaru- gabo, who worked as Kabila’s chief aide during last year’s military campaign against late dictator have since scored, in part over the status of the Banyamulenge, over how to handle persistent insecurity in the volatile east and over accusations of tribal government appointments.

The Banyamulenge migrated 200 years ago to what is now Congo but successive Congolese governments have discriminated against them.

Kabila promised to treat them equally, but officials said he now mainly favoured people from his native Katanga province.

They said tribal appointments had dominated Kabila’s inner circle and the departure of his Rwandan backers had left him vulnerable.

They said Kabila had surrounded himself with relatives. Interior Minister Gacan Kakudji is Kabila’s cousin, army chief-of-staff Celestin Kifwa is a brother-in-law and deputy chief of staff Joseph Kabila is his son.

Other senior posts, including those in military and civilian intelligence, are also held by men from Katanga.

In a statement read on the Goma-based Voice of the People radio station and monitored in the Rwandan capital Kigali, the Congolese 10th battalion said it was in revolt against Kabila.

“We, the army of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, have taken the decision to remove President Laurent Desire Kabila from power,” battalion commander Sylvain Micy had said.

Witnesses in the Rwandan frontier town of Cyangugu and Goma said yesterday both sides had closed their common border.

The regional sources said Goma and Bukavu airports had been closed by the rebellious 10th battalion.

Diplomats said Zimbabwean President Robert Mugabe had called a meeting for Friday to discuss events in the Congo.

They said Kabila and the presidents of Uganda, Rwanda, Zambia, Namibia and Tanzania would meet in the Zimbabwean town of Victoria Falls. — Reuter
Raging battles as war erupts in Congo

BY ROSS HERBERT AND PETER FABRICE

Luanda - Fierce fighting raged across much of the east of Congo yesterday as Congolese ethnic Tutsi rebels and Rwandan soldiers seized the strategic airport in the country's third city of Kisangani and pounded the border towns of Bukavu and Uvira with heavy artillery.

President Laurent Kabila's government denied some of the advances, but an official said an internal commercial flight had been hijacked and ordered to land at the Kitona military base in the far west of the country near the Angolan border.

Battles were yesterday reported in three of the main towns in the east - Kisangani, Bukavu, a frontier town with Rwanda, and Uvira on Lake Tanganyika, across from Burundi.

The vice-governor of the Kivu region, in which Bukavu and Uvira are located, Benjamin Serukira, told AFP that the rebels now control a "large part" of the area. He said that he had joined the rebel side.

DRC Justice Minister Mwenze Kongolo immediately accused Rwanda of having invaded Kivu by sending in "heavily armed troops" to back the Congolese rebels. The Rwandan army denied this, but a UN source in Kinshasa said that battalions apparently coming from Rwanda entered Goma, on the Rwandan border, yesterday morning.

Former Congo foreign minister Bizimma Karaha predicted in SA that Kabila would lose the DRC "like Mobutu" within a month - from a rapidly spreading, nationwide revolt.

Karaha denied that this was just a revolt of ethnic Tutsis and insisted that it was a general revolt against Kabila's oppression, corruption, and favouring of his Katangese tribe for all positions of power.

Angola, which has been sliding towards resumed civil war, appears linked to the fighting.

Diplomats have said this holds massive regional implications. Together with UN military officials, they expressed concern that the battle for Congo might again tilt the balance of power in Angola and help UNITA evade pressure to comply with the Lusaka peace treaty.

"There was a tremendous amount of shooting here right in the middle of town," said a source in the centre of Kisangani. He said government soldiers began rounding up Rwandan soldiers who Kabila ordered to leave Congo last week.

Government troops appeared to be in control of central Kisangani and fighting subsided at 11am but the airport remained in rebel hands, denying the government a vital means of supplying its troops in the east.

"The security implications for the region are tremendous," Paula Ghezini, spokesperson for the UN High Commission for Refugees in Rwanda, said.

This latest rebellion, which erupted at the weekend, has spread far quicker than Kabila's own rebellion, that saw the demise of the late dictator Mobutu Sese Seko.
Congo in turmoil again

KINSHASA - The Congo's capital remained under curfew yesterday and troops loyal to president Laurent Kabila manned roadblocks throughout the city, searching for renegade Rwandan mercenaries.

In the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), military officers proclaimed themselves in open revolt against Kabila on Monday and urged the population to oust the president.

About 14 months after charging victoriously into Kinshasa, the rebel alliance that carried Kabila to power appears to be unravelling.

"The government asks the people of Congo and foreigners in the country to stay calm and to stay at home until order is restored," was the abrupt announcement on Monday on the state-controlled People's Radio.

"Stay at home just until that time when the armed forces of Congo re-establish civil order."

Shops throughout the capital remained closed and the city's downtown streets were deserted on Monday.

A defence ministry official said loyalist troops had been ordered to kill any Rwandan soldiers found hiding in and around the city.

Pre-dawn clashes on Monday at two military bases apparently pitted Kabila's troops against Rwandan mercenaries who last year helped the president to oust long-time dictator Mobutu Sese Seko.

Kabila last week ordered all Rwandan soldiers to leave the country. The fighting comes amid growing suspicions within Kabila's government that the Rwandan troops have been plotting against the regime.

Earlier, Kabila sacked James Kabare, a Rwandan Tutsi who had been the president's top military commander.

Although Rwandan troops played an important role last year in Kabila's victory over Mobutu, relations between the Central African countries have soured in recent months.

According to a defence ministry official, more than 1,000 Rwandan Tutsi soldiers fled the Kokolo base in Kinshasa and are hiding in a forest just outside the city.

Kabila has been growing anxious about the presence of Rwandan forces in Kinshasa and weeks before ordering them to leave he increased security around government buildings. Tanks were deployed in front of the presidential residence and office compound while troops were stationed at key ministry buildings.

In the Rwandan capital, Kigali, a private news agency reported an open rebellion against Kabila had been launched in Kivu province in the eastern part of the DRC.

"We, the army of the DRC, have, taken the decision to remove president Laurent Kabila from power," said a statement read on Sunday over Radio Goma, according to the Rwandan News Agency.

The statement was signed by Sylvain Mbuchi, commander of the Congolese 10th battalion.

The statement called on the local population to remain calm and go about their daily business, and assured residents that the goal of the rebels was to "preserve the unity and security of the whole nation".

"In the name of government troops, we denounce the regime. Mbuchi's text read. It referred to a "movement of open rebellion in North Kivu against Kabila".

Mbuchi set out a list of errors committed by President Kabila - " nepotism, corruption and bad government".

A spokesman for a breakaway ethnic group in North Kivu urged the people to rise up against Kabila.

"We've taken the decision to no longer recognise the government of Kabila," said the spokesman, who identified himself only as Andre. "We don't want to separate from Congo, but Kabila must be removed from power."

In a statement delivered to Associated Press and the Voice of America, Andre said his group, representing Banyamulenge ethnic Tutsis, was in control of most of North Kivu province.

DRC foreign minister Bizima Karaha, a Tutsi from the Banyamulenge group, failed to return to the country on Saturday from a trip to South Africa.

His absence has triggered speculation that he may be linked to the uprising.

Speculation was rife over the stability of Kabila's government after weeks of growing tension between the president, his top advisers and what now appears to be a shaky military alliance with neighbouring Rwanda.

Karaha appears to have gone to ground in South Africa, but has not contacted any local authorities nor his diplomatic mission in Pretoria.

A DRC embassy official told Sapa yesterday that Karaha was in South Africa, but had not contacted them. The official was unable to comment further and referred all questions to a senior envoy, who was not available.

At a briefing in Cape Town on Tuesday, Home Affairs Minister Chief Mangosuthu Buthelezi said he was not aware of any application for asylum by Karaha or any other DRC officials, as rumoured in the media.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs said yesterday morning it was still unable to contact its diplomats in Kinshasa for the latest information about the situation there as telephone lines to the capital country were still down.

The government of Laurent Kabila is busy disintegrating barely a year after his troops marched into Kinshasa, Kamanga Mutond explains why...
Defection Swells Revolt Against Kabila

AFRICA
Battle for east Congo rocks Kabila’s rule

FOREIGN SERVICE

Luanda - The spread of heavy fighting in eastern Congo is threatening Laurent Kabila’s hold on power – and raising fears it will derail delicate peace negotiations this week in Angola.

The United Nations has received word that fighting has spread to the Zambian border and Lubumbashi. Rebel troops yesterday appeared in control of the eastern cities of Goma, Bukavu and Kindu and were fighting fierce battles for Uvira, along Lake Tanganyika, and Kisangani, about 500km north-west of Goma.

The UN said it had unconfirmed reports of fighting in Lubumbashi and of Kabila loyalists fighting rebel troops at Mokambo – at the border with Zambia.

If Uvira and Kisangani airports fail to rebel troops, Mr Kabila will have no ready route to resupply or attack the east, which is separated from Kinshasa by a vast swath of roadless jungle.

A source close to negotiations between the Angolan government and the Unita opposition said the Congo conflict threatened to destabilise fragile peace talks here.

Unita, which has been subjected to trade and travel sanctions and increasingly isolated from the region, may stall for time, seeing the war as an opportunity to seek a new ally and to make resupply easier once Mr Kabila’s forces are shifted away from guarding his southern border.

The swift pace of the rebel advance may also provoke Mr Kabila to strike a desperate bargain with the Angolan government, which lent thousands of troops to him last year to oust Mobutu Sese Seko and thus deny Unita support in Congo.

Meanwhile the United States embassy in Kinshasa yesterday ordered all non-essential personnel to be evacuated from the country.

And Bizima Karaha, Mr Kabila’s foreign minister until he fled to South Africa, said he was joining the rebels and denounced his former boss as a dictator who must be toppled.

Congolese Justice Minister Mwenze Kongolo said the conflict was the result of a Rwandan “invasion” and denied rebels were army dissidents.

A source contacted by telephonic in Kisangani described intense fighting as lasting all day, with dead bodies strewn everywhere.

UN envoy Lakhdar Brahimi said he won assurances from Unita leader Jonas Savimbi that Unita negotiators could return to Luanda by the end of the week.
Mobilus sans pillow hat

The acquisition of Kroger's long-time competitor, Food Lion, has allowed Kroger to expand its market share in the Southeastern United States.

Kroger has also made a significant investment in technology, implementing a new inventory management system that allows for faster and more accurate order fulfillment.

This has resulted in increased profits and a more efficient supply chain for the company.

In addition to its retail operations, Kroger has also expanded into the healthcare sector, acquiring several pharmacies and grocery chains.

These acquisitions have helped Kroger to diversify its revenue streams and position itself as a leader in the retail industry.

With a focus on innovation and customer satisfaction, Kroger continues to be a dominant force in the grocery market.

New rivals such as Aldi and Trader Joe's have emerged, but Kroger remains a key player in the industry.

Kabills

Arrival at
CONGO LEADER LOOKS FOR SUPPORT IN STRONGHOLD

Kabila quits Kinshasa
Time for voices of ordinary Condoleezza to rise above the gun...
Kabila flees as rebel forces near Kinshasa

Panic as capital's power supply cut

Kinshasa - President Laurent Kabila has fled his embattled capital as rebel forces drive toward Kinshasa, according to a senior government official.

"The president is not in Kinshasa," the adviser said yesterday on condition of anonymity. "I can't tell you any more than that."

A Western diplomatic source in Paris said Mr Kabila had gone to the southern city of Lubumbashi, his former rebel base.

"As far as I'm informed, the president is no longer in Kinshasa," the official said yesterday. "I can't tell you where he is but he is definitely no longer here."

Western diplomats and rebel spokesmen said the insurgents had captured Inga, about 300km from the capital, where the primary power transformer for Kinshasa is located.

The rebels were reportedly responsible for the power cut.

Rebel leaders in Goma said Kinshasa was now in their sights.

"It should fall in the next few days, by the end of the week or by the end of the month for sure," rebel commander Jean-Pierre Ondekane said yesterday in the eastern city of Goma.

In the US, Pentagon spokesman Kenneth Bacon said two Marine Corps amphibious warships had been dispatched to the Atlantic waters off Congo in case they are needed to evacuate US citizens. - Reuters
Breakup of Congo feared as rebels close in

By Ross Herbert
Star Foreign Service

Kinshasa — The rapid rebel advance towards the beleaguered capital has raised the prospect of the final breakup of the Democratic Republic of Congo as a nation.

Although rebel forces have demonstrated prowess on the battlefield, they have no commanding figure able to unify more than 200 tribes spread across the vast central African nation. Rebel forces drew support from non-Tutsi groups, but government propaganda has convinced many citizens that they are an invading army backed by Rwanda and Uganda.

President Laurent Kabila returned to Kinshasa yesterday, pledging to stay and vowing to defeat the rebels, Reuters reports. "We are here to stay. Whatever happens, the aggressors will fail," an upbeat Kabila told state television on his arrival in the capital.

He retains support among troops from his home city of Lubumbashi – heartland of his Baluba tribe – and broad but soft support in Kinshasa. If Kabila retreats to Lubumbashi, he could hold it and its valuable copper mines, ceding the rest of the country to the rebels.

Such scenarios remain diplomatic conjecture but underscore the risk the conflict holds for a region racked by tribal tensions.

Tutsi-backed rebels are in firm control of the eastern Congo and the Atlantic coast. With apparent control of the port of Matadi, which supplies Kinshasa with most of its food.

Kabila returns to capital

Imports and fuel, and the hydro-electric station at Inga, the rebel army is in position to strangle Kinshasa economically.

Petrol stations have experienced fuel shortages in Kinshasa and in the Congo Republic capital of Brazzaville, both of which depend on a fuel pipeline from the coast.

Meanwhile, the rebels have named the members of a transitional team which is preparing to take power.

The Congolese Democratic Coalition is led by Ernest Wamba dia Wamba, a professor and a longtime opponent of former dictator Mobutu Sese Seko, and includes Kabila's former foreign minister Bizimma Karaha.

"We want to gather all political parties fighting against Kabila's dictatorship," Wamba said. "We will welcome any political parties, as long as we avoid a new dictatorship."

The coalition called on all Congolese to join in the fight against Kabila, and on the international community to aid the uprising by denying their support to the government.

France dispatched 400 troops from Libreville, Gabon, to Brazzaville on Saturday to evacuate hundreds of people hoping to escape Kinshasa before rebel troops close in on the capital. French paratroopers controlled the port and manned road blocks in neighbouring Brazzaville in anticipation of the mass evacuation.

Animosity towards the French, which has run high since Kabila came to power last year, continues. About 100 people demonstrated in front of the French embassy in Kinshasa on Saturday, and Kabila's soldiers reportedly subjected French citizens to painstaking searches before allowing them to board departing boats.

Congolese citizens paid about Rs50 each for a speedboat journey across 2km of river separating Kinshasa and Brazzaville.

"We don't know what to believe. We are worried. The government says one thing and the foreign media say something completely different."

Aim is to avoid new dictatorship

said one woman who fled to Brazzaville on Saturday.

The United States closed its embassy and urged all citizens to evacuate.

A South African military Boeing 707 airplane evacuated an estimated 100 people from Kinshasa airport.

Those evacuated included South Africans, Japanese, Canadians and Greeks.

» Reports and picture
KINSHASA – President Laurent Kabila, 15 months in office, has played the nationalist card to defend his revolution and maintain power in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC).

