

Also by Tom Cooper  
in the Africa@War series:  
*Great Lakes Holocaust: The First  
Congo War 1996–1997* (Volume XIII)

Co-published in 2013 by:

Helion & Company Limited  
26 Willow Road  
Solihull  
West Midlands  
B91 1UE  
England  
Tel. 0121 705 3393  
Fax 0121 711 4075  
email: info@helion.co.uk  
website: www.helion.co.uk

and

30° South Publishers (Pty) Ltd.  
16 Ivy Road  
Pinetown 3610  
South Africa  
email: info@30degreesouth.co.za  
website: www.30degreesouth.co.za

Text © Tom Cooper, 2013  
Colour profiles / artwork © Tom Cooper  
& Ugo Crisponi  
Maps and unit insignia © Tamara Zeller  
& Pia Dworzak  
Photos © as individually credited

Designed & typeset by SA Publishing  
Services (kerrincocks@gmail.com)  
Cover design by Kerrin Cocks

Printed for Helion & Co by Henry Ling  
Ltd., Dorchester, Dorset and for  
30° South Publishers by Pinetown  
Printers, Durban, South Africa

SA ISBN 978-1-920143-84-8  
UK ISBN 978-1-909384-66-8

British Library Cataloguing-in-  
Publication Data  
A catalogue record for this book is  
available from the British Library

All rights reserved. No part of this  
publication may be reproduced, stored,  
manipulated in any retrieval system,  
or transmitted in any mechanical,  
electronic form or by any other means,  
without the prior written authority of the  
publishers, except for short extracts  
in media reviews. Any person who  
engages in any unauthorized activity in  
relation to this publication shall be liable  
to criminal prosecution and claims for  
civil and criminal damages.

Front cover: The performance of Hawk  
Mk 60s can be regarded as the symbol  
of the much unrecognized and often  
belittled Zimbabwean military success  
in the DRC. Although the AFZ never  
deployed more than four of these light  
strikers to the Democratic Republic  
of the Congo during the war, their  
presence and effectiveness in combat  
proved crucial to the outcome of every  
major battle. *Photo BAE*

---

## CONTENTS

---

Abbreviations	2	
Chapter One	Background	3
Chapter Two	Military Forces of the Congolese Government and Its Allies	5
Chapter Three	Military Forces of Rwanda and Its Allies	16
Chapter Four	Operation Kitona	23
Chapter Five	Operation Musako, Banyamulenge Mutiny	33
Chapter Six	Arms Races and Political Manoeuvring	42
Chapter Seven	Kinshasa's New Strategy	51
Chapter Eight	Conclusion	59
Bibliography	64	
Acknowledgments	64	



*Note:* In order to simplify the use of this book, all names, locations and geographic designations are as provided in *The Times World Atlas*, or other traditionally accepted major sources of reference, as of the time of described events. Correspondingly, the term 'Congo' designates the area of the former Belgian colony of the Congo Free State, granted independence as the Democratic Republic of the Congo in June 1960 and in use until 1971 when the country was renamed Republic of Zaire, which, in turn, reverted to Democratic Republic of the Congo in 1997, and which remains in use today. As such, Congo is not to be mistaken for the former French colony of Middle Congo (Moyen Congo), officially named the Republic of the Congo on its independence in August 1960, also known as Congo-Brazzaville.

