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ZAIRE : THE CURRENT STATE OF PLAY

PART ONE:

This part of the briefing deals with recent domestic developments in Zaire, and covers major foreign policy issues. A second part will examine economic conditions in Zaire.

Mobutu's ascendancy:

When the Belgian Congo became independent as the Republic of the Congo on 30 June 1960, there followed a period of domestic chaos. The immediate post-independence leaders, Prime Minister Patrice Lumumba and President Joseph Kasavubu, faced their first crisis when the army - the cornerstone of the political structure - mutinied. Lumumba appointed Colonel Joseph-Désiré Mobutu as the new Chief of Staff and in the five years that followed - a period characterised by internal conflict, by the exiling and murder of Lumumba, the Katangese secession, numerous rebellions and culminating in the international intervention under the auspices of the United Nations - Mobutu managed to consolidate his position in the army, while the political role of the military grew.

Mobutu intervened in the political crisis that ensued between the then Prime Minister, Moïse Tshombe, and President Kasavubu in November 1965. All executive powers were assumed by Mobutu, who proclaimed the dissolution of the existing government. Mobutu became President, with Colonel Leonard Mulamba as Prime Minister in a 'government of national union', which was to remain in office for five years under a state of emergency. Mobutu insisted that it was not a military coup, but a necessary duty performed in order to save the country from anarchy.

Mobutu cemented his political power by the immediate banning of all political activities. There followed a progressive consolidation of executive, administrative and political functions in the Office of the President. Official policy was initiated by the President, rather than in the Office of the Prime Minister. By 1966, the latter office was eliminated and its powers taken over by Mobutu - thus effectively completing his absolute authority. He had assumed the power to rule by decree that would have the force of law, thus eliminating the decision-making role of Parliament.

By 1967, Mobutu had consolidated his rule and a single party - the Mouvement Populaire de la Révolution (MPR) - was created to replace all existing parties. Mobutu also managed to gain control over, or constrain institutions opposed to his absolute rule - the Catholic Church, student organisations and labour unions. Individual opponents were either politically isolated, exiled or effectively neutralised.

The first Extraordinary Congress of the MPR in May 1970, chose Mobutu as the sole candidate for the presidential elections and established the MPR as the supreme organ of state under the Presidency. In the same year, Mobutu was elected President for a seven-year term and he has remained in charge ever since.

The President thus remains the exclusive source of power, appointing, since late 1980, all executive, legislative and party positions - the Central Committee (114 members), Political Bureau (38 members), Executive Committee (6 members) and the National Executive Council. The only elective body is the National Legislative Council (Parliament) but it has limited power.

Corruption pervades the country and is reportedly an essential part of Mobutu's system of government. It is alleged that he keeps the peace by dipping into government coffers to pay off not only his supporters, but potential rivals and troublemakers.

The official state doctrine is 'Mobutisme' and central to it is a respect for the teachings of the 'Guide', as the President is known. In the early stages, Mobutu's ideology rejected the precepts of Belgian colonialism and was aimed at fostering national dignity. In line with this, the country's name was changed from the Congo to Zaire in 1971, with Mobutu changing his name and title to Marshal Mobutu Sese Seko Kuku Ngbendu Wa Za Banga at the same time.

Mobutu under challenge:

There have been reports that Mobutu's rule is insecure. In spite of the development of a monolithic state structure, there has been growing opposition to Mobutu's regime. The seventies were marked by unsuccessful plots against the President, culminating in the two major crises in Shaba Province.

The invasions of the Province in 1977 and 1978 were indications of dissatisfaction with Mobutu's rule, engineered by exiled political groups. The first invasion (Shaba I), in March 1977, by the Front National pour la Libération du Congo (FNLC), was led by a former officer of the late Prime Minister Moïse Tshombe's army, General Nathaniel Mbumba. They entered Zaire from Angola through south-eastern Shaba Province. Their apparent aim was to regain control of the railway by which minerals were exported from Zairean mines via Lobito, on the Angolan coast. They were supported, at least passively, by Angola, and Mobutu claimed the invaders were supported by the Soviet Union, East Germany and Cuba. The rebels were eventually ousted by Mobutu's army with the help of Moroccan troops, airlifted to Shaba by the French airforce, assisted by the Kuwaitis. The French and Moroccans subsequently urged Mobutu to 'democratise' his regime. Mobutu responded immediately by holding a series of elections for the Presidency (for which he was the only candidate), the Legislative Council and a 'partial' election for the MPR political bureau in late 1977. The secret ballot for the latter two were generally fairly conducted (with over 2 000 candidates for the 270 seats in the Legislative Council and 167 for the

18 seats in the political bureau). However, personal financial resources and connections with Mobutu's regime proved a decisive factor.