His accusations that his former sponsors and allies, Rwanda and Uganda, invaded to support a rebellion by the ethnic Tutsi minority in Africa's third largest country struck a chord among many in Kinshasa.

"We don't want these foreigners coming in and trampling all over us again," one hotel worker commented on Saturday as rebels said they were gathering reinforcements in the west for a final push towards the city.

With Kabila and some members of his government in the country's second city, the mining centre of Lubumbashi, about 1,600km southwest of Kinshasa, the message and repeated government assurances that the army is holding the line began to look a little thin.

But thousands of volunteers, many of them admirably young and the unemployed of Kinshasa, have signed up to fight.

Reports from both sides talked of fighting in the west on the road to the capital in an area where the vast nation narrows towards a small coastline.

Truth, so the saying goes, is often the first casualty of war.

A 24-hour power cut in Kinshasa on Thursday and Friday left both sides claiming to control the giant Inga dams, 225km southwest of the city, which provides the former Zaire and Brazzaville, capital of the neighbouring Congo Republic, with most of its electricity.

One of many ironies of the predicament in which Kabila now finds himself is that he is almost certainly right in pointing the finger at Rwanda, even though its border is almost 1,500km to the east of Kinshasa.

He has good reason to know and recognise the signs – he ousted veteran dictator Mobutu Sese Seko with the active help of Rwanda's Tutsi-dominated army 15 months ago.

Independent sources say Rwandan troops are heavily involved in the latest rebellion, launched in the east on August 2.

In Kinshasa, there is a sense of having seen it all before. "It's a photocopy," said Pierre, a driver who lived through Kabila's triumphal arrival in the capital in May 1997.

In the dying days of the Mobutu regime, the army mobilized across the city before melting away the day before Kabila's forces marched into town.

This time, however, residents report little extra military activity across the city and hopes are for another soft landing that will allow everyone to pick up where they left off with minimal bloodshed.

But, unlike Mobutu in 1997, Kabila enjoys support in the population at large and there are signs that his forces are fighting back.

Sunday was a normal weekend day in Kinshasa. A slow start, with a mixture of church services, soccer and routine chores associated with keeping body and soul together with little or no money.

"There's no panic. People only panic when there is sustained shooting," local journalist Henri Kasongo commented.

Kabila, a 1960s revolutionary, surprised everyone – and possibly even himself – with his sudden rise to power at the head of a disparate coalition of anti-Mobutu forces.

A protege of Ugandan president Yoweri Museveni, the regional powerbroker and a former guerrilla leader, Kabila marched into Kinshasa to be hailed as a liberator at the end of a seven-month bush war.

Kinshasa residents, whatever they think of Kabila the man, praise the way he has ended the predatory snoopers and racketeers of soldiers and security forces that were a way of life under Mobutu.

Kabila's administration has curbed rampant inflation – it is currently around 13 per cent.

Anti-government rebels claim they already control one third of the Democratic Republic of Congo.

But, unlike Mobutu in 1997, Kabila enjoys support in the population at large and there are signs that his forces are fighting back.

Kabila, in his rallying call to the nation, contrasted the size of tiny Rwanda to that of his huge and shambolic neighbour.

"Are we going to accept the challenge of the toad that wants to swallow the elephant?" he asked.

The coming days or weeks may well provide the answer. - Reuters.
Mandela calls Congo summit

President Nelson Mandela is set to host peace talks between the presidents of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Uganda and Rwanda in Pretoria on Saturday, followed by a full meeting of Southern African Development Community (SADC) on the crisis in Central Africa.

Zimbabwean President Robert Mugabe has also been invited. Presidential aide Parsi Mankahana said “plans are far advanced to convene the meeting involving Mr Mandela, DRC President Laurent Kabila, Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni, Rwandan President Pasteur Bizimungu, and Mugabe. “The meeting will be followed by a full session of SADC on Sunday in Pretoria,” he said.

Earlier today the Rwandan government said it was ready for full-blow war with the Democratic Republic of Congo if Zimbabwe and Namibia failed to immediately recall troops they allegedly sent to the DRC.

Rwandan ambassador Dr Ben Karenzi said Rwandan troops were ready to go into the DRC to protect “Rwanda’s vital interest in eastern Congo".

Dr Karenzi called on President Mandela to intervene and to convince Zimbabwe and Namibia to withdraw their military support. He said according to his information Zimbabwean and Namibian troops had already been deployed.

In meetings and telephone conversations with SADC presidents yesterday, Mr Mandela, Deputy President Thabo Mbeki and Foreign Minister Alfred Nzo argued with South Africa’s SADC partners that there could be no lasting military solution to the conflict in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Putting the case against military intervention the South Africans argued that neither the government of President Kabila, nor the rebels now advancing on the capital, Kinshasa, have the capacity to prevail militarily and also run the country peacefully for any length of time.

In meetings and telephone conversations with SADC presidents yesterday, the South African message was sharp and unambiguous: military intervention will make the only rational long-term solution – the creation of a truly democratic state in the DRC – more difficult and it could plunge the entire region into a conflagration.

President Mandela is understood to have told the SADC presidents yesterday that the first step towards resolving the conflict peacefully should be a ceasefire, followed by negotiations between Mr Kabila’s government and the rebels on the formation of an interim administration.

Mr Mandela said he expected Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni would issue a call for a ceasefire by rebels in the DRC. This would have the effect of easing tensions.

“I am convinced we are making very important headway in ensuring that a peaceful solution comes at the earliest possible convenience,” he told journalists at his Cape Town residence, Greenpoint.

He said several heads of state had asked him, as SADC chairman, to call a summit on the crisis.

He wanted Mr Mugabe, who has promised Mr Kabila arms and troops, involved in any SADC initiative because he was a capable and experienced leader. He rejected a suggestion that there was personal enmity between him and Mr Mugabe.
Edwards to Peace Table

CONGO: Mandeia brings

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Edwards to Peace Table

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CONGO: Mandeia brings
Inside the Congo conflict

The main players and why they are involved
THE SITUATION YESTERDAY

Inside the Congo conflict

main players and why they are involved

NEWS

Saturday, January 11
Kabila snubs Pretoria's efforts to broker cease-fire as war rages up

Rebels, down jets, as war rages up
Leachers back S11-hour bid for a ceasefire and political solution in the crisis as Zimbabwean and Angolan troops join the fray

A Mandela plan gives Congo hope
Nzo heads efforts for Congo ceasefire

Stephen Launer and John Djudlu

HEAVILY armed Angolan troops and tanks poured into the Democratic Republic of Congo yesterday, as a ceasefire committee headed by SA Foreign Minister Alfred Nzo prepared to elaborate between Zimbabwe, Angola, and Congo in an attempt to win support for an end to hostilities.

An SA government spokesman said Nzo, his Tanzanian and Mozambican counterparts and senior officials of the African Unity Organisation were likely to travel to Luanda, Harare, and Kinshasa this week. They would also meet representatives of the Congo rebels.

Presidential spokesman Parks Makabola said they would base their efforts on an expression of support for a ceasefire in the declaration following the Zimbabwe Falls meeting chaired by Zimbabwean President Robert Mugabe. Zimbabwe and Angola have been supporting Congo President Laurent Kabila against the rebels.

Intense fighting raged in the country yesterday, with both government forces and rebels claiming significant advances. As rebels seized control of three towns, sources said Kabila was no longer in Kinshasa, but had set up headquarters in the southern town of Lubumbashi.

Sapa-AFP reports that Angolan and Zimbabwean forces helped drive the rebels back from positions close to the capital, Kinshasa. Sources said Angolan troops had also stricken at the rear of the rebel advance.

A rebel spokesman and former foreign minister Bizima Karaba said his forces could not respect any ceasefire until Angolan and Zimbabwean troops had withdrawn from the conflict.

Unconfirmed reports said Uganda was strengthening its military presence in eastern Congo. Uganda is concerned that Kabila may receive military assistance from Sudan, which supports rebels in northern Uganda.

Kenya and Tanzania have had unconfirmed reports that Uganda's 32nd Battalion had moved into Rwanda and the two countries planned to airlift a force into Congo.

The ceasefire plan was agreed to on Sunday in Pretoria at a meeting of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) plus Kenya, Rwanda and Uganda. Angola did not attend and Mugabe rejected his disbandment by sending his high commissioner.

SA government sources said Nzo, the Tanzanian and Mozambican for-
SA's Congo peace bid in tatters

HUGH ROBERTSON
Political Editor

President Mandela's initiative for a ceasefire and troop standstill in the Democratic Republic of Congo has taken another battering, with the country openly rejecting the ceasefire call and Angolan troops continuing their advance against rebels fighting the regime of President Laurent Kabila.

Meanwhile, rebels said Angolan and Zimbabwean jet fighters supporting the DRC government had bombed rebel-held Kisangani today and continued to attack rebel forces south-west of the capital, Kinshasa.

Bialma Karaha, Mr Kabila's former foreign minister, said Kisangani, Congo's third-largest city which fell to the rebels on Sunday, was attacked early today.

"No military objectives were hit, only civilian targets," Mr Karaha said.

"They cannot recapture Kisangani, only bomb it from the air. This is terrorism..."

At the same time, Uganda admitted its forces had been deployed in the north-east of the country. Uganda's Foreign Minister, Eriya Katunganya, said the country's troops were in the DRC, but added they were simply defending Uganda's security interests.

South Africa's role in the peace initiative was further compromised as officials of Mr Kabila's government alleged secret South African support for the rebels.

According to a spokesman, a South African-registered aircraft had been recorded requesting permission to land at Goma, a town in eastern Congo now held by rebels.

He said the South African Government...
Congo peace brokers hypocrites, says Mugabe

Michael Hartnack

HARARE — President Robert Mugabe called would-be peace brokers in the Democratic Republic of Congo “hypocrites” yesterday, in what diplomatic observers saw as an intensifying war of words with President Nelson Mandela.

“All those who have been denying and all those who have been talking peace are hypocrites,” Mugabe said, claiming that Zimbabwe had positive proof that Rwanda and Uganda were helping rebels against President Laurent Kabila’s government.

Reports yesterday said Mandela, the chairman of the Southern African Development Community (SADC), had again criticized Mugabe’s role in seeking military intervention as chairman of the SADC Organ on Politics, Defence and Security.

Speaking after a meeting with Howard Wolpe, US special envoy to Africa’s troubled great lakes region, Mugabe said: “There are hypocrites who are talking peace when in fact they are supping with the rebels all day and all night.”

He rejected US calls for the withdrawal of all outside forces from the Congo.

US ambassador Tom Donaldson appeared disconcerted by the vehemence of Mugabe’s remarks and said Washington stood by its appeal “so that the quickest possible path and diplomatic solution to address the conflict can be found. We all have a common aim in how dangerous the situation in the Congo has become.”

Zimbabwean spokesmen have been emphasizing that their contingent is a part of “allied SADC forces” responding to an appeal for help from “a legitimate government.”
Kasrils clarifies SA's potential role in conflict

By Pierre Dupont

South Africa has the capacity to deploy peacekeeping forces in the war-torn Democratic Republic of Congo within 24 hours, but is not about to do so, Deputy Defence Minister, Simon Kasrils explained yesterday.

He was clarifying remarks he made at a briefing on Tuesday when he said SA was ready to deploy peacekeeping forces in the Congo if the Southern African Development Community took such a decision at the highest level.

Kasrils said yesterday that his remarks had been taken out of context and misinterpreted in some reports to suggest that SA had changed its policy about not intervening militarily in the Congo.

"I was talking hypothetically," he said. "We have been working on improving our peacekeeping capacity for the past four years and that we are now very well trained and have the capacity to send a peacekeeping force into the Congo. I also said we were capable of doing so within 24 hours because we have a rapid response force." Kasrils said.

He added this would happen only if President Mandela and the SA Government gave the order, and the peacekeeping mission was approved at the highest level by the SADC.

He said SA did not consider the Zimbabwe meeting of some SADC defence ministers, which approved military intervention two weeks ago, as an adequate decision-making body.

Kasrils also explained that SA was in any case unlikely to get involved in the Congo as it was now with a war going on.

"We would be very careful about going in for peace enforcement. We are not in favour of that," he said, adding that SA did not want to repeat the mistakes made in other interventions, such as in Somalia, which had tried to enforce peace.

Star Foreign Service
Congo crisis reflects a new Africa

Africa is re-shaping itself and national boundaries drawn up in colonial days will not survive

There is nothing that has concluded more people to Africa for the past five years than the curious and intriging about-turn by Rwandans, Ugandans and some troops from the Alliance of Democratic Forces (ADF) who had helped overthrow Laurent Kabila in May last year.

The prospect of Kabila's being removed from office may be avoided, however, if the proposed ceasefire and negotiations bring about the required duration of peace in the country. That will be determined before the end of this week, it is hoped.

Like all such alliances, which are sometimes called "marriages of convenience" between common issues, the ADF has not been able to survive the test of time. It has now been replaced by the Coalition for Defence of Democracy (CDD) - another amorphous grouping embroiling forces with varying political and ideological aim.

These include a well-known revolutionary schedule, Ruvush Wamba wa Wamba, who used to teach at the University of Dar es Salaam, and some educated soldiers who were brought in by the rebels and their ranks mean to be collecting extensive dissatisfaction in Angola.

The anti-Kabila forces are united under the leadership of armed forces, because they claim he is "corrupt," a "rogue" and a "dictator" and demand democratic elections in the country.

Amid all these changes of corpora- tion, the rebels, who have the advantage, have been able to hold on to the power in the rebel independent war camp after they were able to hold on to the power in the rebel independent war camp.

The paper also quoted Mugabe's aide, Godfrey Chidune, saying he was happy that Kabila had been defeated. "We hope that Kabila's defeat will pave the way for more democratic elections in the near future," Chidune said.

The statement certainly does throw some light on the situation which has led to the presence of the rebels in parts of the country. The rebels have been active in the region since 1981, when they were part of a rebellion led by the Armed Forces for Democracy in Angola.

Huge western transnational companies, mainly from the US, France and Belgium, have been the major players in the conflict, and they have been joined by Nubian. They are raising "national interest" as justification for what Kabila and his supporters and the rest of the Congolese people see as an invasion of the Congolese sovereignty of the region.

The situation has been further complicated by the fact that Kabila and his government have refused to negotiate with the rebels, who have been demanding a political settlement to the conflict.

In the wake of the defeat of Kabila, the military has been an important player in the conflict, and the rebels have been able to hold on to the power in the rebel independent war camp.

The economic interests inspiring the current scenario have now expanded beyond the traditional players of the West, and includes African leaders such as Mugabe.

According to reports quoting the anti-Kabila rebels, Zimbabwe's President has more than $200 million at stake if Kabila loses the fight. There may be others like Mugabe who are probably not only ready to make a quick back cut out of the "joke of Africa." The Americans, too, have to have very close military co-operation with the Rwandan government, have decided to keep "out of sight" and perhaps pursue their other interests more clearly than before.

The broad of the African Studies Center at the University of Cape Town, Mahamad Mamadou, has noted another factor to the African crisis in Angola is its "fearful political base." For the Congolese, the situation is that anybody with an interest in the Congo is going to pursue it through a foreign force because there is hardly any foreign force strong enough to do it.
HUNDREDS WOUNDED OR KILLED — DOCTORS

Kinshasa under siege

KINSHASA: As the long-awaited rebel assault on the capital of the Democratic Republic of Congo started yesterday, South Africa continued with its shuttle diplomacy to broker a peaceful solution.