# Abbreviations

<b>AA</b>	anti-aircraft	<b>FNLA</b>	<i>Frente Nacional de Libertacao de Angola</i> (National Front for the Liberation of Angola, armed group opposing Portuguese rule in Angola 1960–75, later fighting against the MPLA government in 1970s/80s)
<b>AAA</b>	anti-aircraft artillery	<b>FNLC</b>	<i>Front National pour la Libération du Congo</i> (National Front for the Liberation of the Congo, insurgent organization in Zaire/Congo, 1990s)
<b>AB</b>	Agusta-Bell (Italian–American helicopter manufacturers)	<b>GCI</b>	ground controlled interception
<b>AdA</b>	<i>Armée de l’Air</i> (French Air Force)	<b>GP</b>	general purpose (bomb)
<b>ADCC</b>	Air Defence Consultants Corporation (Israeli commercial military enterprise)	<b>IAI</b>	Israeli Aircraft Industries (since 2006 Israeli Aerospace Industries)
<b>ADF</b>	Allied Democratic Forces/Front (armed opposition group in Uganda since 1990s)	<b>IAP</b>	international airport
<b>AFB</b>	Air Force Base	<b>ICRC</b>	International Committee of the Red Cross
<b>AFDL</b>	<i>Alliance des Forces Démocratiques pour la Libération du Congo</i> (Alliance of Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Congo-Zaire, Rwandan-supported insurgent organization in Zaire, 1996–97)	<b>IDF</b>	Israeli Defence Forces
<b>AFZ</b>	Air Force of Zimbabwe	<b>IFF</b>	identification friend or foe
<b>An</b>	Antonov (the design bureau led by Oleg Antonov)	<b>II</b>	Ilyushin (the design bureau led by Sergey Vladimirovich Ilyushin, also known as OKB-39)
<b>ANC</b>	<i>Armée Nationale Congolaise</i> (Congolese National Army, 1960–71)	<b>IP</b>	instructor pilot
<b>ANR</b>	<i>Agence Nationale de Renseignements</i> (National Intelligence Agency, DRC)	<b>IR</b>	infrared, electromagnetic radiation, longer than deepest red light sensed as heat
<b>ANT</b>	<i>Armée Nationale Tchadienne</i> (Chadian National Army)	<b>LRA</b>	Lord’s Resistance Army (armed opposition group in Uganda)
<b>APC</b>	armoured personnel carrier	<b>MAGRIVI</b>	<i>Mutuelle des Agriculteurs des Virunga</i> (Farmers’ Society of Virunga)
<b>AT-14 Spriggan</b>	ASCC, codename for Vikhr, Soviet-/Russian-made ATGM	<b>MANPADS</b>	Man-Portable Air Defence System(s) (light surface-to-air missile system that can be carried and deployed in combat by a single soldier)
<b>ATGM</b>	anti-tank guided missile	<b>MBT</b>	main battle tank
<b>BAC</b>	British Aircraft Corporation	<b>MHz</b>	megahertz, millions of cycles per second
<b>BAe</b>	British Aerospace	<b>Mi</b>	Mil (Soviet/Russian helicopter designer and manufacturer)
<b>CAP</b>	combat air patrol	<b>MiG</b>	<i>Mikoyan i Gurevich</i> (the design bureau led by Artyom Ivanovich Mikoyan and Mikhail Iosifovich Gurevich, also known as OKB-155 or MMZ ‘Zenit’)
<b>CASA</b>	<i>Construcciones Aeronáuticas SA</i> (Spanish aircraft manufacturer)	<b>MILAN</b>	<i>Missile d’infanterie léger antichar</i> (French-made ATGM)
<b>CBU</b>	cluster bomb unit	<b>MLC</b>	Movement for the Liberation of Congo (armed opposition group in central DRC, late 1990s)
<b>CIA</b>	Central Intelligence Agency (USA)	<b>MNC-K</b>	<i>Mouvement National Congolais/Minoritaire–Kalonji</i> (Congolese National Movement/Minority–Kalonji, insurgent organization in Zaire/Congo, 1990s)
<b>C-in-C</b>	commander-in-chief	<b>MNC-L</b>	<i>Mouvement National Congolais/Minoritaire–Lumumba</i> (Congolese National Movement–Lumumba, insurgent organization in Zaire/Congo, 1990s)
<b>c/n</b>	construction number	<b>MoD</b>	ministry of defence
<b>CO</b>	commanding officer	<b>MPLA</b>	<i>Movimento Popular de Libertação de Angola</i> (People’s Movement for the Liberation of Angola, leftist anti-colonial movement in Angola during the 1960s and 1970s; later ruling party of Angola)
<b>DRC</b>	Democratic Republic of Congo	<b>MPR</b>	<i>Mouvement Populaire de la Révolution</i> (Popular Movement of the Revolution, Mobutu’s political party)
<b>DSP</b>	<i>Division Présidentiel Special</i> (Special Presidential Division, FAZ)	<b>NAF</b>	Namibian Air Force (formerly the Namibian Defence Force/Air Wing)
<b>ECM</b>	electronic countermeasures	<b>Nav/attack</b>	used for navigation and to aim weapons against surface targets
<b>ELINT</b>	electronic intelligence	<b>NCO</b>	non-commissioned officer
<b>ENI</b>	<i>Ente Nazionale Idrocarburi</i> (Italian state-owned petroleum company)	<b>NDF/AW</b>	Namibian Defence Force/Air Wing
<b>EO</b>	Executive Outcomes (South African commercial military enterprise)		
<b>FAA</b>	<i>Forças Armadas Angolanas</i> (Angolan military, since 1992)		
<b>FAC</b>	<i>Forces Armées Congolaises</i> (Congolese Armed Forces, since 1997)		
<b>FANA</b>	<i>Força Aérea Nacional</i> (Angolan Air Force, since 1992)		
<b>FAR</b>	<i>Forces Armées Rwandaise</i> (Rwandan Armed Forces, 1962–94)		
<b>FARDC</b>	<i>Forces Armées de la République Démocratique du Congo</i> (Armed Forces of the DRC, since July 2003, formerly FAC)		
<b>FAZ</b>	<i>Forces Armées Zaïroise</i> (Zairian Army, 1971–1996)		
<b>FAZA</b>	<i>Force Aérienne Zaïroise</i> (Zairian Air Force, 1971–96)		
<b>FDD</b>	<i>Forces pour la Défense de la Démocratie</i> (Forces for the Defence of Democracy, armed opposition group in Burundi, 1990s/2000s)		
<b>FDLR</b>	<i>Forces Démocratiques de Libération du Rwanda</i> (Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda)		
<b>FIM-92A</b>	US-made MANPADS (full designation FIM-92A Stinger)		

<b>NL</b>	<i>Namibiese Lugmag</i> (Afrikaans for the unofficial designation often used for Namibian Air Force in everyday communication)	<b>MANPADS</b>	ASCC, codename for 9M313 Igla-1, Soviet MANPADS
<b>NRA</b>	National Resistance Army (insurgent organization in Uganda, 1981–85)	<b>SA-16 Gimlet</b>	ASCC, codename for 9M313 Igla-1, Soviet MANPADS
<b>OAU</b>	Organization of African Unity	<b>SAM</b>	surface-to-air missile
<b>OCU</b>	operational conversion unit	<b>SADC</b>	Southern African Development Community
<b>ORBAT</b>	order of battle	<b>SAM</b>	surface-to-air missile
<b>PMC</b>	private military company	<b>SARM</b>	<i>Service d'Action et de Renseignement Militaire</i> (Zairian Military Intelligence Bureau)
<b>PRP</b>	People's Revolutionary Party (insurgent organization in Zaire, 1980s)	<b>SNIP</b>	<i>Service National d'Intelligence et Protection</i> (National Service for Intelligence and Protection, top Zairian intelligence agency)
<b>RCD</b>	<i>Rassemblement Congolais pour la Démocratie</i> (insurgent organization in DRC, 1998–2003)	<b>Su</b>	Sukhoi (the design bureau led by Pavel Ossipowich Sukhoi, also known as OKB-51)
<b>RPA</b>	Rwandan Patriotic Army (military wing of the RPF, 1987–94, and official designation of the Rwandan military, 1994–2002)	<b>TAM</b>	Tbilisi Aerospace Manufacturing (Georgian aircraft manufacturing company)
<b>RDF</b>	Rwanda Defence Forces (official designation since 2002)	<b>TASA</b>	Tbilisi Aircraft State Association (Georgian aircraft manufacturing company)
<b>RDF/AF</b>	Rwanda Defence Force/Air Force	<b>UNHCR</b>	UN High Commissioner for Refugees
<b>RPF</b>	Rwandan Patriotic Front (insurgent organization in Uganda and Rwanda, 1987–94)	<b>UNITA</b>	<i>Uniao Nacional para a Independência Total de Angola</i> (National Union for the Total Independence of Angola, armed group opposing Portuguese rule in the 1960s and 1970s, then opposing the MPLA until 2003)
<b>RHAW</b>	radar homing and warning system	<b>UNRWA</b>	United Nations Relief and Works Agency
<b>RWR</b>	radar warning receiver	<b>UPDF</b>	Uganda People's Defence Force
<b>SA-2 Guideline</b>	ASCC, codename for S-75 Dvina, Soviet SAM system	<b>USAF</b>	United States Air Force
<b>SA-6 Gainful</b>	ASCC, codename for ZRK-SD Kub/Kvadrat, Soviet SAM system	<b>WNBFB</b>	West Nile Bank Front (armed opposition group in Uganda in 1990s/2000s)
<b>SA-7 Grail</b>	ASCC, codename for 9K32 Strela-2, Soviet MANPADS	<b>ZDF</b>	Zimbabwe Defence Forces
<b>SA-14 Gremlin</b>	ASCC, codename for 9M36 Strela-3, Soviet	<b>ZNA</b>	Zimbabwe National Army