The invasion had far-reaching domestic repercussions, in the form of arrests, trials and executions and a purge of army personnel. Former Foreign Minister and Prime Minister, Nguza Karl-I-Bond, was arrested and accused of having concealed prior knowledge of the invasion. The areas of Shaba that had been affected by the invasion were 'cleansed' by the army and repression fell heavily on the 'Lunda' group which had not shown sufficient opposition to the invaders. Predictably, resentment towards Mobutu's regime increased in the Shaba region, which partially explains the resurgence of the conflict.

Thus resulted the second Shaba invasion (Shaba II) in May 1978, when Katangese rebels, again originating from Angola, but this time crossing the Zambian border, entered Shaba. The invaders occupied the major mining centre of Kolwezi and gained control of the railway between Kolwezi and the Angolan border. Their stated aim was the takeover of Shaba and the replacement of Mobutu. Mobutu eventually managed to expel these forces, with the assistance of French paratroopers. This was followed by Belgian humanitarian assistance and the installation of a Pan-African Peace Keeping Force, comprising military instructors from countries sympathetic to Mobutu (principally Morocco, Senegal and Togo).

The 'democratisation' that was introduced after Shaba I has since been shelved, as Mobutu's regime has strengthened its control over the executive, legislature and the party. The formation of opposition parties to the MPR has been rigorously circumscribed. Opposition to Mobutu's leadership continues, despite rigorous repression of all political activities outside the one official party. There are three principal centres of opposition: the missionary-supported groups based in and around Kisangani; exiled politicians and their internal guerrilla allies; and a disaffected group in the army.

Kisangani (formerly Stanleyville) has an international airport, but it is so isolated that government control in this strategic area is often only nominal. Missionaries supply essential services and this gives them a large degree of political authority in the region, and they have encouraged demands for meaningful reforms. The town has a reputation as a revolutionary centre going back twenty years when the Lumumbist leader, Christophe Gbenye, declared it a seat of a "Popular Republic of the Congo".

It is estimated that Mobutu is opposed by up to a dozen groups in exile. Supporters of the late Prime Minister, Patrice Lumumba, still control armed bands in the vast interior of Zaire, notably in the mountainous east, where they are said to have established a rudimentary administrative system despite occasional military patrols. In March 1984 the Belgian-based Mouvement National Congolaise Lumumba (MNCL) claimed responsibility for bomb explosions in Kinshasa, and the MNCL's Secretary-General Francois Lumumba (son of Patrice), left Belgium for Zaire where he is rumoured to be directing resistance in Kisangani from Brazzaville, just across the river from Kinshasa.

The recent French promise to step up military aid to Zaire may be part of an attempt to stem discontent within the army leadership, but it is unlikely to have much impact on Mobutu's critics in the army. Most of the disaffected men come from Equateur Province, the home of Mobutu and the current Prime Minister - Kengo Wa Dondo. Some officers believe that possible widespread unrest might be stemmed if Mobutu were persuaded to

retire for 'medical reasons' in favour of Kengo.

Continuing problems:

Since Mobutu's re-election for a third term in the July 1984 elections (as the only candidate he received 99,2% of the vote), there have been unconfirmed reports that a military coup against the government, in October 1984, was prevented by advance warning from Western intelligence sources. The coup was alleged to have been planned by officers from Equateur Province who were dissatisfied with Mobutu's handling of the Zairean contingent in Chad, and for setting up a Civil Guard (responsible to him alone) to quell disorders. Mobutu denied the coup attempt, asserting that reports were spread to make Zaire appear unstable at a time when it needed debt rescheduling.

In November 1984, Shaba Province again emerged as a trouble spot when a group of insurgents, believed to be rebel bands of Zaireans living in Tanzania or in the mountains of eastern Zaire, raided the Province. Government paratroopers and marines drove the rebels from Moba, on the shores of Lake Tanganyika, killing over 100 of them. The Mobutu government described the invaders as 'armed intruders coming from Tanzania', but an opposition group - the Renewed Congolese National Movement - claimed that the incursion was actually a revolt by Zairean troops. The Tanzanians rejected all charges of involvement in the raid and charged Mobutu with attempting to discredit Nyerere on his assumption of the OAU chairmanship.

Student agitation has been a fairly regular feature of Zaire's domestic scene. At the end of 1981 Kinshasa's educational system ground to a virtual halt. Student leaders responsible for disturbances were incorporated into the army for 're-education'. In April 1985, there were disturbances at some universities. There had been criticism of the government authorities at Mbanza Ngungu University (just south of Kinshasa) and Mbuji Mayi University in the south. At Kinshasa University, the Institute of Public Works has been closed since December 1984. Further unrest was reported at Kisangani and at Mbandaka in Equateur Province, where students demonstrated violently against security forces at the funeral of a student believed killed by the authorities.