REBELS fighting to topple President Laurent Kabila launched an assault on the capital Kinshasa yesterday, infiltrating suburbs near the airport and triggering a fierce artillery battle.

With the sound of heavy weapons fire echoing across the city from early morning, the government urged the people via state radio and television to stay calm.

"The Congolese armed forces are conducting mop-up operations of armed elements who infiltrated the capital," a radio announcer said.

Doctors at a Kinshasa hospital said hundreds of fighters had been wounded or killed.

The government imposed a curfew while it tackled "invaders" claiming to control parts of the city. The curfew, announced by the official Voice of the People radio, followed air and artillery strikes in the morning against rebels east of the capital.

Earlier one of the Tutsi-led rebellion's leaders, Bizima Karaha, said the rebel forces had entered Kinshasa, controlled parts of it, and had attacked the airport.

Other rebel leaders said they had taken Kalemie in the south-east Katanga province, and denied government claims they had been kicked out of Kisangani, in the north-east, and the port town of Matadi.

In Kigali, meanwhile, Rwanda accused Kabila of ordering the killing of ethnic Tutsis and others and warned it might enter the Congo conflict if necessary to protect them.

"Rwanda could intervene in the Congo crisis if Kabila pursues the initiative he has undertaken to terminate foreign nationals or Congolese on the pretext that they are Tutsis or Rwandans," Patrick Mazimpaka, minister in the Rwandan president's office, said.

Angola and Zimbabwe have both sent troops to support Kabila, while Uganda and Rwanda are supporting the rebels, although both deny any active involvement.

This has left the country virtually split in two, with Uganda and Rwanda in the east and Angolan and Zimbabwean troops backing government forces in the west.

PEACE MISSION: Alfred Nzo

Angolan warplanes and helicopters yesterday supported DRC artillery in an attempt to flush out rebel pockets near Kinshasa.

Kabila's cabinet director, Abdoulaye Yerodia Ndombal, went on official radio to say authorities were imposing a night-time curfew until the "Rwandan and Ugandan invaders" had been crushed.

Most shops, offices and public buildings were closed and the army put up roadblocks, searching vehicles and advising people to return home.

The artillery fire that raged through much of the morning died down in the afternoon to enable ground troops to track down concealed invasion forces, a source close to the president's office said.

Angolan military planes were seen on the tarmac at the airport, which was guarded by Zimbabwean troops. They are helping to protect the city and its supply routes.

Witnesses reported that more than 200 rebel fighters had surrendered during the mopping-up operations run jointly by DRC, Angolan and Zimbabwean forces.

The rebels, mainly army soldiers who had defected, surrendered at a Roman Catholic mission at Sanga, 40km south-west of Kinshasa on the road to Matadi.

Others gave themselves up at a camp in Lembal, in the east of the capital. Witnesses said they appeared to be tired and hungry.

Karaha, Kabila's foreign minister until he defected, had earlier said that "our troops are in Kinshasa, they have attacked the airport and control certain parts of the city".

He said Zimbabwean troops and Kabila's soldiers were in disarray.

He also claimed at least 50 Zimbabwean soldiers had been killed on Monday at Kasangula, a few kilometres south of the capital, and that the rebels had repelled a DRC and Zimbabwean attack.

He said the government for its part claims its forces and allies have recaptured the towns of Matadi, Mbanda, Bombo and Banana.

"We have captured the towns of Matadi, Mbanda, Bombo and Banana," Kabila's spokesman said.

He also said his government had recaptured the towns of Matadi, Mbanda, Bombo and Banana.

The government for its part claims its forces and allies have recaptured the towns of Matadi, Mbanda, Bombo and Banana.

"We have captured the towns of Matadi, Mbanda, Bombo and Banana," Kabila's spokesman said.

On the diplomatic front meanwhile, a South African-led diplomatic mission held talks in Addis Ababa with Organisation of African Unity chief Salim Ahmad Salim.

South Africa's Alfred Nzo headed a team of foreign ministers from Zambian, Mozambican and Tanzanian that met Salim and will accompany him on a visit to Angola and the DRC to try to broker a peaceful resolution.

However, in Harare, President Robert Mugabe branded as "hypocrites" fellow southern African leaders trying to reach a diplomatic solution, saying they were "sapping with the rebels", the official Zina news agency reported.

Several countries closed their embassies in the Kinshasa last week and evacuated staff and foreigners. — Supa-AP, Reuters
Zimbabwe flies home first battle casualties

Michael Hartnack

HARARE — Zimbabwe has acknowledged its first casualties in fighting to defend President Laurent Kabila's government in the Democratic Republic of Congo, saying "at least" two soldiers have been killed and 15 wounded.

State sources said yesterday three more Zimbabwean soldiers were missing in the battlefront.

"Zimbabwe is sending reinforcements after finding that regular troops from at least two foreign countries were spearheading the attacks in Kinshasa," said the state-controlled Herald, which editor Bornwell Chakadza was recently transferred to the post from being President Robert Mugabe's director of information.

Meanwhile parliament, the politburo and traditionally supportive sections of the African business community, were reported as criticizing the war at a time of explosive internal trouble in Zimbabwe.

Millers said yesterday they would stop producing meal as soon as current maize stocks ran out, raising the probability of renewed food riots. State price clamps following a 2$300/ton increase in grain prices had made milling unviable, they said.

The Herald said bodies and wounded started arriving back in Harare from the Kinshasa airport and around the Masina suburb. A leased Russian heavy transport aircraft that brought them back took reinforcements for the 600-strong contingent already deployed, said the newspaper, which is closely controlled by the information ministry.

The newspaper said that after the "foreign-led invasion force" attacked SADC troops, the "allied forces ambushed the principal column being used in the assault."

Hundreds were reported killed on both sides.

The Zimbabwean Financial Gazette, owned by a consortium of leading African businessmen linked to Mugabe's ruling Zanu (PF) party, reported unrest among parliamentarians and a split in its elite policy-making body, the politburo, over intervention in the Congo. Retired army commander Gen Solomon Mujuru warned strongly against involvement, politburo sources told the newspaper, while MPs were outraged that they were not consulted.

"Gen Mujuru openly expressed his reservations and questioned what Zimbabwe stood to benefit, and whether it was not a question of putting interests of private individuals to the forefront," they said.

This was a reference to reports that cabinet ministers were among those owed up to 2$2,5bn on business ventures in Congo since Kabila took power last year.

In some of the most outspoken criticism ever published in Zimbabwe, an article called the intervention "The War of Mugabe's Ego", while an editorial warned that the fallout from the "debacle" would bedevil relations between Zimbabwe and SA long into the future.

Mandela targeted

"Neither (Nelson) Mandela nor his successor Thabo Mbeki is likely to forget too soon what a good friend Zimbabwe has been and is," it said sarcastically.

"Diplomats said yesterday Mugabe's attack on Wednesday on 'hypocrites' calling for peace was clearly aimed at Mandela, while Mugabe's demand that the Organisation of African Unity take over management of the crisis challenged Mandela's position as chairman of the SADC.

Edmore Tohaiva, chief economist for Zimbabwe's First Banking Corporation, questioned the cost of intervention "when the country is facing one of its worst recessions", and when unions seemed about to launch a national strike for "restored macroeconomic stability to stop the decline in disposable income due to spiralling inflation and tax".

The International Monetary Fund delayed until October its $20m budget support and a crucial donor conference next month sought $240bn for urgently needed land reforms, he noted.

The cost of deploying a single Zimbabwean soldier was put at $1,100 a day, while tangible profits so far from trade with Kabila had been minimal, said Tohaiva.
Nzo quits DRC mission as fighting grows

By Willie Bokala

MINISTER of Foreign Affairs Alfred Nzo was on his way home yesterday after his team of Southern African Development Community (SADC) leaders aborted their peace mission to Kinshasa because of heavy fighting.

"This has prompted Nelson Mandela to call on heads of state in the region to speak with one voice over the question of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC)," said spokesman Parks Mankahana.

President Mankahana said Nzo would brief Mandela on developments leading up to his proposed ceasefire in the DRC.

The President believed all heads of state should be united over the DRC question, Mankahana said.

The question of who was the aggressor in the DRC had to be dealt with multilaterally, said Mandela's spokesman, who was commenting on a report that Zimbabwe's president Robert Mugabe had on Wednesday called South Africa "hypocrites" for its would-be peacebrokering in the DRC.

Diplomatic observers have seen this as an ever-intensifying war of words between Mugabe and Mandela.

Mankahana said Mandela's quest for a united voice among African leaders was the reason for Nzo, the foreign ministers of Mozambique, Angola and Zambia, and Organisation of African Unity secretary-general Dr Salim Ahmed Salim undertaking their mission to Luanda and Kinshasa.

The mission was trying to find a way of reconciling the SADC initiative with that of the Victoria Falls summit organised by Mugabe.

Mandela had "enormous respect" for Mugabe, believing him to be one of the premier statesmen on the African continent and in the world, Mankahana said.

"President Mandela believes that whatever tactical differences may exist between other SADC states and Zimbabwe, everyone wants to make peace on the continent, including President Mugabe," Mankahana said.

"It is President Mandela's firm view that all heads of state should speak with one voice on the question of the DRC," Mankahana reiterated.
Congo Leader Thanks Mugabe

AFRICA
Kabila seeks SA support before accepting ceasefire

Michael Hartnack, Dustin Cheek and Stephen Lauffer

DEVELOPMENT Republic of Congo President Laurent Kabila last night said he would not accept President Nelson Mandela's call for a ceasefire in the war with rebels until SA denounced invasion of his country by Uganda and Rwanda.

"We all know that SA sold more than 60 tons of guns and ammunition to Rwanda before the aggression and we cannot see reason in calling for a ceasefire before condemning the aggression and calling on the aggressors to retreat," Kabila said after day-long talks with President Robert Mugabe in Harare.

Kabila's statement that "while he knows definitely that Rwanda and Uganda are supporting the invasion troops, there are other countries who are supporting his enemies", was taken by observers as a reference to SA.

Mandela's spokesman Parks Mankabola said last night that government would reply to Kabila's statement through the media only through legitimate communication channels.

SABC Television news reported last night that Deputy Foreign Affairs Minister Aziz Pahad dismissed as "unfounded" Kabila's accusations that SA had supplied arms. Tension between Zimbabwe and SA also heightened at the weekend with the disclosure that Zimbabwean aviation authorities denied an SA Air Force flight overflight rights en route to the Congo. As Kabila's forces advanced on the battlefront, Mugabe attacked Rwanda, Uganda and SA, saying they were hypocrites for urging a ceasefire while pouring arms into the conflict. Rwanda, in turn, said it would send troops into Congo if it became necessary to protect itself.

Kabila's rejection of Mandela's ceasefire call came after SA Defence Minister Joe Modise said earlier that he was hopeful a ceasefire could be in place within a week to 10 days. Modise

Ceasefire

Continued from Page 1

said that mediation efforts were continuing and it was possible that a renewed mission might travel to the region before the end of the Nonaligned Movement summit on Thursday.

But other observers said Modise's forecast was optimistic.

Forces loyal to Kabila were advancing at such a rate that they had little reason to agree to a ceasefire for the moment.

Meanwhile, the SA Air Force yesterday confirmed reports in the Zimbabwean state-controlled Herald that the SAAF flight had been deliberately obstructed — the Herald reporting it was in case it was supplying the rebels.

An article by an anonymous "correspondent", understood to be a top Zimbabwean government figure, alleged: "Millions of dollars worth of SA arms sales to Rwanda and Uganda triggered the present uprising in the Congo and explain the confusing signals coming out of Pretoria regarding a ceasefire in that country."

The article said that Sunday, August 23, Zimbabwe's civil aviation department was asked by the SAAP to permit an American-built Lockheed C130B Hercules to overfly.

The article said a verification team of foreign ministers of Namibia, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe met Uganda's President Yoweri Museveni at Gulu military barracks on August 12, and saw "large quantities of new SA armoured vehicles, troop carriers and other military equipment".
The peace process in Congo is facing new challenges. The government and the armed opposition groups are trying to find a peaceful resolution to the conflict. However, the prospects for a lasting peace are uncertain due to ongoing political tensions and economic difficulties. The international community is closely monitoring the situation and providing support to promote dialogue and reconciliation. }

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**Chronicle of Events**

**21st October**
- The government and the opposition signed a peace agreement, but implementation has been slow.

**22nd October**
- Talks between the two sides fell through due to disagreement on key issues.

**23rd October**
- Mediators called for a resumption of dialogue to avoid further escalation.

**24th October**
- International sanctions were announced to pressure both sides to adhere to the agreement.

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**Summary**

The peace process in Congo is fraught with challenges, but efforts continue to promote dialogue and reconciliation. Despite setbacks, the international community remains committed to supporting the process. Further progress will depend on political will and concrete actions from both sides.
Kabila plans to seize chunk of telephone company

(KINSHASA — President Laurent Kabila's government plans to seize a major stake in the Democratic Republic of the Congo's main private telephone company Telecel and has accused a group of staff there of treason in the civil war.

Senior Telecel staff came from the ethnic Tutsi Banyamulenge minority, accused of playing a prominent role in the revolt against Kabila.

A senior government official said government "did not plan to nationalise the company" but to take over a major shareholding held by Miko Bwayitare, ethnic Tutsi part owner of the company. Earlier Telecommunications Minister Kinkela Vi-Kansy alluded to the plan on state radio and television.

US businessman Joe Gatt, the other major shareholder in Telecel, said he was to hold talks with government. "It is very difficult to understand what they are doing," he said.

Telecel, which uses cellular telephone technology, has become the main telecommunications network in Congo. It is part of Telecel International, which is based in the British Virgin Islands.

The future shape of the Congolese company, in which Belgian company Sait-RadioHolland holds a 10% stake and Miko and Gatt hold 45% each, was unclear.

However, state radio said government planned to put the management of the company in Congolese hands, and that a new company, Telecel Congo, was set up on Monday.

New directors would be named soon.

Shortly after Kabila took power, his government scrapped a concession under which Sizarail, a private company with SA interests, was operating the rail network.

Claire Pickard-Cambridge reports that Congo business sources said last night the action against Telecel sent a worrying message to investors.

"Even though government denies this amounts to nationalisation, it is expropriating assets and appointing its own directors. There has been no talk of offering compensation."

The source said it was believed that government or its appointed directors intended to plunder Telecel's reserves because the company was known to be cash-rich.
mining concessions

US company demands return of Congo gold
With Congo crisis UN steps in to deal
Peace efforts founder as Kabila leaves

Stephen Laufer

DURBAN — Efforts to broker a ceasefire and political settlement in the Democratic Republic of Congo faltered last night as key players left Durban, ending a breakfast summit scheduled for this morning.

The departure of Namibian President Sam Nujoma and reports last night that Congo President Laurent Kabila would also leave appeared to stymie United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan’s efforts to breathe new life into the peace process.

Military sources confirmed that Nujoma, who is among Kabila’s key backers, had left SA for Windhoek. Aides to Kabila said he was likely to leave last night after a number of meetings, most of them with heads of states regarded as his supporters, who are in Durban for the Nonaligned Movement summit.

Earlier, attempts by SA to gain agreement on a resolution on Congo for the summit’s final communiqué collapsed when representatives of the Kabila government did an about-turn on a call for a ceasefire and the withdrawal of foreign troops. Sources said problems arose over whether it referred to all external armies or just those supporting the rebels.