## CHAPTER ONE: BACKGROUND

### Origins of the campaign

As in the case of the First Congo War, 1996–1997, at the heart of the Second Congo War was again the unfinished, eight-year-old Rwandan civil war which began in 1990 by the assault of the predominantly Tutsi Rwandan Patriotic Front (PRF) against the government of Hutu president, Juvenal Habyarimana. This conflict reached its bloody climax with the 1994 Rwandan Genocide and the subsequent RPF conquest of the country. After their defeat, the forces of the former Hutu extremists (including remnants of the former Rwandan military, the so-called ex-FAR or *Forces Armées Rwandaise* and the Interhamwe militia) fled to eastern Zaire – as the Congo was officially named from 1971 to 1997 – together with much of the Rwandan Hutu population, from whence they attempted to continue the war against the newly installed Tutsi government. In 1996, Rwanda invaded the DRC in an attempt to secure final victory. After forcefully repatriating around one third of the Hutu refugees and massacring another third, Kigali was forced to realize that a large part of the Hutu extremists had fled – with the last third of the refugees – deep into central Congo. By organizing a quasi-insurgency of Congolese Tutsis and a number of political opponents of the government of President Mobutu Sese Seko – named the Alliance of Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Congo-Zaire (*Alliance des Forces Démocratiques pour la Libération du Congo*, AFDL)

– the Rwandans then launched a pursuit that brought them all the way to Kinshasa, where they toppled the government and installed the former Maoist-cum-wealthy businessman Laurent Désiré Kabila as the new president of the country, which was then renamed the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC).

The surviving Hutu extremists were scattered by the war, but they rapidly reorganized and launched an insurgency against the Rwandans, this time in the areas of the Congo now under Rwandan control. Within a few months, they found a new ally in Kabila who began supporting them due to increased pressure from the Congolese population complaining that he favoured the increasingly unpopular Rwandans, acting as their puppet. Faced with a growing insurgency in the eastern Congo and support of the Kabila government for their enemies, the government in Kigali decided to attempt a second invasion of its giant neighbour in mid-1998.

### Trouble in Kinshasa

Laurent Kabila arrived in Kinshasa on 23 May 1997 and immediately began establishing a new government. Officially announced only a day later, this included him as the new president and was dominated by leading AFDL figures. It avoided the inclusion of potentially unpopular Tutsis. Excluded from this process were most existing political parties, those established during Mobutu's reign, most

notably the Union for Democracy and Social Progress (*Union pour la Démocratie et le Progrès Social*, UPDS) led by Étienne Tshisekedi, the Unified Lumumbist Party (*Parti Lumumbiste Unifié*, PALU) led by Antoine Gizenga, and the Front for the Survival of Democracy in Congo (*Front pour la Survie de la Démocratie au Congo*, FSDC), who refused to recognize the new government and called on the people to reject it. The first demonstrations in Kinshasa occurred only hours after Kabila officially announced his government and declared the Democratic Republic of Congo on 24 May 1997. Without a political base in the country, without a military or democratic background, Kabila knew no other way to react but through violence. He deployed his troops to disperse the demonstrators. Dozens were arrested and subsequently tortured. The new president then issued a decree prohibiting all political activity except for the AFDL. When this failed to quieten the opposition Kabila's newly established security forces were deployed to directly target opposition leaders and activists, hitting PALU in particular. Hundreds of political opponents were arrested and tortured and dozens were murdered.

While South Africa, followed by Angola, Rwanda, Burundi, Libya and Zimbabwe had already recognized the new Democratic Republic of Congo, by 20 May 1997, the USA and most European countries were slower in doing so, cautiously waiting for official notification before recognizing Zaire's new name and government. At the same time, they imposed strict conditions on the fledgling state, including the democratization and liberalization of the economy, as prerequisites for the provision of financial aid. This prompted suspicion within the ranks of Kabila's inexperienced administration that found itself unqualified to solve the problems and chaos left by Mobutu. Kabila's promise of elections was not taken seriously and there was little understanding of the complex process of organizing an entirely new state under the given conditions. Instead, his political opponents maintained that he suppressed dissent in an attempt to hold onto power indefinitely.

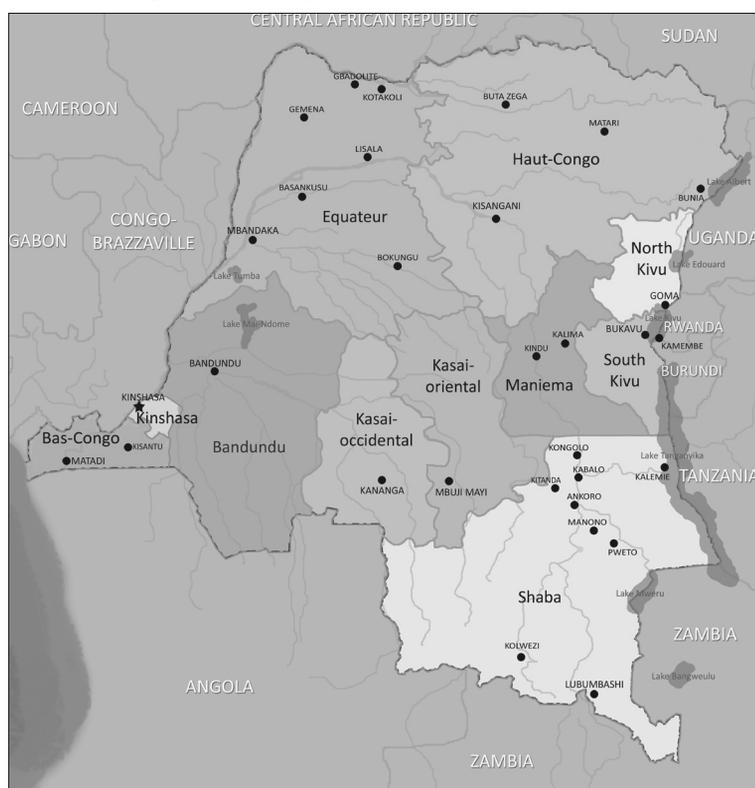
With hindsight it is easy to place the blame for the troubles in the

DRC of 1997 on Kabila and his administration. One should keep in mind that this huge country was already in a bad way when he took power. Aside from the widespread chaos and the presence of foreign troops, various insurgent groups, militias and armed bands, civil authorities and security infrastructures had collapsed. While most of the former government and its military (as well as many foreigners) were attempting to flee, others began plotting against Kabila. Major airports and roads were either totally ruined or in urgent need of repair. Other means of communication were practically non-existent, there was lack of fuel, and agriculture and industry was either already in ruin or in the process of being usurped by the Rwandans, the Ugandans and their foreign supporters. Although officially president and thus considered to represent all 60 million Congolese inhabitants, Kabila's control was actually restricted to a few major towns, including Kinshasa, Kikwit, Mbandaka, Kananga, Mbuji-Mayi, Kolwezi and Lubumbashi, the port of Matadi and the Inga hydroelectric dam. But even these were secured by entirely inadequate contingents of AFDL insurgents, mostly under the command of various RDF officers, none of whom had experience in operating civil services. The Kivus remained under Rwandan control and most of the Haut Congo and Equateur provinces were under Ugandan control. Except for brutally suppressing political opposition, the AFDL and its Rwandan commanders, as well as all the units of the Rwandan Patriotic Army present in the country, proved interested rather in pursuing and massacring Rwandan Hutu refugees (and any Congolese civilians they suspected of helping them), looting and raping, than in maintaining freedom and security. This is not to say that the Rwandans and Kabila's security services were the only ones acting in this fashion. During June and July 1997 the troops of the Angolan Armed Forces (*Forças Armadas Angolanas*, FAA) – deployed in the country in support of the AFDL since February/March 1997 – launched a similar crackdown on Angolan separatists among the refugees from the Cabinda enclave – many of whom had fought against the government in Luanda in the 1980s –

primarily in the province of Bas-Congo. Exactly how many people were arrested or disappeared in the DRC between June 1997 and August 1998, remains unknown. Unsurprisingly, the population soon began to regard their new authorities with much suspicion.

Another persistent problem for the new administration was the lack of money. The several lucrative foreign mining concessions financing the Rwandans and the AFDL could not support the entire country. With the majority of the state-controlled mines in derelict condition, and other mines under foreign control, the new administration found itself without dependable sources of income, while having to service an inherited debt of between US\$14–16 billion. Mobutu had died in September 1997 in Morocco but his astronomical private slush fund remained out of the new government's grasp.

Surrounded by opponents while trying to secure his position, establish control over the country, get the economy into order and deflect criticism for his favouritism of Rwandan Tutsis, Kabila began appointing family members to crucial political and economic positions, and entering alliances with various parties and companies at odds with his supporters in Kigali. Slowly at first, but unfailingly, his decisions began to turn most of his former allies into outright enemies.



The Democratic Republic of Congo.



Angolan troops relish their victorious advance into eastern Zaire/ Congo in May 1997. Immediately after participating in the overthrow of Mobutu's government, FAA units became involved in mass atrocities against Angolan separatists from the Cabinda enclave.  
*Photo Albert Grandolini Collection*



Much of the Congo, especially the east of the country, was in turmoil in 1997/98. The movement of masses of refugees from Rwanda, Burundi and Angola, as well as internally displaced people, was the norm.  
*Photo Mark Lepko*

## CHAPTER TWO: MILITARY FORCES OF THE CONGOLESE GOVERNMENT AND ITS ALLIES

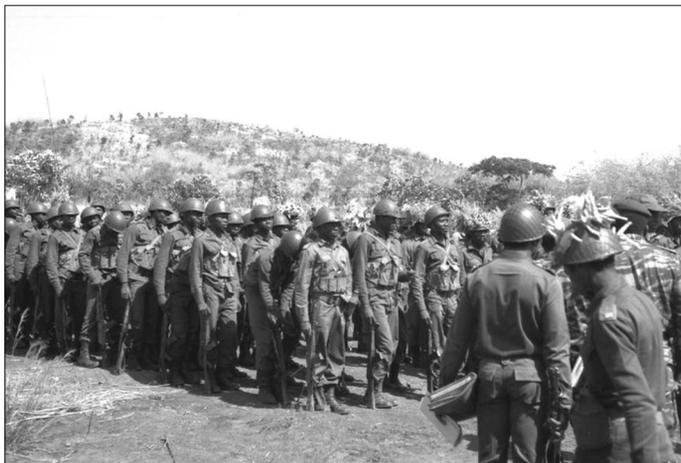
The Second Congo War was not only a civil war between the government of President Laurent Désiré Kabila and a rabble of different insurgent movements, but also a chaotic cocktail of other people's wars that saw a major collision between two regional African alliances – the Great Lakes Alliance (Burundi, Rwanda and Uganda), pitted against members of the Southern African Development Community, namely Angola, Namibia and Zimbabwe. Except for insurgent organizations that sided with Kabila's government and operated well behind enemy lines for most of the war, the majority of the anti-Kabila insurgents received lukewarm to no support from the local population, showed little combat effectiveness and proved not only heavily dependent on support from their foreign donors but solely dependent on them for their naked survival. Thus, while it appeared as though foreign military powers occupied most of the country, the majority of these forces were only active along the front lines or maintaining control of the major mining areas, while the insurgents were left to maintain control of the rear areas. This resulted in a situation where most of the fighting during the Second Congo War was done by foreign contingents. This chapter provides an insight into the forces that sided with Kabila's government.