The Congolese delegation had ultimately rejected the amendment altogether. If no agreement was achieved by this afternoon, the summit would probably not take a position on the crisis at all, the sources said.

Kabila arrived unexpectedly in Durban yesterday, apparently after a late-night meeting of his key backers decided to encourage him to come and put his case to Annan. It is understood that Nujoma, Robert Mugabe of Zimbabwe and Jose Eduardo dos Santos of Angola told Kabila he was losing ground to the SA view of events in Congo.

Besides Annan, Kabila yesterday met Nujoma, Mugabe, dos Santos and Sudanese president Omar El Bashir, who supports rebels active against the Ugandan government, which itself supports rebels against Kabila. He also met Isayas Afwerki of Eritrea; Denis Sassou Nguesso of Congo (Brazzaville); Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat; and Omar Bongo of Gabon.

Ararat’s spokesman said the Palestinian leader had expressed his full support for efforts to maintain the territorial integrity of Congo and called for a dialogue to resolve problems.

Abusing an invitation to speak on behalf of the African group after President Nelson Mandela’s election to head the Nonaligned Movement yesterday morning, Nujoma hinted himself to a defence of the intervention by Namibia, Zimbabwe, and Angola on the side of Kabila. He said he said his allies would leave Congo only when the job is done to the satisfaction of the governments of the Congo.

Striking an uncompromising note, Nujoma said the nonaligned nations should strongly reiterate the “sacred principle” of respect for the sovereignty, territorial integrity and unity of states, and “oppose any manoeuvre aimed at overthrowing legitimate governments by force”.

Earlier, sources said that all Southern African Development Community leaders were expected to meet today to discuss their next move. The Summit’s final communiqué will not be released today, sources said.

Continued on Page 2

Congo (continued)
Kabila lashes out at the ‘invaders’

DURBAN: President Laurent Kabila of the Democratic Republic of Congo used his address to the Non-Aligned Movement heads of government summit here yesterday to launch a scathing attack on Rwanda and Uganda, accusing them of wreaking havoc in his country.

Kabila also lashed out at the international community, who he accused of ignoring human rights abuses perpetrated by the Rwandans and Ugandans in his country — including a key harbour, dam and oil refining facilities. He also accused them of hijacking Congolese planes to carry Rwandan troops 2,000km into DRC territory.

Kabila said his countrymen were being deported and killed, women were being raped and children were being used as cannon fodder. “We denounce these odious crimes.”

He called on the Non-Aligned Movement to condemn the aggressors, saying: “The dignity and credibility of our forum is at stake.”

Kabila accused Rwandan deputy president Paul Kagame of attacking the DRC under the false pretence that genocide was taking place in the east of the country.

He claimed those backing the invaders were stooges for people with vested financial interests in the DRC who did not want to see his government succeed.

Earlier in the day, Kabila’s request to jump the queue and be the first head of state to address delegates was rejected.

Kabila apparently asked the secretary general to allow him to be first so that he could return to the DRC to grapple with the continuing conflict in his country.

“Kabila’s request was turned down because the list of speakers was already completed. He was also told that he should perhaps look for another president who was willing to swap positions,” sources in the secretariat said.

Earlier yesterday Kabila left the heads of state auditorium while United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan was in the middle of his address.

A source said this should be interpreted in the light of increasing tension between the UN — Annan in particular — and the DRC.

Other sources in the corridors of the summit suggested the refusal of Kabila’s request was to force the DRC leader to attend a Southern African Development Community leaders’ working breakfast here this morning.

The crises in Angola and the DRC, as well as problems in the Great Lakes region, are expected to be on the agenda for the breakfast talks, hosted by Annan. — Sapa
CONGO'S SARDINE REbellion

OFFICERS, POLLUTING AT THE HELM OF POWER

ANALYSIS
Fighting for the freedom to enjoy sex without fear

The Constitutional Court takes a scathing view of homophobic legislation still on the statute books, writes Carmel Rickard

ST (PT) 6/1/98

Gays drank "excursively", became addicted to drugs, and were "completely estranged from the church and religion". Homosexuals became spiritually and physically weak, leading to a loss of productivity and in general "frail activities result in moral decay and a sense of inferiority".

The police contributed other stigmatising information, not least that they had "established" that every gay person makes his business to recruit as many homosexuals as possible and that homosexuality had been increasing in a "dubious" fashion.

They proposed that homosexuals be removed from their environment and receive psychiatric treatment, and that unless the legislation be introduced, the Constitution would be violated.

Last week, the Constitutional Court scrutinised the section of the act, including the "social therapy" provisions. The clause passed 30 years ago was, according to the police evidence, not being violated.

"Once you take away prejudice, there is nothing left," commented Judge Alfie Buthelezi. "All the justifications are on prejudice, the very thing the Constitution is there to prevent."

The court's task is to consider a decision made by Judge Jonathan Marcus of the KwaZulu-Natal High Court in May. Following a challenge to the section brought by the gay and lesbian community, he declared the common-law crime of sodomy unconstitutional, along with various other sexual offences in the South African legal system which would not be a crime if committed by a woman, or engaged in between women or a man and a woman.

Under the Constitution, an order such as that made by Judge Heher has to be referred to the Constitutional Court before it takes effect.

The majority of the court was making this argument, as Judge Lorie Ackermaann pointed out during the hearing, because it was the first time it had been dealing with issues of sexual orientation. The coalition and its members hope the court's judgment will be more than a rubber stamp. They want it to highlight the injustices they have suffered, and also to put a stop to the violence and homophobia that is being perpetuated in society.

Marcus argued that even though Judge Heher's conclusion was welcome, his decision had not focused sufficiently on continuing discrimination against the gay and lesbian community, such as the fact that someone with a conviction for sodomy could not register as a security officer or qualify to receive a pension under the Special Pensions Act. Marcus argued that the judgment should not be interpreted as a blanket decision extending to all industries that discriminate against gay and lesbian people.

The court has reserved its judgement to an as yet unspecified date. Based on the tone of the debate, it seems almost certain that the court will declare the sodomy laws unconstitutional.

But even if the judgment goes further, the problem remains of how they are to be implemented — including judges of other courts, that the days of discriminating against people on the grounds of their sexual orientation are over.

After all, it was only four years ago that the Deputy Judge President of the Johannesburg High Court, Judge Mosie Fetham, handed down a judgment invalidating a lesbian mother's access to her own children; a decision which, since it has still not been overruled, continues to carry legal force in the lower courts on questions of adoption and foster care.
Secret deal helps Mugabe save face

Spies pave way for Congo peace talks

ANDREW TRENCH

As Zimbabwean President Robert Mugabe sent his troops to war in the Democratic Republic of Congo, his top intelligence officers were quietly meeting with their South African counterparts to hammer out a plan that would allow Mugabe to withdraw from the damaging and costly conflict without losing face.

The meetings laid the foundation for a breakthrough at the Non-Aligned Movement's summit in Durban this week, where Mugabe announced he would hold a peace meeting between the countries involved in the conflict at the Victoria Falls in Zimbabwe tomorrow. Uganda and Rwanda are backing Mugabe as they support the beleaguered regime of Congo's President Laurent Kabila.

The meeting — the idea of President Nelson Mandela and Deputy President Thabo Mbeki — is expected to allow Mugabe to pull his troops out of the Congo while retaining a semblance of dignity.

Sources close to the peace talks said the Sunday Times that South Africa decided to allow Mugabe to take the credit for a possible settlement because it was a small price to pay to end the Congo crisis. The need for the deal to be played in the Zimbabwean capital, Harare, last Thursday when top officials from the South African Secret Service met with their Zimbabwean counterparts.

The Zimbabweans urged South Africa to push ahead with a deal that would allow Zimbabwe to withdraw from Congo.

The meeting was one of a series that is said to have started within days of Mugabe sending troops to help prop up Kabila last month.

Zimbabwean intelligence officials told their South African counterparts that Mugabe had not consulted them about the deployment and that they had serious concerns about the country's capacity to sustain a war on foreign soil.

It is unlikely Zimbabwean intelligence community anticipated Mugabe would quickly realise his mistake and seek a way out.

Zimbabwe has committed almost 3,000 troops to the Congo and some estimates say this has already cost the cash-strapped country up to $300m (about R189 million). Later discussions between the intelligence officials took place with Mugabe's sanction, and South African officials clearly understood that the request for a way out for Zimbabwe came directly from the president, the sources said.

Another meeting is said to have taken place between the South African Secret Service and its Namibian counterparts in Namibia over the past two weeks. Opening a door for Zimbabwe's withdrawal from Congo became central to South Africa's strategy to bring an end to the crisis, and intense diplomacy picked up on the opportunity offered by the meetings of the intelligence officials. On Thursday morning, at a meeting at Durban's International Convention Centre at which the 14 countries of the South African Development Community were represented, Mandela is said to have put forward his idea for the Mugabe-led meeting of envoys.

The central role Mugabe played in the crisis was underlined by the fact that he represented Kabila's interests at the breakfast summit, which was also attended by United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan and Organisation of African Unity Secretary-General Salim Ahmed Salim.

Once a face-saving formula was provided for Mugabe, the next problem was to sell a deal to Rwanda and Uganda, which have troops in the Congo. But there was evidence even before Thursday morning's meeting that an agreement was in sight.

Annan said he and Salim had had a series of meetings with Ugandan and Rwandan officials. It is understood that gaining the support of Rwanda and Uganda for the peace deal hinged on getting Kabila to accept that he was faced with a rebellion that needed to be dealt with by negotiations, and that he could not simply claim to be the victim of an invasion.

If Kabila accepted this, Uganda and Rwanda would concede their troops were in the Congo and would negotiate a withdrawal.

Meanwhile, sensing that his allies were seriously considering ditching him, held a series of meetings with Angolan, Zimbabwean and Namibian officials.

To save face, Mugabe had to sell Rwanda and Uganda's line that there was a rebellion as well as an invasion in the Congo, and that a political solution was needed. At a press conference on Thursday, Mugabe specifically referred to rebels in the Congo as being a distinct entity from Rwandan and Ugandan forces — an indication that the issue had been resolved.

Mugabe also dropped his backing of Kabila's calls for the immediate withdrawal of Rwandan and Ugandan forces.

"In the short term, what we would want to see is an involvement on the side of the rebels and those on the side of the government of Kabila to meet the terms of peace," Mugabe said.

He added he would advise Kabila to implement a "political programme" embracing people of "all shades of opinion" which would lead to elections next June.

In return, South Africa conceded that Zimbabwe, Angola and Namibia would have to withdraw its troops from the Congo was justified.

"Our call for a ceasefire does not mean that we did not agree with the original reason foreign troops intervened in Congo," Mandela said this week, opening the door for a face-saving withdrawal by Zimbabwe, Namibia and Angola.
Congo stance will smooth way for talks

SA Play to force peace
Hugh Robertson
Political Editor

The Democratic Republic of Congo ceasefire agreement signed at Victoria Falls may no longer be worth the paper it is written on.

The rebels, who are the cause of all the fighting and who were kept at bay for a week, were invited to the talks by the government at the insistence of DRC president Laurent Kabila, walked out of the meeting today and vowed to continue their struggle.

Rebel leader Bizima Karaha declared: “We are not bound by this agreement, because the only Congolese at the meeting was Kabila — the one who is killing his own people.”

The agreement was signed by the presidents of the six countries involved — the DRC, Zimbabwe, Angola, Namibia, Rwanda, and Uganda — but there is no guarantee that it will be followed by any action.

In effect, the agreement merely freezes the military standoff between the rebels and the government.

Although the rebels said they had come to the talks ready to sign a ceasefire agreement, the closest they got to being formally recognised was when Zambian President Frederick Chiluba, who chaired the summit, and Organisation of African Unity Secretary-General Salim Ahmed Salim, who was an observer, briefed them.

Although South African officials welcomed the ceasefire, they cautioned against assumptions that it would necessarily lead to a lasting peace.

For that to happen, there would have to be a comprehensive political agreement on steps towards real democracy in the DRC and a recognition by Mr Kabila of the rebels and their grievances.

He has steadfastly refused to have anything to do with them, let alone accept them as negotiating partners.

Senior intelligence sources estimate it is costing Zimbabwe between R6-million and R7-million a day to maintain about 500 troops in the area.

Throughout yesterday’s negotiations Mr Chiluba was forced to shuttle between the hotel room where the rebels were accommodated and Mr Kabila’s conference headquarters, because the Congolese president refused even to meet the rebels, whose forces still hold key towns and installations in the DRC.

The danger now exists of a ceasefire going into effect without the main combatants observing it, and South African officials believe there is a high risk that it could unravel.

If it does, a second ceasefire would be far more difficult to secure.

Even as the ceasefire agreement was being proclaimed at the talks late last night, Angolan, Zimbabwean and DRC government aircraft were reported to be bombing rebel strongholds over a wide front, including the DRC’s eastern provinces, where the rebels have strong popular support.

Meanwhile the practical military and financial reasons for South Africa’s decision not to send peacekeeping troops to the DRC as part of a settlement began to emerge today.

Senior intelligence sources estimate it is costing Zimbabwe between R6-million and R7-million a day to maintain about 500 troops in the area.

Even if these were an exaggerated estimate, they said, it would cost several times that sum to mount a credible peacekeeping operation. The huge and unsettled country — a cost which South Africa could not even consider without huge budget cuts back at home.
Congo ceasefire on cards

Warning sides will swap prisoners, but South African official cautions there may be little more than a ceasefire in the present military standoff.
OAU summit to tackle Congo conflict

Addis Ababa - Defence ministers from seven African nations were to meet today in the Ethiopian capital to discuss the conflict in the Democratic Republic of Congo, the Organisation of African Unity said.

Ministers from Angola, Zimbabwe, Namibia, Congo, Zambia, Rwanda and Uganda were to meet OAU secretary-general Salim Ahmed Salim "to hammer out details of a ceasefire and withdrawal of foreign troops from the Democratic Repulic of Congo", OAU spokesman Ibrahim Dagash said.

A senior UN official was also expected to attend the Addis Ababa talks, he said.

Zimbabwe, Angola and Namibia have deployed troops, tanks and planes to prop up the Congolese government of Laurent Kabila. Rwanda and Uganda are backing the rebellion led by the Congo's ethnic Tutsi minority. The rebels have vowed to intensify their six-week struggle. - Reuters
Huge aid airlift to save Kinshasa

Capital’s food supply cut

Kinshasa – International donors have lined up to join an airlift of food and medical supplies for the Congolese capital, but there is no sign of a truce in the civil war that has led to the emergency.

France announced yesterday it would fly food and medical aid to Kinshasa on Sunday and then help out with airlifts to other parts of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

The Co-operation Ministry in Paris made the announcement as Belgium landed the first emergency aid flight in Kinshasa, where nearly 6 million residents are cut off from port supplies by the civil war.

France said one of its aircraft would fly in 34 tons of food along with medical kits and electricity generators.

The plane would then be used to help maintain an air bridge between Kinshasa and the port of Matadi to the west.

The road and rail corridor, through which 75% of food aid supplies enter Kinshasa from Matadi, remains closed because of the fighting.

Diplomats in Kinshasa said the Netherlands government was expected to join the airlift, sending in a DC-10 aircraft with medicines and water treatment chemicals.