### **Congo: reorganization of the military**

One of the mammoth tasks facing the AFDL administration in Kinshasa was the reorganization of the military and all other security services. This was by no means easy, as the new government not only lacked the necessary money, but also the necessary cadres. It had to make a decision about what to do with what was left of the former Zairian Armed Forces (*Forces Armées Zairoise*, FAZ) and then turn its own, now former, insurgent supporters – around 18,000 fighters by late 1997, the majority of them teenagers or so-called *kadogo* (Swahili for 'short ones') – into properly trained soldiers, and assigned to disciplined and effective units.

The issue of the former FAZ troops was dealt with in entirely the wrong fashion and without a thought for the consequences. As they advanced from the Kivus toward Kinshasa in the second quarter of 1997, the Rwandans and AFDL insurgents occupied military bases. The local FAZ units were disarmed and their officers and other ranks arrested and put into detention camps. Most officers, NCOs and soldiers associated with units such as the former Zairian Military Intelligence Bureau (*Service d'Action et de Renseignement Militaire*, SARM), Special Presidential Division (*Division Présidentiel Special*, DPS) or the Civil Guard were summarily executed, often in public, during late May 1997. The following month, the new government began moving large contingents of imprisoned ex-FAZ troops to the Kitona air force base (AFB), near the Atlantic coast, where they were to undergo training in ideology and re-education. Eventually, between 30,000 and 35,000 ex-FAZ officers, NCOs and soldiers from all over the country were herded together into barracks that could barely accommodate 10,000 and were in an advanced state of disrepair.

They were held there under terrible conditions, lacking food and medical care. Summary execution, torture and submission were the order of the day. The situation only began improving in late 1997 when some of the soldiers were dispatched to serve with the newly established units across the country. What they experienced in their former bases did little to please them. Constructed in the manner of western barracks, many of the sprawling ex-FAZ military installations included extensive housing facilities for families of officers and other ranks. What is little known is that when the Rwandans and AFDL insurgents occupied these bases, they felt at liberty to rape thousands of the ex-FAZ soldiers' wives and daughters, as well as women randomly arrested in surrounding towns. Therefore, dissent and mistrust within much of the military was practically pre-programmed.



Thousands of well-trained ex-FAZ officers and soldiers (seen here in the 1980s) were sent to 're-education' camps in their former bases, the most notorious being situated at Kamina AFB, near the Atlantic coast. Due to the heinous nature of their re-education, it required an almost implausible measure of patriotism for them to side with Kabila's government and oppose the Rwandan and Ugandan invasion.

*Photo Albert Grandolini Collection*

Command and control over the armed forces and security services in the first few months of Kabila's rule was vague, if at all. Initially, there was no minister of defence, no chief of staff and no ranks. The situation began changing only in September 1997, when the new Congolese Armed Forces (*Forces Armées Congolaises*, FAC) was established, but even then the RPA had to deploy none other than its top commander, James Kabarebe – one of Paul Kagame's closest aides, then minister of defence in Rwanda and mastermind of the 1996 invasion of Zaire – to serve as the acting chief of staff and later as minister of defence, to bring the new military in hand.

Kabarebe's job was by no means easy, and it remains questionable if he in fact attempted to complete it to the full advantage of the Congolese authorities. His attempt to mix and organize the former Banyamulenge insurgents (trained by foreign private military companies, or PMCs, in Rwanda, 1995/96,), former AFDL *kadogo* (recruited and trained by Rwandans in eastern Zaire in early 1997), former FNLC insurgents (trained by Angolans and Zambians in the 1980s and 1990s) and ex-FAZ personnel, into cohesive units dispersed over a massive country, could doubtfully have succeeded. Almost no AFDL cadres, and even less so their RDF supervisors, spoke French or Lingala, the predominant languages spoken by the former FAZ. Instead they spoke Kinyarwanda, Swahili and English (even Kabarebe spoke only Swahili and broken English at that time). No French or any other of language the Congolese generally understood was universal among them. At least as important is that Kabarebe's view of his task, as the FAC chief of staff, was to ready the new army as soon as possible for a deployment against the surviving Hutu extremists who had already begun reorganizing and implementing a new insurgency against Rwandan dominance.

In a rush to get the FAC operational, the Rwandans left the FAC to be trained by a mix of foreign instructors that can only be described as exotic. Units based in the Kivus received training from the RPA, those in Haut-Congo from North Koreans, while units in Kinshasa and the Bas-Congo were trained by Chinese, Tanzanian, North Korean and Rwandan instructors. The result was internal tension and ethnic rivalry, a lack of cohesion, poor military skills and no recognizable military doctrine within the 16 brigades known to have been constituted, or in the process of being assembled, as of August



The mastermind of the 1996/97 Rwandan invasion of Zaire, James Kabarebe (centre) was put in overall command of the newly established FAC in September 1997 and later even appointed the DRC's minister of defence. At left is US Army General Ward. *Photo US DoD/AFRICOM*

1998, as shown in Table 1 on the facing page. Although taking over all the heavy equipment left behind by the FAZ, including a total of around 30 intact Type-59 main battle tanks (MBTs) and Type-62 light tanks, the FAC lacked not only crews trained to operate them, but also gunners for heavy artillery, mortars and multiple-rocket launchers (MLRs). Only one weak company equipped with Type-59 MBTs and Casspir mine-resistant, ambush-protected vehicles (MRAPs) was available for the defence of Kinshasa. One other company, equipped with Type-62 light tanks, was deployed in Kisangani in August 1998. The former was subsequently redeployed to Gbadolite, where it supported a Chadian counteroffensive against Uganda in January 1999, while the latter was taken over by Rwandans in August 1998. The situation gradually improved during early 1999, when Angolans, Namibians and Zimbabweans established and trained a number of new battalions and brigades using newly purchased equipment. The first of these, the 5th Mechanized Brigade, became operational at Kamina AFB in March that year. It was followed by the re-establishment of the 10th Brigade (123 officers and 2,600 other ranks), trained by Zimbabweans, Namibians and North Koreans, which became operational in October 1999.

The new Congolese military had no air force and no navy. While at least eight Aermacchi MB.326G and MB.326K jet trainers and light strikers were still intact, all were stored at the military cantonment of N'Djili IAP, and had been inoperable for years. Four SIAI-Marchetti SF.260 turboprop trainers were found stored at Kamina AFB. At Gbadolite airport there were two intact and one sabotaged Mi-24s, but no pilots, ground crew, spares, lubricants or fuel. The five MiG-21 supersonic interceptors and fighter-bombers were never completely assembled and, left in the open and exposed to elements, their condition rapidly deteriorated, while three Jastreb and Galeb light strikers Zaire had obtained from the former Yugoslavia, were sabotaged by Serbian personnel. During mid-1998, there were attempts to overhaul one of the MB.326s and two SF.260s. A South African company was contracted for this purpose and these aircraft, as well as two intact Mi-24s, were brought to N'Djili IAP, but the work was still ongoing in August 1998. Furthermore, while three Lockheed C-130Hs (9T-TCA, 9T-TCB and the now 9T-TCC, formerly 9T-TCG), one DHC-5D Buffalo, two Douglas C-47s and



When and how this Czechoslovakian-built M53/59 Praga self-propelled anti-aircraft gun (with a twin 30mm cannon) – obtained either from Serbia, Slovakia or Libya – reached the Congo, remains unknown, but the vehicle survived long enough to be seen in service in the Goma area in 2012. Like in so many other cases, the newly established FAC was outfitted with whatever armament and equipment could be purchased around the world, primarily Eastern Europe.  
*Photo via Esoteric Armour.Blogspot.com*



Three Aeromacchi MB.326Ks seen stored inside a hangar at N'Djili IAP (here already wearing the latest FAC fin-flash introduced in 2002/03). Purchased from Italy in the 1970s and 1980s, these aircraft were inoperable and most of their pilots were forced to emigrate before the First Congo War. Despite this, and the availability of huge stocks of related spares and weapons, they were never used to constitute a new Congolese Air Force. *Photo Bundeswehr*

**Table 1: Forces Armées Congolaises, August 1998**

Unit	HQ/Base	Remarks
Presidential Guards Brigade	Kibomango Training Centre (Kinshasa)	CO Joseph Kabila, in the process of training by North Koreans and Tanzanians, including a company of Type-59 MBTs and Type-62 light tanks and an infantry company equipped with Wolf Turbo MRAPs
3rd Brigade	Base unknown	Base unknown. In the process of establishment and training but defected to the RCD in early August 1998
5th Mechanized Brigade	Kamina	In the process of training 1998, officially established 8 March 1999
6th Brigade	Karangerera	In the process of establishment and training
7th Brigade	Gikuku	In the process of establishment and training
9th Brigade	Base unknown	In the process of establishment and training
10th Commando Brigade	Goma (North Kivu)	CO Sylvain Mbuchi and XO Jean-Pierre Ondekane. Established in Kasai and deployed to Goma in September 1997. Completed training with the help of North Korean instructors. Was reinforced to 16,000 troops by August 1998, before the majority defected to the RCD. A new 10th Brigade was then established at Kitona in 1999
11th Brigade	Moba & Manolo	In the process of establishment and training. Defected to the RCD in early August 1998
12th Brigade	Bukavu (South Kivu)	CO Birunga Kamanda. Completed training but defected to the RCD in August 1998
13th Brigade	Tongo	No details available
15th Brigade	Masisi	No details available
20th Brigade	Kananga	CO Ilunga Kabambi and included 221 Battalion in Kananga and 222 Battalion in Bukavu
50th Brigade	Camp Kokolo (Kinshasa)	Completed training with the help of Tanzanian instructors in January 1998
81st Brigade	Nyabyondo	CO Laurent Nkunda. Status unclear but unit defected to the RCD in August 1998
85th Brigade	Bisie	Undergoing training in 1998 and became operational in 2002
Officer School/Training College ( <i>Ecole de formation des officiers</i> )	Kananga	Running courses for officers and NCOs under Rwandan supervision



Although striving to present itself to the public as a well-organized armed force, the AFDL mainly consisted of child-soldiers or *kadogo*. They received little training and generally proved ineffective in combat, but, in Laurent Kabila's words, "they think it's a game and know no fear". This group was photographed in Kinshasa in late May 1997.

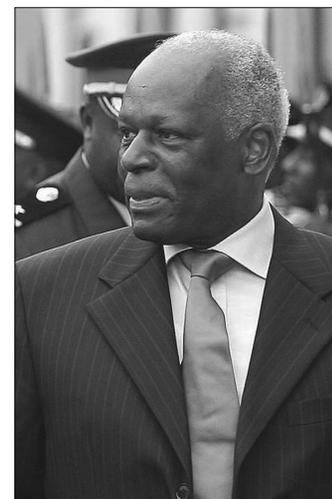
one of two former Serbian Antonov An-26s, were available, only the latter three were operational. Similarly, none out of the four SA 330 Pumas, one SA 332 Super Puma and seven SA 316B Alouette IIIs, left behind by the former FAZ, was operational. The navy suffered similarly, with most of its vessels useless, rusty hulks.