The International Committee of the Red Cross was to start flying in water treatment chemicals from Kenya today, the ICRC co-ordinator for emergencies, Jean-Marie Falzone, said.

Aid workers and diplomats this week sounded the alarm for an imminent catastrophe, saying stocks of food and water treatment chemicals in Kinshasa had been exhausted.

"With the aid coming in we are cautiously optimistic a catastrophe will be avoided," Kinshasa Governor Theophile Mbemba said, pointing to further aid from Italy.

He said with the return of electricity to Kinshasa on Tuesday after disruptions of nearly a month, a fuel crisis had also eased in the city.

Defence officials from the countries involved in the conflict met in Ethiopia yesterday, but there was no sign of progress towards an expected truce.

The rebels fighting Laurent Kabila’s government, who were not invited to the talks at the Addis Ababa headquarters of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU), scorned the regional meeting – and claimed fresh military gains. – Reuters
Kabila disgruntled after SADC talks

Port Louis, Mauritius – President Laurent Kabila today expressed his “extreme disappointment” at the outcome of a summit of southern Africa heads of state, devoted largely to the Democratic Republic of Congo conflict.

Leaders in the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) issued a final statement saying Angola, Zimbabwe and Namibia had acted legitimately when they sent in troops to back Kabila against rebels.

They also labelled the long-standing leader of Angola’s ex-rebel movement Unita, Jonas Savimbi, a “war criminal” responsible for bloodshed and deteriorating security in his own country, where he has been disavowed by former top aides after failing to disarm thousands of his troops.

However, the SADC heads of state, who wound up their summit late yesterday, stopped short of backing Mr Kabila’s contention that Rwanda and Uganda invaded the DRC when they sent troops to back the Tutsi-led rebels in the east.

“I came here for a condemnation of the aggression of a member state of the SADC,” the DRC president said at the airport here, where the annual summit had been held.

“They should have made an unambiguous statement on the aggression, which wasn’t the case”. He pushed aside the idea of a ceasefire.

The final statement from the summit called for talks “involving all parties”.

There was heavy fighting today between forces backing Mr Kabila and his foes for the rebel-held eastern town of Kalemie, independent sources said in Kinshasa.

“There are violent clashes at Kalemie and many dead,” one of the sources said, but added that the town in the north of the mineral-rich south-eastern Katanga province had apparently not yet been wrested from the Tutsi-led rebels.

Pro-Kabila forces surrounded Kalemie last Friday after heavy fighting. – Sapa-AFP
Denmark threatens to cut off African aid

Michael Hartnack

HARARE — Paul Nielsen, Denmark's Minister for International Development, has issued a warning to African states that Copenhagen may cut off aid to all those embroiled in the Democratic Republic of Congo if fighting escalates there.

"The minister's point was simply that he was very worried, as is the Danish government, that as soon as the chips are down, then African governments forget to use the means of negotiation and go straight to war," diplomatic sources said yesterday.

They confirmed Nielsen last week told a closed meeting here with high-level representatives of nine African states with whom Copenhagen has "development co-operation", that Denmark was "troubled" by the failure of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) to avert violence in both Congo and Lesotho.

"I find it disappointing that African countries do not genuinely support the efforts of regional organisations such as SADC and the OAU," Nielsen told representatives of economic ministries from nine states, from Zimbabwe to Eritrea.

"Should the countries involved get into a face to face confrontation, my country will have no other option but to withdraw all the aid to the countries involved."

Business leaders were now afraid of investing in Africa because of perceived political instability and were moving to other parts of the world.

"If Danish development assistance is being somehow diverted to the military by warring parties, then this concern is real," Nielsen said.

He reported "growing disbelief" by Danish taxpayers in the usefulness of spending money in a continent where killing and the destruction of people were common. Danish people often asked if their government was contributing to the funding of wars.

Denmark, whose voters approved diversion of a fixed proportion of national income to assist poor nations, is the eighth largest source of donor funds in the world and 60% of this is devoted to Africa.

Zimbabwe's Deputy Finance Minister, Misheck Chimamasa, reportedly told Nielsen Denmark had played a major role uplifting the poor.
The urgency of the situation hits home...
Locals and foreigners edgy in Congo Republic

Republic of the Congo leader Denis Sassou Nguesso celebrated his first anniversary in power last week but deep fault lines are beginning to show, writes Helen Vespasiani in Brazzaville.

ONE year after his victory in the civil war in Congo Republic, Denis Sassou Nguesso's hold on power appears to be crumbling. Tension is growing in the former French colony across the river from Laurent Kabila's Democratic Republic of Congo.

Twelve months after Sassou's Angolan allies took the port of Pointe Noire, making Sassou the victor in Congo's civil war, rebel activity has put the country's railway line out of action, caused the French embassy to update its evacuation plan and prompted international organisations and nongovernmental organisations to scale their activities back to a strict minimum.

Sassou, who ousted his arch rival, the former president Pascal Lissouba, after more than four months of fighting last year, appeared to command a lot of popular support when he returned to power. He had already been president for more than 13 years prior to Lissouba's term in office.

He preached reconciliation, disarmament, reconstruction of the shattered economy and development of sectors other than petroleum, recruiting popular singers to put the message across.

A former Marxist, he was at pains to emphasise he would continue with his predecessor's liberal economic policy. He called on the Congolese people to emulate Uganda's success in repairing its economy after years of civil war.

The French community, which dominates business in Congo and fled at the beginning of the war, tended to return. Companies which did come back were given free radio advertising. Ambitious disarmament drives were carried out, insulting terms for the country's various ethnic groups were banned. The peace forum was staged with great pomp and ceremony in the capital Brazzaville.

The Angolan troops stationed throughout the south of the country were at first welcomed by the Congolese. They were referred to as the 'Ango' because of their habit of hailing the local population in the same terms. But there were worrying signs almost from the start. Sassou's government was made up predominantly of people from his own region -- the north -- or of long-time Sassou faithful. At the peace forum, 'extremists', that is those who had supported Sassou's opponents Lissouba and his last prime minister Bernard Kolelas in the war, were forbidden to take part.

Some of the Angolan troops were withdrawn. The remainder watched their pay arrive late or not at all and took to terrorising the local population by burning, looting and raping.

Young people from regions of the south of Brazzaville, traditionally loyal to Kolelas and Lissouba, took up arms against the Angolans in several localities. On one occasion the rebels seized a hydro-electric dam, depriving the south of the country of power and water for a month. Several times they cut the railway line linking Brazzaville to Pointe Noire, causing petrol shortages in the capital and pushing up the prices of basic foodstuffs.

An increasing number of United Nations agencies and nongovernmental organisations are reporting that their staff have been killed, threatened or robbed at gunpoint in the capital or within a 20km radius.

"Tension is running very high here in the capital," said one expatriate aid worker whose organisation has cut back activities to a strict minimum. "You can be stopped and searched six times in the space of 1km."

In southern Brazzaville, a part of town traditionally loyal to Kolelas, shots ring out in the deserted streets in the evening. Some.organsisations have established a self-imposed curfew and avoid certain parts of town after 8pm.

There is a long tradition of violence in Congo, but until very recently it has been directed through political leaders -- most Congolese political leaders since independence have come to a bloody end in mysterious circumstances.

Sassou has done little to improve the lot of his people -- or at Congolese from a different ethncity group last year.

This is the first time in living memory that expatriates have been targeted. Three French nationals have been killed in three months. In the most recent killing last month, the victim had his head blown off while he slept at home in Brazzaville.

The new threat can perhaps be imputed to an anti-French feeling that crystallised after the war. A new, bitter style of articles in local newspapers, notably in the satirical weekly Le Rue Meurt, accused French interests of being present in Congo for what they could plunder and the Congolese of allowing themselves to be walked over.

Reports that France's largest oil company Elf Aquitaine SA -- also the largest operator in Congo -- bankrolled both sides in the war did nothing to improve sentiment. Elf has repeatedly denied any involvement as has the French government, but a former Elf chairman, Loik Le Floch Prigent, in a written statement during a recent legal investigation, revealed that Elf's policy in neighbouring Angola was to prolong the civil war in that country for as long as possible.
Kabila urged to deal directly with rebels in bid to achieve peace.

Europe withholds aid for Congo.
withdrawn from Namibia

Threatens a Strike

Zairean opposition
Zaire Economy in Chaos

On the cover of Newsweek, the photo of a war-ravaged Zaire and the street scene in Kinshasa, by Peter Turnley, tells the story.

"Some Short... this is the center of Kinshasa, with the shops wrecked and the streets deep in mud," writes turning. "There is hardly any food..."
FW’s safari is postponed

PRESIDENT FW de Klerk’s African summit in Zaire tomorrow — which was “postponed” yesterday — might not take place at all, senior Government sources conceded last night.

They admitted that the meeting might have been a mistake and that it would probably not have achieved much.

They felt that a “rebel” meeting — held despite opposition from the African National Congress and the Organisation of African Unity — would have been unnecessarily divisive at a time when the Government was seeking reconciliation with the ANC and Africa.

“We don’t want to force ourselves on anyone and get people up in arms,” the source said.

“We are not seeking confrontation with the ANC.”

These sentiments were hinted at by De Klerk in his announcement yesterday that Zaire President Mobutu Sese Seko — the host — had asked for the meeting to be postponed until a later date.

Sowetan Correspondent.
FW’s safari is postponed

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Sowetan Correspondent.
Striking public servants close Zaire's central bank

Kinshasa - About 2,000 employees of Zaire's Central Bank went on strike yesterday, demanding end-of-year bonuses and restoration of transport allowances. Employees picketed the bank, forcing it to close for the day. Troops guarded the building behind a large iron fence as bank staff shouted their demands.

"It is us who print the nation's money, but at the end of the month we don't see any of it. They treat us like pigs," said a printer.

His pay cheque, equivalent to $50 a month, often went unhonoured, he said.

A Bank of Zaire official said the bank had in principle agreed to pay the bonus. "Only we have a problem of liquidity. We had agreed to give them the bonus at a later stage but the staff are impatient."

The bank's staff used to be among Zaire's best-paid public servants. In 1985, annual inflation hit 8,000%. — Reuters

(559) Start 01/12/96
Dictators not allowed in Congo, says trade union

Reneé Grawitzky

TRADE unions in the new Democratic Republic of Congo would not allow the country to slide back into dictatorship and would give self-proclaimed leader Laurent Kabila two months to take control before questioning his democratic principles, a unionist has said.

Addressing the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung in Johannesburg on Friday, Kaino Daniel, general secretary of Fenamiza, the mineworkers' union of Zaire, said: "We are happy that Mobutu has left and we hope Kabila will be able to rebuild the country."

Kabila was being observed closely, especially to ensure that his Alliance of Democratic Forces had democratic structures.

Daniel emphasised the people would never again accept a dictatorship, but appeared unconcerned about the recent moves by the government to ban political activity. He said this move was unnecessary as Mobutu had facilitated the establishment of 400 political parties, some of which he had financed.

In order to get the situation under control, Kabila had to implement certain measures.

Daniel defended Kabila's military takeover and said if he had not taken power, Mobutu would not have left the country. In terms of current opposition parties, Daniel said cohabitation between Kabila and former premier Ettienne Tshisekedi would be very difficult. Elections would determine the outcome.

He was hopeful that investments would flow into the country now that Kabila was in power. Early signs were positive, with approaches made by US and SA investors. He did, however, question the signing of agreements between multinationals and Kabila. Such agreements should be signed with the new government.

He did not question Kabila's intention to implement a market economy with the prospect of privatising the mines. In fact he supported this move, as it would provide the government with much-needed capital.

The 32 years of Mobutu's dictatorship had left the people in misery and desperation.

The country was the "geological scandal" of Africa. Although one of the richest African countries in terms of resources, its people were so poor that it was a luxury to eat once a day. Mobutu used the country's wealth as his own and turned the country into a corrupt and immoral state. With the average salary $1 a month, it was a country where only the wealthy could send their children to school or the sick to hospital.

Since the early 1970s the private sector had all but disappeared with the outbreak of riots and high levels of theft, while public service workers had not been paid for two years.
Low pay angers Kabila’s workers

KINSHASA — An army of neglected public servants got their first pay packet in months yesterday, but found their new leader President Laurent Kabila’s effort to restore order in the Republic of Congo unimpressive.

“In other countries people are happy with pay day but here it is a day of sadness,” post office employee Pelange Sumba said as he picked up a month’s salary — a wad of notes enough to make him a millionaire in “new zaires” but worth only around $20.

If Kabila, who ousted veteran dictator Mobutu Sese Seko last month, had hoped for gratitude he will be disappointed. Numerous disgruntled workers complained as they took their money.

“This money will not help anything — it is like being given just a tip,” grumbled another postal worker, Victor Boa.

Hundreds of an estimated 600,000 state employees queued up at banks in the centre of the capital, Kinshasa, to collect the pay, originally announced for Wednesday but delayed a day.

Kabila’s government said it would pay one month’s salary to employees, but no back pay — at least for now — and no wage rise because the country is bankrupt. Finance Minister Mwapapa Mwana Nanga said the wage bill — about $20m — would be found from meagre government revenues. The “new zaires”, at about 110,000/31, would be replaced by the Congolese franc later this year, he said.

In a worrying sign for Kabila, soldiers from his own army, angered by their own pay dispute, fired off rounds in the jungle city of Kisangani in the east this week, residents and local church radio reported.

They started shooting in the city centre after some were paid in dollars, others in local zaires and some not at all, residents said.

Public servants, who earn between 1-million and 4-million “new zaires” a month, are some of the worst paid people in a country where an estimated 70% have no job at all.

“It is an insignificant salary but we have no choice. With $18 I cannot make ends meet,” foreign ministry worker Jean-Marie Dambota said.

Most workers like him gave up relying on the previous crumbling state, and put their real efforts into second jobs to scrape a living. Many rely on handouts or even their wives’ prostitution to earn the money to raise a family.

Public servants would have to start working properly and those who did not would be laid off en masse as part of efforts to restore order to a sector full of “fictitious workers”, Mwapapa said.

Decades of economic indiscipline by the Mobutu government ruined what could have been one of Africa’s richest states. Mobutu is alleged to have stashed away billions of dollars, and to have enriched his followers at the population’s expense. — Reuters.
Zaire - General
1999
Foreign currency ban stumps Congo trade

The move may lead to rapid inflation as there is not enough local currency.

"Trade has come to a standstill because nobody knows how to price their goods, and if they sell goods they will land up with Congolese franc which they cannot get rid of," said one SA businessman.

The decree, signed on January 8, aims to force dollars out of the informal economy into the hands of the commercial banks and ultimately the central bank. Transgressors face up to five years in jail or a fine of up to 50 000 Congolese francs.

An SA source said the ban's immediate effect on his Congolese operation would be to upset the salaries of employees, who were paid in dollars. "If their salaries are converted into Congolese francs at the official exchange rate, rather than the realistic black market rate, they will receive half what they used to get."

This means the ruling will have a marked social impact on employees and will raise business costs significantly. All our suppliers will have to build their costs into a Congolese franc quote to ensure it reflects its true value in dollar terms."

He said he was also worried that government grows more desperate for dollars to pay its external bills it will consider seizing such dollar accounts.

In a related move, the government has signed a decree establishing a company called Bourse Congolaise des Matieres Precieuses, through which all precious minerals must be sold. The decree aims to force sellers — the large informal diamond market in particular — to go to the "bourse" which pays in Congolese francs.