As such and as amply demonstrated during the first two years of the coming conflict the FAC was woefully unprepared for war, nor were its gross deficiencies rectified by the acquisition of significant quantities of new armament and equipment – primarily light infantry weapons from Eastern European sources – during 1998. Furthermore, it suffered similar mismanagement and ethnic rivalry as the former FAZ, even though soldiers were regularly paid. To make matters worse during the first few weeks of the war, the former AFDL-*Kagodo* suffered heavy losses and mass desertions of the Banyamulenge. Following this, the majority of the FAC units consisted of former Mobutu troops and Katangan Tigers. These two groups were the most unusual among all the Congolese fighters in this war due to the fact that all of them had received proper military training before the war. Even then, the leadership of the Katangan Tigers was divided between those who sided with Kabila (and were thus rewarded with powerful positions in exchange for their loyalty and services) and those who did not, many of whom – including General Jean Delphin Mulanda – were imprisoned, while others joined the Rwandan-supported mutiny or established their own insurgent groups.

#### PCD/PDF/PDG:

##### (Congolese) People's Defence Forces/Groups

Locally known as the *Défense Civile et Populaire* (People's Civil Defence, PCD), led by Colonel Dunia, this militia was created by Kabila in August/September 1998, primarily in the Bas-Congo and Kinshasa areas, and consisted of civilians who volunteered to support the government in the struggle against the Tutsi and Rwandan advance on the Congolese capital. While receiving no or next to no military training, the PCD became notorious for its pogrom of the Tutsi, not only in Kinshasa, but also in other major Congolese cities,



Angolan President José Eduardo dos Santos had personal and political agendas in the DRC and remained deeply involved – and highly influential – in all developments in Kinshasa through the period 1998–2001.

Photo Mark Lepko Collection

in late 1998. Except in relation to units of the Mayi-Mayi militias it included, its subsequent participation in the war is largely unknown.

In November 1999, Kabila attempted to expand the PCD to a 20,000-strong paramilitary force, now officially designated the People's Defence Forces, and intended to support the FAC and the National Police. Although several minor units came into being and saw some combat deployment, overall, the PDF never became truly operational.

#### Southern African Development Community Allies

##### FAA: Angola

The involvement of Angola in the Second Congo War, potentially the Kabila government's strongest ally, came as a major surprise to Rwanda, and appears to have been influenced by direct and personal business interests of the government in Luanda (such as installing a monopoly on fuel supplies by the Angolan state-owned company Sonangol in the DRC), but also out of concern because of Rwandan ties to the Angolan UNITA insurgents.

As of 1998, the Angolan Military Forces (*Forças Armadas de Angola*, FAA) were in the process of massive expansion. An almost uninterrupted civil war that had ravaged the country since 1975 – fought between the government of President Eduardo dos Santos and the insurgency of the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (*União Nacional para a Independência Total de Angola*, UNITA) – training and logistic support provided by several South African PMCs during the mid-1990s and an increasing income from extensive oil and diamond resources, had turned the FAA into a combat-proven army, equipped with around 150 MBTs, 150 APCs and infantry fighting vehicles (IFVs) of Russian origin, supported by around 130 76mm and 130mm artillery pieces, roughly 75 122mm MLRs, over 200 anti-aircraft artillery pieces (including around 30 ZSU-23-4 self-propelled, radar-guided AA guns), a miscellany of anti-tank guided missiles (ATGMs), and an air-defence system leaning upon a well-developed radar network, but also a number of – yet inoperable – SA-2, SA-3 and SA-6 SAM sites.



An FAA infantry squad during a training session. Although unevenly distributed through the force, generally the training of Angolan troops improved markedly during the mid-1990s, heavily emphasizing integrated COIN operations, with some units receiving excellent training while others had to make do with next to none.

*Photo Albert Grandolini Collection*



The first company of MPLA paras during their graduation ceremony in 1976. Originally trained by Cubans in the mid-1970s, the quality of Angolan commando and paratroop units rose considerably during the mid-1990s, due to the contracting of South African PMCs, but also military cooperation with Portugal and other Western countries.

*Photo Albert Grandolini Collection*



As of 1998, the FANA was one of most powerful air forces in Sub-Saharan Africa, equipped with more than 40 MiG-21, MiG-23, Su-22 and Su-25 fighter bombers. Therefore, availability of equipment was none of its problems – but that of qualified personnel was, which is why it frequently had to recruit foreign contract personnel. The Russian pilot of this MiG-21bis (serial C350) made an emergency landing in western Zaire in the mid-1990s, and the plane – wearing a camouflage pattern and markings typical for this period of time - was simply abandoned in situ. *Photo via Chuck Canyon*



One of most important parts of the FANA was its relatively large force of around 20 transport aircraft. This not only decreased the dependence of Angola to chartered civilian transports, but also enabled its air force to support the deployment of the Namibian and other contingents during the II Congo War. This picture shows one of at least four Antonov An-26s operated by the FANA during the late 1990s. *Photo Tom Cooper Collection*

Relatively little is known about the order of battle of the FAA contingent deployed in the DRC during the Second Congo War. Initially, it consisted of two brigade-sized tactical groups, each about 2,500 strong. One – including the 5th and 8th regiments (each including a company of T-55s and BMP-2-borne mechanized infantry) – advanced out of the Cabinda enclave, the other – including three unknown mechanized infantry regiments reinforced by a Namibian motorized company of 150 troops – advanced from Mbwanza Congo, in northern Angola. At least one additional mechanized group was deployed in the Katanga Province, primarily for the protection of Mbuji-Mayi, before the FAA's involvement was grossly reduced in 1999 because of the war against UNITA at home.