"Although the bourse purports to be under private control with oversight by government, it is an attempt to centralise trade and increase government's ability to secure foreign currency," said an SA source. Government's bid to corner foreign currency was likely to further encourage smuggling, he warned.

However, the bourse did not appear to pose an immediate threat to foreign mining operations because war and policy uncertainty had largely prevented development.

Foreign mining companies in Congo include Anglo American, American Mineral Fields, Icor, and Toronto-listed Tenke Mining. The government cancelled its agreement with Toronto-listed Banro Resources last year and the dispute is the subject of international arbitration. It is rumoured that the government plans to cancel a cellphone contract it awarded to foreign-based Congolese Wireless Network.

Foreign businessmen are dismayed by the arrest last week of respected Central Bank governor Jean-Claude Massungu Musonge, who they see as the "voice of reason" in official circles. His opposition to the currency ban is believed to be the reason for his detention.

President Mobutu Sese Seko tried several times to ban foreign currency transactions and to force mineral trade through government. His failure is a lesson the new government still has not learnt.
Kabila regime arrests six opponents

KINSHASA — Six political opponents of President Laurent Kabila have been arrested in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, according to a local human rights organisation.

Voix des sans voix (Voice of the Voiceless) said that the six were detained on Saturday at the headquarters of the National Intelligence Agency after being summoned there by Ngole Kabongo, its administrative director. There has been no official statement on the arrests.

Voix des sans voix said on Monday that one of the men, Boboliko Lokonga of the Social Democratic Christian Party (PDC), had been released the same day but the others were still in detention.

The others are Adrian Phongo and Joseph Mukendi of the Union for Democracy and Social Progress, Cleophas Kamitatu of the PDC, Bofassa Djema of the Popular Movement of the Revolution and Kisimba Ngoy of the Nationalist Federalist Party. — Reuters.
Congo tightens control over diamonds, gold trade

KINSHASA — The Democratic Republic of the Congo is moving to cash in on its gold and diamond exports which last year reached their highest level since 1991, according to mines ministry figures.

The government recently set up a commodity exchange for precious minerals to centralise gold and diamond transactions and increase the revenue which the state obtains from a sector which, the ministry says, contributes far less than it should to its coffers.

Last year, diamond exports topped 25 million carats for the first time since 1991, according to statistics from the Centre National d’Exploitation (CNE), a specialised service of the mines ministry that grades precious minerals.

The Congo exported slightly more than 25.87 million carats of diamonds, worth about $450 million, last year, up from 21.7 million carats valued at $386 million in 1997, according to the CNE.

Miba (Miniere de Bakwange), a Belgian-Congolese mining company in the southern town of Mbuji-Mayi, accounted for slightly more than a quarter of the exported diamonds. The rest came from the 45 licensed buyers that purchase the precious stones from local miners.

The roughly 6.8 million carats Miba exported still fell below its profitability benchmark of seven million carats a year.

Ten years ago, Miba produced 10 million carats. Gold exports shot up from just under 394,000kg in 1997 to more than 1.1 million kilogram worth about $9.5 million last year. Production of copper, whose production in Congo has plunged in recent years, gold and diamonds have accounted for of the bulk of the foreign exchange circulating in the Central African nation. On paper, they generally bring in $300 million to $400 million a year, but according to the ministry, barely 6% of this amount reaches the state treasury.

Much of the Congo’s gold, and diamonds are smuggled to neighbouring nations and, according to the mining authorities here, the amount declared to the CNE generally represent less than half the precious minerals exported.

“it is unacceptable that in 1997, official imports of Congolese diamonds registered on foreign stock exchanges amounted to $1.2 billion in Anvers (Belgium) and $246 million in SA, whereas CNE statistics only registered exports worth $350 million,” said Mines Minister Frederic Kabasa Maliba.

To limit the damage, the government has set up a new precious minerals exchange to group all licensed gold and diamond traders in a central site in Kinshasa where their operations can be monitored. The trading companies will now have to conduct all their transactions at the BCPM. “Thus, once and for all, the Congolese state will have control over its real diamond and gold production, which is often underestimated because the operations of many trading companies are dispersed,” said an official memorandum justifying the creation of the exchange.

To join the exchange, gold and diamond traders have to lodge $3 million in an account in Switzerland. “If we assume that 40 companies will be members of the BCPM, it will have $1.2 billion in its account, which will make available to the Central Bank,” the memorandum explained.

However, an expert at the Central Bank of Congo said the timing of the mineral exchange’s creation was wrong. He said the government needed to take charge of the marketing of these precious commodities. — Sapa-IPS.
Congo corners diamond spoils

Need for foreign currency behind expatriate ban

Clare Pickard-Cambridge

Claudine Misser

The Democratic Republic of Congo's decision to ban foreigners from its diamond trade appears to be largely motivated by the government's desire to centralise control of products earning foreign currency.

All expatriates with licences to buy diamonds were ordered to leave the mining areas on January 15 by Mining Minister Frederic Kibassa Maliba and all diamond buying permits were cancelled. Only nationals may reapply for licences and the new licence holders will have to resell diamonds through a centralised Bourse for Precious Minerals which will pay intermediaries only in Congolese francs.

Bourse sales on the international market would give government access to the foreign currency it needs to finance its civil war against the rebels. Other aims are to cut down smuggling — about 50% of Congo's diamonds are thought to be sold illegally — and the promotion of indigenisation in the industry, although there are concerns about the way new licences will be allocated.

As one analyst said: "Indigenisation or black empowerment could be positive if buying licences are granted in a transparent manner. However, there are fears the process lends itself to corruption and the government could use the shake-up to maintain control in the winning companies." Only bigger local companies are likely to be able to afford buying licences.

The membership of the bourse is "firmly downpayment".

De Beers spokesman Andy Lamont said recently the ban would have "huge implications for De Beers' business in the DRC and we are seeking clarification in our discussions with the authorities. It is an extremely complex situation, but our aim is to play a constructive role in the economies in which we operate".

De Beers has one buying office in Kinshasa, operating as its subsidiary Sedico.

"The subject of our discussions with the Congolese government will be to see whether Sedico will be able to continue operating," said Lamont.

He said the state diamond mining operation, Miba, produced about 6.5 million carats a year worth $60m-$70m.

"We had a buying contract with Miba which became the subject of force majeure in June 1997 when the allies backing Laurent Kabila overran the area. Since then Miba sales have been offered to the major dealers on a tender basis. De Beers has bought the bulk of the diamonds offered at tender."

Analysts say the centralised bourse and the accompanying ban on foreign currency transactions is unlikely to be enforceable in a dollarised economy — 90% of transactions are done with foreign currency — and where smuggling is already rife. "Former president Mobutu seems not to have tried to enforce similar bans and always failed," said one.

While many predict that the centralised bourse will fail soon, the fact remains that internal marketing arrangements will have little effect on the international market. Congo represents about 4% of the diamond supply — or 14-million carats a year — and while production is important, it is not critical to the world market. "Congo's diamonds still have to get to Antwerp or India to be cut and nobody will buy diamonds if they are overpriced," said one observer.

Congo is the fifth biggest producer in the world, estimated to earn between $800m and $1bn a year. Botswana is the biggest producer with 28% of world supply, or about $2bn a year, followed by Russia at about $1.3bn and SA at $1bn.
The rot comes out of the woodwork in the Congo

Corruption reaches deep in the war-torn state, writes Francois Misser in Brussels

T
HE man flashes his identity card from the Congolese president’s office, which ironically bears the number 000007. Unlike James Bond, he does not have a licence to kill but his revelations could deliver a fatal blow to what may remain of Democratic Republic of Congo leader Laurent Kabila’s financial credibility.

His name is Michel Rudatengha. He was the president’s director general for economy and finances for more than a year after Kabila came to power until the August 1998 anti-Tutsi pogroms in Kinshasa.

After hiding for five months in an embassy there, Rudatengha, a Congolese Tutsi, has re-emerged in Belgium as an exile and is now willing to spill the beans.

A lack of transparency characterizes the management of Congolese state properties. For instance, the petroleum products distribution company, Sonangol-Congo, owned on a 50-50% basis by the Congolese government and by Aelia’s parent company, Aeta, has no legal existence, claims Rudatengha. It does not have a staff of its own and it is not registered. Unlike public-owned corporations or partly state-owned ones, Sonangol-Congo does not have an account at the central bank.

Yet public administrations are instructed to buy petroleum products from this company in preference to other sources.

The only person who knows what happens to the profits — which do not appear in the treasury accounts — is its CEO, Pierre-Willy M’Poyo, the minister of state to the presidency in the outgoing government, who has just been reappointed oil minister, and is Kabila’s right hand man in economic matters.

In fact, the new minister of economy and industry, Jean Bemba Saola, was asked by Belgian police several years ago to help with the theft of $82m in the Bralima brewery in Kinshasa.

M’Poyo was involved last year in the clandestine sale of state shares worth more than $20m in the Brahma breweries controlled by Heineken and in Toyota’s local concessionary, Afrima. Neither the former minister of economy, Nyembo Kamena, nor his Belgian colleague, Taka Nga, knew about the deal, says Kabila’s former adviser, Heineken confirmed the sale of state shares but could not confirm further.

There is also a mystery surrounding the proceeds of illegal sales of Gecamines’ coal and copper products during the Mobutu era.

After Kabila took over in May 1997, Rudatengha claims to have received a fax from the SA government offering to help Congo get back the money from such sales with which it went into SA commercial bank accounts. The fraud could have amounted to as much as $300m, he was told.

The figure is consistent with the estimate of the former Gecamines Commerciale CEO, Andre Atunde Lithungo, that 30% of production was smuggled out of the country. For 1992 alone, this may represent more than $150m. He says that in 1994 he instructed his lawyers to start legal action against a Johannesburg-based coal trading company. Rudatengha says he was then told by Kabila to hand over the matter to another adviser and he said he did not know whether the Congo managed to get money back from the SA banks.

Gecamines sources in Brussels said they did not know of any official SA involvement in the attempt to recover the proceeds of the fraud in SA banks. However, they said a Johannesburg-based consultancy, the commission of Gecamines to recover the money originating from the sale of Gecamines’ stolen products. However, its efforts were unsuccessful.

There are suspicions that money extorted from public administrations and major companies is pumped directly into the presidency. Every month, M’Poyo is said to bring about $2m in cash to the “upper chamber” — a room with a safe, located in Kabila’s “Marble Palace” in Kinshasa, the keys of which are permanently in Kabila’s pocket, says Rudatengha.

The money comes from MIBA diamond company, says the former adviser, who was once asked to count the bank notes. Two “FR” which, loosely translated, means “president of the republic.”

MIBA is not the only unwieldy provider of the “upper chamber.” Rudatengha claims also to have seen M’Poyo bringing in cash proceeds from oil taxes. On several occasions, the central bank governor, Jean-Claude Masangu, was instructed to deliver money in cash — a monthly amount of $45m, to the “upper chamber.”

Kabila’s claims.

“Had to sign the receipt because Kabila didn’t want to,” he says.

Kabila also benefited from the Congolese central bank’s guarantee for the reimbursement of food imports from Namibia by a private company called Gesac, whose main shareholders are the state president and his relatives. If the Congolese clients do not pay, the bank will step in.

In fact, Gesac is the sole beneficiary of a $20m monthly revolving credit line afforded by the Namibian government to finance these supplies. Congolese firms which should have benefited from this facility are going out of business, says Rudatengha.

As Kabila consolidates his vast wealth, neither the diamond company, MIBA, nor Gecamines are able to pay the salaries of their workers, and most public servants have not been paid for months.

Belgian papers have confirmed M’Poyo’s “raids” on MIBA, aimed at financing the war effort.

Congolese businessmen are not surprised by these practices. In a letter dated back to April 1997, MIBA’s then financial manager, Ngandu Kamanda, and director general, Jean-Pierre Mortez, asked the Benelux bank in Brussels to transfer from $3.5m MIBA’s account to an account at the BCDI bank of Kigali, via a New York bank, with the following mention: “contribution to the war effort.”

The BCDI account belonged to the Compagnie Mixte d’Import-Export (Comiex), founded by Kabila during the 1987-1988 period when he was a guerrilla leader who owned about 40% of Comiex’s capital, according to two of Kabila’s former colleagues.

Comiex is also the main shareholder of the newly formed Banque du Commerce et de Developpement (BCD), into which the $1m ransom extracted from each member of a group of former MIBA managers — who were prosecutors paid. The money went into an account named "FR" which, loosely translated, means "president of the republic."
Little to celebrate in Kinshasa

By CHRIS McCARUS

Two years ago, Rwanda and Uganda helped to propel Laurent Desiré Kabila to power in the then Zaire after sweeping across thousands of kilometres of jungle and savannah within eight months. Mobutu Sese Seko, arguably the dean of African dictators for his complete effect on the nation through murder, egotism and kleptocracy, was already sick with prostate cancer.

After 32 years, Mobutu’s own army had abandoned him and allowed foreign Tutsi troops with Kabila’s collection of teenage soldiers to walk into town without firing shots. “Even a dog,” people said at the time, “would be an improvement on Mobutu.”

On Monday, Kabila’s Government of National Salvation asked Kinshasa’s 5 million residents to celebrate the anniversary of their “liberation”. At the Martyrs Stadium, teams of men in yellow shirts cleaned the streets with brooms, shovels and wheelbarrows. A yellow tent was raised for dignitaries. Dozens of civic, trade and military groups marched, danced and played instruments as the president watched from his chair. But fewer than 50,000 people turned out. There is little to celebrate. The lives of the country’s 40 million other residents have not improved and the Kabila regime looks increasingly like Mobutu’s.

The self-proclaimed Maoist, one-time collaborator of Che Guevara and former Dair ee Saisan hotel owner promised in 1997 that the country would be rebuilt and that he would organise elections within two years. However, most observers and opposition politicians have ruled out elections this year because the eastern third of the country has been occupied by rebels supported by Rwanda and Uganda.

One of Kabila’s problems is his inflated ego, reminiscent of that of his ally in the war, Robert Mugabe. He slammed the phone down on US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, then braged about it to Congolese journalists. And he refused to receive US Africa envoy and veteran civil rights activist Jesse Jackson.

His Government of Public Salvation, as Kabila calls it, is a pariah both at home and abroad. Since he banned trading in dollars, food cannot be imported from abroad.

It is common to hear the elderly speak nostalgically of the Belgian colonial era, when “we all ate three meals a day”. There is little money in the national treasury.

While nearly every other African leader today courts the West, Kabila is planning a kind of Eastern Europe in the jungle. Barely a week goes by without word that he has jetted to Tripoli, Khartoum, Nairobi or Harare in search of aid, and condemned “the aggressors” Rwanda and Uganda.

Last month he inaugurated the Committee of Popular Power, or CPP, inside the Palace of the People. Television viewers saw the bald, overweight figure in the Mao jacket addressing the audience in a grand hall. Behind him on the back wall hung a 10 metre-high portrait of himself.

As a first step in the week-long proceedings, first Kabila officially dissolved the liberation movement born in the bush and “gave the power back to the people”. Delegates from Kinshasa then began drafting documentation as to how to “organize in cells” and “defend the quarter from enemies.”

Some delegates attended for fear that pro-Rwandan infiltrators were in their midst. Some came out of respect and gratitude for the man and his movement. And some came because they no longer eat regularly and were hoping that a small sum would be given to all.