In general, FAA troops were poorly paid, but well trained, and well equipped with modern communication systems, and trained to call upon artillery and the air force for close support. The Rwandans considered them their most dangerous opponents and therefore attempted to keep Angola out of the war before invading the DRC. The major problem facing the FAA was its very inconsistent performance. Some of its units comprised highly experienced and battle-hardened professionals, while

others possessed no combat readiness at all. Similarly, while all of them received extensive military education abroad (primarily in the former Soviet Union), some Angolan officers were excessively corrupt, while others proved their mettle in combat beyond doubt.

The Angolan Air Force (*Força Aérea Nacional, FANA*), was in relatively good shape during the mid-1990s. The majority of its combat and transport aircraft had been overhauled – some in the former Soviet bloc and some in Portugal. The FANA was equipped with around 25 medium and heavy transport aircraft, ranging from some eight older Antonov An-12s, at least four An-26s, to at least four Il-76 jets. Its combat units operated around a dozen Mi-24/25 helicopter gunships and around 30 Mi-8/17 assault and transport helicopters, some 14–16 Sukhoi Su-22 and Su-25 fighter-bombers, around 30 MiG-21bis and MiG-23ML fighter interceptors and a handful of Aero L-39 training jets that served as light strikers.

This expansion was as a result of intelligence reports received by Luanda regarding UNITA's extensive acquisitions of arms and equipment from the Ukraine, supposedly including very advanced T-64 MBTs and even MiG-23 interceptors from stocks of the

Unit	Base	Type	Main Task ('Speciality')
21st Helicopter Regiment			
1st (Light) Helicopter Squadron	Negage	SA 316B, AS.565 Panther, SA 365 Dauphin	Training, liaison, troop transport and fire support
2nd Helicopter Squadron	Negage	Mi-8MT, Mi-8MTV-1, Mi-17MTV-3	Assault and troop transport
3rd (Bomber) Helicopter Squadron	Negage	Mi-24, Mi-25	Attack
23rd Air Transport Regiment			
5th Air Transport Squadron	Luanda	An-2, Do.27, Do.28, F.27, CASA C.212	Light transport
6th Air Transport Squadron	Luanda	L-100-20/30, An-12, An-26	Medium transport
7th Air Transport Squadron (also VIP Squadron)	Luanda	Gulfstream III, Falcon 20E, Tu-134A, Boeing 707, Boeing 727, Il-76	VIP and heavy transport
26th Fighter Bomber Regiment			
11th Fighter Squadron, Group 1	Cabinda	MiG-21bis	Fighter-bombers
11th Fighter Squadron, Group 2	Cabinda	MiG-21bis	Fighter-bombers
13th Fighter Squadron	Lubango	MiG-23ML	Fighter-bombers and interceptors
15th Fighter Squadron	Catumbela	Su-22M-4K	Fighter-bombers
16th Fighter Squadron	Catumbela	Su-25	Fighter-bombers
Reconnaissance Squadron	Luanda	PC-7, PC-9, EMB.312	COIN light strikers and reconnaissance

former Soviet military.\* In reaction, Luanda placed sizeable orders for additional weapons from the Czech Republic and Slovakia, as well as from Russia, and contracted Western and South African PMCs to help the FANA with the recruitment of experienced foreign pilots and ground personnel. So it happened that between 1998 and 2001, Angola acquired not only 25 additional combat aircraft, but also 205 T-72 MBTs and 38 different artillery pieces. The FANA aircraft were partially operated by Angolan, but also by a sizeable group of Belarusian, Ethiopian, South African, Ukrainian, and even several US pilots and technicians. Furthermore, the Angolan Air Force was completely reorganized during this period, receiving a much leaner structure, with units specialized in specific tasks, as illustrated in Table 2.

### **NDF: Namibia**

The decision of the Namibian government to deploy its troops to the DRC was strongly influenced by Angolan and Zimbabwean pressure, but also linked to business interests of members of the Namibian administration. It proved, publicly, very controversial and faced not a few protests.

As of 1998, the largely British-trained Namibian Defence Force (NDF) had only around 8,000 officers and other ranks; the contingent it deployed to the DRC was variously reported as between 1,600 and 2,000 troops, including the 5th Infantry Battalion (equipped with Casspir MRAPs purchased from South Africa and five BRDM-2



Later during the Second Congo War, the NDF purchased at least two Chinese-made Y-12 light transports (serials NAF-97-600 and NAF-97-639) which saw extensive operations in support of Namibian troops in the DRC. *Photo Alan Lebeda*

armoured cars from surplus Angolan stocks), reinforced by at least one artillery battery. Namibian troops were well-trained professionals, primarily former members of SWAPO (South West Africa People's Organization), but also officers and other ranks who had served with the South African-controlled security forces of the former South West Africa in the 1980s and were specialists in counterinsurgency warfare (COIN).

The similarly small air wing of the Namibian Defence Force (NDF/AW) maintained only two squadrons in 1998. The fixed-wing unit flew light aircraft like Cessna O-2As and a single Cessna Caravan II, two Chinese-made Y-12 light transports and one Dassault Falcon 900 VIP-transport. The rotary-wing unit was initially equipped with two Mi-8Ts and two Indian-built Hindustan Aeronautics (HAL) SA 316B Chetak (a licensed copy of the SA 316B Alouette III), but was soon reinforced by the addition of more helicopters. While Namibian

\* The mentioned arms deliveries to UNITA as of 1998 included four T-64 tanks, 50 BMP-1 and BMP-2 infantry fighting vehicles (IFVs), South African-made SAMil-100 MRAPs, a battery of Russian-made BM-22 Uragan MRLs, SPG-9 73mm anti-tank guns and a number of ZU-23-2 anti-aircraft guns. While acquiring such an arsenal, UNITA had to realize it lacked fuel and lubricants, as its mechanized forces were smashed by the FAA in battles near Cuito and Huambo in the latter part of 1999 because they ran out of diesel. These defeats resulted in the ultimate demise of UNITA, following the capture of its HQs at Jamba in 1999.