Inspired by Libyan ideology instructors and Muammar Gaddafi’s Little Green Book, the CPP is being implemented by Dominic Sakombi, the “born-again” Christian who advised Mobutu for years.

Down a potholed street leading from the stadium where the “liberation” celebrations took place on Monday, Isabelle, a 31-year-old divorced mother of two, said: “I would have liked to join the celebrations, but someone has to stay here and try to make money.”

“One thing you can’t argue with is safety on the streets. Mobutu’s soldiers would stop and steal your wallet, jewels, television, groceries - anything. Kabila’s soldiers will just let you walk on by.” Some would say this means they no longer have anything to lose. - IFS
Kabila at risk in fight for gem fields

SAM KILEY

LUSAMBO: Broken street lights stand as monuments to decades of dictatorship and corruption. Creepers grow up the insides of once gracious colonial villas in Lusambo. Here Congolese rebels and Rwandan troops are tying a noose to strangle President Laurent Kabila’s ability to pay for foreign troops.

The town, which has gradually been returning to the jungle since the Democratic Republic of Congo’s independence from Belgium almost 40 years ago, was the last main line of defence for Kabila’s Zimbabwean and Namibian allies before the great prize of Mbuti Mayi where, 112.6km south, lies Africa’s richest diamond area.

The loss of these real-life “King Solomon’s Mines”, where gems sometimes worth millions are harvested like potatoes, would spell an almost immediate end for Kabila.

After thwarting the attempts of foreign mining companies to exploit the vast mineral resources of the Democratic Republic of Congo, which include copper, uranium and 60% of the world’s cobalt, by a mixture of sharp practice and demands for huge amounts of future profits in advance, Kabila now relies entirely on Mbuti Mayi’s diamonds for his survival and for funds to pay his foreign allies.

Lusambo was overrun last week. Now only diplomatic peace moves involving President Thabo Mbeki lie between the Rwandans and an assault on the Congo’s treasure trove.

The battle for Lusambo raged for a week. The first to run were Zimbabwean and Namibian prisoners of war said to be Kabila’s loyalist Congolese forces. Flight was less easy for the professional soldiers from Southern Africa.

Some, like Namibian Private Albertus Witbooi, were specialist desert fighters, men ill-trained to cope with Central Africa’s dense forests.

“They have no idea how to survive in this environment. They have scattered into the bush, but they will have to give themselves up or starve to death,” said Jose Kanku, the deputy commander of the rebel “task force”.

In their latest advance, the Rwandans and the Congolese rebels outwitted Kabila’s allies by encircling their positions and using guerrilla bush craft to creep beneath the arc of heavy artillery shells and wipe out Zimbabwean and Namibian positions.

The shock of the final assault on Lusambo forced Zimbabwean and Namibian troops into a fast retreat, leaving their dead and wounded behind. Some, Rwandan intelligence officers said, were believed to have regrouped and were heading for Mbuti Mayi. Others were left to face capture by rebels who, they had been told, would shoot them.

None of the warring parties in the Congo’s civil war, which has pitted Hutu militia, Sudan, Angola, Namibia, Chad, Zimbabwe and Kabila’s men against the rebels backed by Uganda and Rwanda, has an honourable reputation for the treatment of prisoners.

“I’m afraid of dying here,” said Private Philip Petrus Mwato. “They don’t have to worry,” Commander Kanku said. “We are going to treat them well.” — The Times, London
SA lends weight to Congo peace talks

Claire Pickard-Cambridge, and Sapa-AFP

SA MINISTERS who left for Lusaka last night are expected to add weight to moves towards a ceasefire in the Democratic Republic of Congo where it is proposed that troop withdrawals begin next month.

Foreign Minister Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma and Defence Minister Patrick Lekota are to meet several of their Congolese counterparts after officials in the region reportedly reached a tentative agreement on dates for a troop withdrawal over a three-month period.

Many stumbling blocks remain and preparatory ceasefire agreements will have to be endorsed by heads of state at a summit meeting set for tomorrow in the Zambian capital. President Thabo Mbeki is expected to attend tomorrow, but Zimbabwean President Robert Mugabe and Congolese President Laurent Kabila cast doubt yesterday on whether the summit would go ahead.

After two days of consultations with Kabila in Zimbabwe, Mugabe said heads of state would not meet unless an "acceptable" draft ceasefire agreement had been drawn up. Kabila complained that there were too many draft ceasefire documents in circulation.

A draft agreement circulating in Lusaka and several European and African capitals early this week envisages the establishment of a joint military commission of observer groups within a week of the signing of the peace agreement. The ceasefire would take effect seven days after the signing on July 3.

The document sets out mobilisation of military observers within two weeks of the signing, but is vague about the release and exchange of prisoners of war, saying only this would take place over a period of "one to 12 months".

Deployment of a peacekeeping operation should take place before the withdrawal of foreign forces from Congolese territory although both steps would take place within one to three months after the peace agreement.

The United Nations (UN) is understood to be committed to providing the political, financial and logistical resources needed to support the peace effort. However, the document does not make it clear whether a peacekeeping operation would take place under UN auspices or what the number and nationality of troops deployed would be.

Outlining the principles of the agreement, it says that the signatories — all the warring parties, including Chad which has already withdrawn its troops — would have to allow the prompt treatment and evacuation of the wounded. Signatories should allow immediate access to the International Committee of the Red Cross, enabling the organisation to arrange the release of prisoners of war, recovery of the dead and treatment of the wounded.

All the parties were compelled to facilitate humanitarian assistance through opening up "humanitarian corridors" and by providing enabling conditions for assistance to refugees.

The document envisages the rebels signing under the umbrella of the United Front, but it was not clear last night whether all three rebel factions would be attending. The Zambian government said on Wednesday that rebel leaders of two factions, Jean-Pierre Bemba and Emile Ilunga, were in the country.

A Congolese delegation from the Union for Democracy and Social Progress led by veteran opposition leader Etienne Tshisekedi is expected to attend, and representatives of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU), the UN and the Southern African Development Community are also in Zambia.

While officials are still thrashing out ceasefire modalities, sources say the main sticking point is determining which side should pull out first. The Congolese government and its southern African backers are insisting that Rwanda, Uganda and Burundi — who support the rebels — should withdraw their troops first because they "invaded" Congo, while the rebels and their allies prefer simultaneous withdrawal.

Walter Thembu Thabethe, SA's high commissioner in Lusaka, said yesterday the atmosphere at the discussions was positive and there had not been any walkouts. He said it appeared that the summit would take place.

However, Mugabe warned in Harare yesterday: "The war continues and to us the most important thing is that we strengthen our defence forces and strengthen our own lines of resistance and resist more ground being taken and occupied by the invading forces."

Zambian President Frederick Chiluba, assigned by regional leaders, the OAU and the UN to mediate peace in the Congo, is spearheading the preparations for the Lusaka talks.

More troops: Page 9
SANDF outlines plans to deploy troops to Congo

Stephen Loufer (58)

SA COULD field a contingent of 2 000 troops plus air, medical, and possibly naval support in a larger African peacekeeping force for the Democratic Republic of Congo, defence officials said yesterday.

Civilian and defence department experts are weighing SA’s options following President Thabo Mbeki’s announcement that SA will commit troops to a peace exercise.

Reluctant to talk numbers, the officials stressed the need for caution until a clear ceasefire agreement and an international peacekeeping mandate were in place.

It is understood Mbeki met Defence Minister Patrick Lekota and defence force chief Siphiwe Nyanda immediately after his announcement to Parliament.

Nyanda said any peace enforcement role which would see SA troops in combat with militias in order to disarm them was “a crazy notion. It’s a nonstarter.” Those who had armed them should take responsibility for their future. The SA National Defence Force (SANDF) was looking to avoid a peacekeeping role in which it might have to separate belligerents militarily. “It’s not manageable.”

Another senior official said the peacekeeping mandate would have to make room for “more robust peacekeeping” than just monitoring. Under a monitoring mandate, peacekeepers may only carry sidearms for limited self-defence.

The official said the United Nations (UN) failed in Angola because its troops could not intervene when the ceasefire was breached. Troops from SA, Nigeria, and Egypt have been mooted for an African force under a UN security council mandate. It is likely they will receive logistical support, including transport and backup supplies, from countries with a larger military capability, including the US, UK and possibly France.

Uniformed and civilian sources were unanimous that any SANDF deployment depended on a binding ceasefire agreement spelling out the acceptance of a peacekeeping force by all Congo belligerents.

Clear exit criteria defining the circumstances under which peacekeepers would leave had to be laid down before troops went in, including agreement on what level of stability would allow a withdrawal.

Nyanda said warring parties had to make a crucial contribution by policing the ceasefire themselves so the foreign force would simply have to monitor the peace.

He refused to discuss numbers, but senior officers and civilian defence officials said SA could field two battalions, totalling roughly 2 000 soldiers. They could be supported by at least one 16-strong squadron of helicopters, several C-130 and C-160 transport planes and up to five surgical field units with 150 medical staff each.

Depending on where the SA contingent was deployed, the navy could provide logistical support.

A senior source said a contingent of 4 000 had been considered, but SA’s internal security needs and the need for a standby force should Lesotho’s democratisation process be derailed led to numbers for Congo being scaled back.

Meanwhile, as ceasefire negotiations edged forward in Kinshasa, this UN refugee agency said heavy fighting in eastern Congo had prompted a steady flow of refugees across the border into Tanzania. Refugees arrived in Kigoma, in western Tanzania, at a rate of 100 per hour last weekend, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees said.
SA troops may be lining off to DRC sooner than later.
Formal Congo deal signals end of war
'It looks like the dawn of a new era'

LUSAKA - A draft ceasefire deal on the war in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) is due to be signed by rebels and heads of involved states on Saturday, Zambian President Frederick Chiluba said today.

"I do not think, we will have any arguments. All problems have been thrashed out. I am optimistic that they will sign," said Mr Chiluba, who has been mediating the peace process.

He said ministers of defence and foreign affairs who yesterday agreed on the draft ceasefire had been in constant touch with their capitals, "therefore we don't expect any issues that will delay the process further".

A ceasefire in the war which has sucked in more than six African countries was due to have been signed in Lusaka on June 30, but was delayed by haggling over the details and the political future of the vast central African continent formerly known as Zaire.

"Despite the length of discussions, it's an African paper worked out by African ministers," said Mr Chiluba.

"I commend the ministers and the Congolese Rally for Democracy and the Congolese Liberation Movement who sat together during the meetings," he said of the two main rebel groups.

"It's a paper that is the product of serious negotiations between all warring factions, especially the rebels and Congolese government officials," Mr Chiluba said he hoped there would be the political will to stick to what had been agreed, adding that, along with the ceasefire pact in Sierra Leone, also reached yesterday, "it looks like the dawn of a new era in Africa".

Yesterday's draft ceasefire plan, reached after two weeks of negotiations, doesn't go into effect until 24 hours after it has been signed by the heads of the six nations involved in the war, leaders of the three Congolese rebel groups and other regional and organisational leaders.

It was not clear whether rebels fighting in eastern Congo had accepted the draft plan, but rebel leaders attending the talks and their main backers, Rwanda and Uganda, signed the deal, officials said. Rebels currently occupy the eastern third of the country.

"We have adopted the document. I am very happy. The war is over now," Congolese Foreign Minister Abdoulaye Yeroda said.

The ceasefire calls for a joint military commission of belligerent forces to implement the peace accord and the creation of a unified army after a 90-day national dialogue on Congo's political future.

It also calls for peacekeeping troops from the Organisation of African Unity or the United Nations to oversee the accord.

---AFP---

How the ceasefire will work

LUSAKA - These are the main points of a draft ceasefire agreement on the Democratic Republic of Congo conflict reached at talks here.

- The cessation of hostilities shall come into force within 24 hours of signing the agreement.
- The United Nations security council, acting in collaboration with the Organisation of African Unity, shall constitute, facilitate and deploy an appropriate peacekeeping force in the DRC to ensure the implementation of the agreement, and track down all armed groups.
- The parties to the conflict shall set up a Joint Military Commission, which, with a UN/OAU observer, will be responsible for carrying out, immediately the deal is in force, peacekeeping operations until the deployment of the UN peacekeeping force.
- The final withdrawal of all foreign forces within nine months of a withdrawal schedule drawn up by the UN, the OAU and the JMC.
- There shall be a mechanism for disarming militias, especially the Interahamwe, the Rwandan Hutu group responsible for the 1994 genocide in Rwanda, and an important factor in the DRC war.
- All parties have committed themselves to the process of finding, identifying, disarming, and reassembling all members of armed groups in the DRC.
- The parties shall ensure that armed groups operating alongside their troops or in the territory under their control comply with the processes leading to dismantling of those groups.
- The parties shall release detainees or hostages and allow them to relocate to any provinces or country where their security is guaranteed.

---AFP---

Thumbs-up for ceasefire in Congo war

LUSAKA: African defence and foreign ministers yesterday endorsed a long-delayed draft ceasefire agreement designed to end the crippling war in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC).

"The parties agree to a ceasefire among all their forces in the Democratic Republic of the Congo," said the document, which was endorsed by the DRC government and its Southern African military allies Angola, Namibia and Zimbabwe.

The two rebel factions and their backers, Rwanda and Uganda, also adopted the deal.

The endorsement was welcomed by joint states, Zambia, the Organisation of African Unity (OAU), the UN and ministers from the 14-nation Southern African Development Community (SADC).

The ceasefire will take effect within 24 hours of the draft being signed by heads of state at a date to be announced by mediator, Zambian President Frederick Chiluba.

The document calls for the creation of a unity of nations between the forces in the DRC and prohibits military movements, reinforcements and hostile actions, including propaganda, and also makes attempts by any of the forces in the DRC to occupy new ground and movement of military forces and recruits from one area to another without prior agreement between the parties involved to the conflict.

The document, hammered out after 13 days of difficult talks in the Zambian capital, called the UN Security Council would be requested in consultations with the OAU to constitute, facilitate, deploy a peacekeeping force under a Chapter Seven enforcement mission.

"In this respect, the UN Security Council shall provide the requisite mandate for the peacekeeping force," the document said, adding that a joint military commission would be formed by the belligerents in Congo "with responsibility for executing immediately after coming into force of this agreement, peacekeeping operations until the deployment of the UN force".

It also calls for national dialogue between Congolese political groups, the creation of a new national army, release of prisoners of war, facilitation of humanitarian assistance throughout the DRC and finally the withdrawal of foreign forces involved in the conflict.

The parties to the conflict also agreed to address the security concerns of Rwanda and Uganda, which triggered the latest war, and to this concern committed themselves to the process of locating, identifying, disarming and assembling called Rwandan Hutu militias and ex-Ugandan armed forces.

"Counties of origin of members of the armed groups commit themselves to taking all the necessary measures to facilitate their repatriation, such measures may include the granting of amnesty in countries where such a measure has been deemed beneficial," it said. ---Ruter
KINSHA萨 – Mathieu Pindi has fond memories of Mobutu Sese Seko’s three decades of rule, even though the economy was dilapidated and military thugs abounded under the corrupt dictator.

At least he had a job then. Things have got worse since rebels toppled Mobutu more than two years ago and a rebellion against his successor, Laurent Kabila, erupted a year later.

Now, a new ceasefire plan has revived Pindi’s fragile hopes, although it’s easy to understand other Congolese who don’t share the enthusiasm.

The latest fighting has carved Congo, formerly known as Zaire, into vast, undefined zones of rebel and government control. Millions of people have lost their homes and major industries – including the country’s potentially lucrative mining sector – have all but collapsed.

“In the days of Mobutu we suffered, but at least we had peace,” Pindi said. “Now we are in trouble that we never believed could exist. We are hungry and desperate. We are a country with nothing.”

Pindi (50) lost his office job with a small air charter company shortly after the war broke out last August, disrupting business and forcing the company to fold. Now he can’t pay school fees for his children, who some days go without food.

Like many other desperate residents of Congo’s capital of Kinshasa, Pindi hopes the ceasefire holds. The deal was reached after two weeks of intense negotiation in Lusaka, Zambia.

Leaders of the six African nations involved in the war cobbled together the accord, which was signed late on Saturday, but without the signatures of the rebel groups who have been fighting to oust Kabila.

“If this ceasefire works, we can begin attacking the real problems of Congo. We can start working for food, working for a future,” Pindi says.

Tension wracked the capital last week as residents listened nervously to hand-held radios, waiting for news of progress in the talks. There was no jubilation in the streets at the news of the accord, though.

“We are victims of this war and until we see real change, we will remain victims,” said Leonard Mtwaremba, a corporate manager of Dosco, a Swiss-based industrial equipment firm that has lost millions and laid off scores of employees since the war began.

Most Congolese government officials in the capital were also cautious, although foreign minister Abdulaiye Yerodia said he was “happy the war is over now.

Finance minister Mawumpanga Mwana Nanga said Congo’s government remains wary of Rwanda, which it accuses of backing the rebels in a bid to gain territory.

Rwanda says it merely wants to end the threat posed by the Congo-based Rwandan Hutu militia, who carried out the 1994 genocide of some 800,000 Tutsis and moderate Hutus.

The rebels, for their part, accuse Kabila of power-grabbing, corruption and nepotism.

For many residents of the capital, the political wrangling has taken second place to more pressing daily concerns, such as skyrocketing inflation.

The country’s chamber of commerce estimates that Congo’s economy is working at less than one-sixth of its capacity. The Congolese franc, which replaced the Mobutu-era currency, has lost 80 percent of its value since it was established a year ago.

The state-controlled Gecamines, which controls much of the country’s mineral rights, has laid off 15,000 of its 25,000 employees, company officials said.

Isabel Malinga, a street vendor selling a few wilted fruit in a Kinshasa market, blamed Kabila for the country’s woes but said she would forgive him if he could end the war and put food back on her family’s table.

“I don’t know how to explain how miserable we are,” Malinga said. “All I can say is that we should all do whatever it takes to bring peace and fill our stomachs. This is our last hope.” – Reuters
OAU is to appoint a Commander for Congo cease-fire
There's little hope of union for Africa

Several dubious assumptions underly the
Congo peace talks, which are unlikely to deliver more than a de facto partition of the country,
write Ivor Powell and Howard Barrell

A failed ceasefire in the Democratic Republic of Congo will open the way for the break-up of the country that straddles the heart of Africa and could hold in a prolonged period of instability, directly affecting other states bordering on it. The harsh realities and costs of implementing last week's ceasefire agreement in Luanda are assessed, in the light of the decreasing chances that the negotiations that preceded the drawing-up of the peace accord were dominated by wilful thinking.

Negotiators made several dubious assumptions, including:
1. that the protagonists are serious about the search for peace;
2. that foreign states will be prepared to commit military forces to peace enforcement and secure the area responsible for atrocities in one of the world's remotest, modestly and inhospitable environments;
3. that the United Nations will be able to protect the crucial major powers in providing the financial and logistical backing for an operation which will have to involve some 60,000 troops to have any hope of being effective;

The head of early warning at the Pretoria-based Institute of Security Studies, Richard Curnow, warned that the agreement was "no remote from the realities on the ground in the Congo as it defies belief".

The ceasefire agreement - which has yet to be ratified by rebel groups - appears to the regime of President Laurent Kabila - achieved little more than the de facto partition of the country into a rebel-controlled east, and a western part still under the control of Kabila. Just how those zones would break up, however, remains uncertain, with numerous experts this week of continuing engagements. Especially so if the remnant of the diamond capital of Mbuji Mayi at the centre of one of Congo's richest mining areas.

Zimbabwean troops in Mbuji Mayi and nearby Kibembo, bolstered and supplied by Angolan aid and fuel, continue to hold out against rebel attacks despite a three-week offensive. According to unconfirmed reports, part of the difficulty for the regime lies in the fact that the area around Mbuji Mayi has been heavily mined - a difficulty that has not stopped troops from entering the miningfields.

Securing Mbuji Mayi would give rebel forces control over the two richest mining areas in Congo, while cutting off Kabila's regime from much-needed funding for its war effort. It is, in effect, a prerequisite for any sponsored Congo rebels will commit themselves to any ceasefire until the front has finally been won or lost.

In terms of the proposed ceasefire, it is only after the various rebel groupings and the government army have been integrated into a national defence force and "inter-Congolese political negotiations" have led to the establishment of a political dispensation that the two Congos could be brought together again.

Meanwhile, international diplomacy, backed up by yet-to-be-mustered peacekeeping forces under the auspices of the United Nations and the Organisation for African Unity, will still be scrambling to find ways of bringing order to not only Congo itself but much of the African continent as well.

Congo is bordered by Angola, Bu- ruanda, Central African Republic, Congo-Brazzaville, Rwanda, Sudan, Uganda - all of which are experiencing their own domestic turmoil - as well as Tanzania and Zambia. As it stands, the ceasefire agreement is essentially a comprehensive of preconditions for restoring order in the central African region - the original aim of the scramble for Africa in the late 19th century.

Howard Barrell

Historical sequence of a disaster

- Berlin conference of European powers in 1884 declared what is now the Democratic Republic of Congo the private property of King Leopold II of Belgium. Belgian colonial policy follows. Belgian government takes control of territory in 1885.
- The vast territory of the Congo and what are now Rwanda and Burundi are sites of ancient ethnic rivalries, among others between Hutu and Tutsi. These tensions were exacerbated by the colonial administration. Belgian authorities outlawed all ethnic and political organisations. By Congress and encouraged multi-ethnic groups. Belgian government. In the 1960s, which is now Rwanda to settle in territory in the eastern Congo, which was claimed as ancestral land by other groups. These settlements from Rwanda were known as "kabyles".
- Belgian grants independence to the decades during and after independence to the decades during and after independence to the languages of the Kasai region and the Katanga region in 1960. Within a multi-ethnic community, the multitudes of political, social and religious identities in the east. Those of the Kasai region and the Katanga region are key to the future of the Kasai region and the Katanga region.
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the divided heart of Africa

CONGO COALITION

Leads: Laudat Kabila
Regional area of eastern DRC.

Congo.

Forces:
* Armed Forces of the Congo (FAC):
  * 40,000 to 45,000 trained troops, most of them from the Burtoni military camp. The FAC is controlled by Kabila and based around the country's capital, Kinshasa.
* National Army: 10,000 soldiers, mostly from the eastern Kasaï region.

Uganda

2,500 to 3,000 trained troops, mostly from the National Army of Uganda.

Mali

1,500 to 2,000 trained troops, mostly from the National Army of Mali.

Zaire

1,000 to 1,500 trained troops, mostly from the National Army of Zaire.

Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC)

1,500 to 2,000 trained troops, mostly from the National Army of the DRC.

RWANDA FOR CONGOLESE DEMOCRACY

Leader: Paul Kagame

Forces: Rwandan military, other Rwandan forces.

KENYA

Rwandan military and other African forces.

UGANDA

Rwandan military and other African forces.

MADAGASCAR

Rwandan military and other African forces.

ZIMBABWE

Rwandan military and other African forces.

SOUDAN

Rwandan military and other African forces.

TANZANIA

Rwandan military and other African forces.

ZAMBIA

Rwandan military and other African forces.

MALAWI

Rwandan military and other African forces.

MOZAMBIQUE

Rwandan military and other African forces.

SOUTH AFRICA

Rwandan military and other African forces.

AFRICA IN GENERAL

Forces: Rwandan military and other African forces.

RWANDA

Forces: Rwandan military and other African forces.

UGANDA

Forces: Rwandan military and other African forces.

KENYA

Forces: Rwandan military and other African forces.

JOHN STAPLETON

Forbes InternationaL

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John Stapleton
TWO STEPS FORWARD, ONE STEP BACK ON PATH TO STABILITY
Principal backers sign peace deal while rebels split apart

The refusal by rebels of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) to sign a peace deal in Lusaka last weekend denied southern African leaders a prize they were keen to display at the Organisation of African Unity summit in Algeria this week.

It would have been an auspicious entry on to the world stage for SA’s Thabo Mbeki, attending his first summit as head of state, to have arrived with the deal under his belt. He has spent more time and effort on the DRC peace talks than on any other issue since his inauguration a month ago. His Foreign Minister, Nkosazana Zuma, has concentrated on little else since her appointment.

The peace accord, such as it is, was signed by DRC President Laurent Kabila, his backers Zimbabwe, Namibia and Angola, and rebel backers Rwanda and Uganda, SA, Zambia, the OAU and the UN witnessed the deal.

The “agreement” calls for an immediate ceasefire, an international peacekeeping force deployed within four months, the withdrawal of all foreign troops, the disarming of guerrilla forces, formation of a national army made up of government and rebel forces, and the commencement of a national dialogue leading to elections.

It came a day after a similar agreement ending a gruesome eight-year civil war was signed between government and rebels in Sierra Leone. The two events were seen by some as the dawn of a new era for the continent.

But the agreement will not stick until the people who are doing the fighting agree to sign and lay down their arms.

Fighting continues in the DRC. It would be folly to send peace monitors there before the rebels resolved their differences.

The process hit a snag in Lusaka last Saturday, when Ernest Wamba dia Wamba, who early this year was ousted as leader of the main rebel group, the Rally for Congolese Democracy (RCD), insisted on signing on behalf of the RCD. His successor as RCD leader, Emile Ilunga, thought he should sign.

The irony is that it took almost a year to convince Kabila to agree to face-to-face talks with his enemies. Kabila refused because, he argued, the rebels were merely pawns of Uganda and Rwanda.

The rebels have always insisted they were ready to seek a peaceful solution should Kabila agree to talks. But with that objective having been achieved, they failed to agree on who should sign it.

Suddenly Kabila, along with his minder, Zimbabwean President Robert Mugabe, looks like the good guy. “Depending on how Kabila behaves from now on, he has the chance to gain the moral high ground,” says Owen Sichone, acting director of the University of Cape Town’s Centre for African Studies. “And that would deny the rebels the democratic credentials they have been claiming. They may have shot themselves in the foot.”

Sichone says the weight of international opinion may yet force the rebels to sink their differences and sign.

While Kabila has been forced to acknowledge the legitimacy of the rebels, they in turn have compromised by not insisting on Kabila’s immediate removal from power. He was in Algiers with a firmer spring in his step.

“Most of the heads of state at the summit will sympathise with Kabila. They’re all wary of coups and guerrilla incursions,” says Sichone. Similar sentiments were expressed by Nigeria’s President Olusegun Obasanjo: “We must condemn coups and let the violators know there is no room for them in our company.”

Forty-five heads of state showed up, the biggest attendance at an OAU summit in a long time and a sign, perhaps, that calm may be returning to many African countries. Many African leaders tended in the past to fear being removed from power in their absence.

Obasanjo arrived at the summit straight from engineering the peace deal in Sierra Leone — a deal that many democrats have trouble swallowing.

Sierra Leone’s Revolutionary United Front (RUF) took to the bush after losing an election to a government led by Ahmed Tejan Kabbah, and for eight years plundered, maligned and killed civilians. Kabbah’s government was kept in power by the West African peacekeeping force, Econog, led and paid for by Nigeria.

When Obasanjo came into power, he vowed to bring the soldiers back home because the war was too costly for Nigeria. Kabbah was forced to negotiate with the RUF, whose leader, Foday Sankoh, may now become a vice-president in a government of national unity.

By contrast, what seems to have happened in the DRC conflict is that all parties exhausted their resources. “It makes for a graceful exit for all involved,” Sichone observes.

Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni, for instance, wants to concentrate on problems with Sudan.

But the key to peace in the Great Lakes lies in Rwanda. The Tutsis now in power are a minority, and they will lose any democratic elections to the Hutus, who were responsible for the 1994 Tutsi genocide before fleeing to the DRC.

Nearer home, the resolution of the DRC conflict will help relax the tension between SA and Zimbabwe — a good beginning for Mbeki’s presidency.

Barney Nithnhechtshi
LUSAKA — The European Union (EU) on Saturday urged rebels in the Democratic Republic of Congo to sign immediately the Lusaka ceasefire agreement endorsed by the six belligerent African countries involved in the conflict.

In a statement issued in Lusaka by the Finnish embassy, the EU appealed to the Rwandan and Ugandan governments to prevail on the Rally for Congolese Democracy leadership to settle their internal wrangles and sign the ceasefire agreement to foster peace in the Congo.

The EU warned that future relations with belligerent countries would be tied to respect for the ceasefire accord, and it could probably affect donor aid to countries that disregarded the Lusaka ceasefire agreement.

The EU said it would scrupulously follow the implementation of the ceasefire agreement and the respect for the accord by the belligerent countries and the rebels alike.

Finland issued the statement in its capacity as the president of the 16-nation EU, which provides financial aid to African countries for economic and social development.

The EU considered that the political credibility of the rebel leaders depended on their willingness to put the interests of the Congolese people before their personal leadership ambition.

"The EU reiterates that it considers the agreement reached in Lusaka as a crucial step towards restoration of peace in the Congo and the entire region," it said.

The EU would financially support the implementation of the ceasefire agreement provided the belligerent parties respected and implemented it.

The rebel faction led by Emile Ilunga and the Movement for the Liberation of Congo's Jean-Pierre Bemba have vowed to continue fighting, saying they were not part of the ceasefire agreement reached in Lusaka.

The rebels could not append their signatures to the ceasefire document because differences arose as to who was legitimate leader for the Rally for Congolese Democracy leadership.

The EU said it would facilitate the return of refugees and the reintegration of disaffected soldiers and other combatants and encourage national reconciliation. — Sapa-DPA.
Congo rights on as envoys meet
Kabila abandons SADC summit

leaders of the continent. Africa
is not governed by a treaty to
cuiency. The SADC Summit, held
in July 1994, was a significant
event in the region's political
agenda. The leaders of various
African states met to discuss
issues such as economic
integration, security, and
regional cooperation.

The SADC (Southern African
Development Community) is
an intergovernmental
organization consisting of 16
African states. Its purpose is
to promote peace, stability,
and economic development in
the region. The summit is a
key event in the SADC's
annual calendar, providing a
platform for leaders to
address regional challenges
and outline strategies for
future cooperation.

The summit in July 1994
highlighted the continent's
commitment to addressing
common challenges and
strengthening ties among
African states. The discussions
likely focused on economic
policies, security concerns,
and regional integration projects.

Overall, the SADC Summit in
July 1994 marked an important
turn in the continent's
endeavors towards unity and
cooperation, reflecting the
leaders' dedication to
overcoming regional issues and
promoting sustainable
development.