Mobutu's response:

Mobutu's tightening grip on the Party, the government, the territorial administration and the army has been bolstered by the considerable strengthening of his power through a cabinet reshuffle in which the Justice portfolio was added to his existing portfolio of Defence. His establishment of the Civil Guard as a body independent of the army is meant to keep the latter on its toes, as it has been a constant headache, with rumours of rebellion. Chief of the New Guard is Mandungu Bula Nyati, former Governor of Shaba Province. He is seen as one of the regime's most powerful men (the product of an Eastern bloc education in the 1960s), along with Army Chief of Staff General Eluki and Prime Minister Kengo. It seems likely that Mandungu's excellent West German connections helped persuade Bonn to supply DM 2,5 million to train and equip the Civil Guard, together with an extra DM 5,5 million in military aid. Encouraging the German involvement is consistent with Mobutu's tactic of promoting competition between those countries that support his regime.

There was a government reshuffle in February 1985, which retained Prime Minister Kengo in charge of a rigorous economic programme, and in charge of eliminating corruption. Known as Mobutu's 'hatchet man', he is himself alleged to be one of Zaire's main gold and ivory smugglers and to have previously been involved in a R5,5 million bank swindle exposed by Interpol. Ironically, Kengo supervised the January 1985 dismissal of four provincial governors and two ambassadors and acted similarly with respect to ministerial posts in the February reshuffle.

Internally Mobutu's hand has been greatly strengthened by his policy of 'divide-and-rule', which has been applied to the army in particular. Ultimately, different units of the armed forces will have little in common other than the shared leadership of Mobutu. Mobutu does not allow officers to command soldiers of similar tribal background. So segregated, it is thought that the armed forces will have great difficulty organising a coup.

Mobutu has extended the 'divide-and-rule' principle to other sectors of his administration. A recent law bans government officials from holding a plurality of offices. It will thus be increasingly difficult for ministers, generals or members of the Party's Central Committee to peddle their influence in government departments other than their own. Even Mobutu's aides are drawn from several tribal groupings with no independent tribal power base.

The recent appointment of Jean Diteng Tshombe (son of former Prime Minister Moïse) to the Energy and Mines Secretariat, is interpreted as a conciliatory gesture aimed at shoring up the President's domestic power. Tshombe had previously led the Katangese secession movement, but returned from exile in Brussels under an amnesty offered by Mobutu in 1983. However, Tshombe had been too isolated within the exiled Zairean opposition for this appointment to represent a true political overture.

Such conciliatory gestures are not uncommon, but they usually follow periods of disturbances; such as the 'democratisation' following Shaba I; or the amnesty offers, including that to former Prime Minister Nguza Karl-I-Bond after Shaba II and again recently. They may also result from pressure from Mobutu's supporters - as with the pardoning this year of the 13 Members of Parliament who had in 1982 attempted to form an opposition party (the Union for Democracy and Social Progress). However, these acts of clemency have usually been accompanied by the tacit understanding that dissidents, once released or returned to Zaire, will abstain from further political activity, or at least until such time as Mobutu decides they are ready to re-enter the ranks of the political establishment.

Foreign policy trends:

Zaire's foreign policy is directed towards the survival of the regime. Principal aims of Zaire's foreign policy are therefore to secure the economic, diplomatic and military backing for the precarious economic and domestic political position. Allies, too, are played off against one another to gain maximum economic and diplomatic benefit for the regime.

Generally, Zaire is seen as a pro-Western state, and relations with the Soviet Union are not favoured, mainly because the Soviet Union was suspected of being involved in the student unrest of the late 1960s and of having engineered the second Shaba invasion, in conjunction with Cuba and East Germany. Relations with the People's Republic of China (PRC) were

at first cool, because the PRC had aided the Mulele rebels. However, Mobutu saw the PRC as an important counter-weight to the Soviet Union and relations improved, culminating in Mobutu paying state visits to Beijing (formerly Peking) in 1973 and 1974. In April this year, a senior Chinese Communist Party delegation from the PRC Foreign Liaison department met Mobutu, also visiting Kinshasa and Bas-Zaïre.

a) Relations with the United States

Mobutu was heavily criticised by the Carter Administration for human rights violations and this was illustrated by a reluctance to afford US assistance to Zaïre during Shaba I. This changed during Shaba II, when the US accused Angola, Cuba and the Soviet Union of complicity with the invaders. Congress successfully stalled passing an aid package to Zaïre, which was only passed once the Administration had lobbied in its favour. Also, growing US links with Zaïre were seen in Mobutu's visit to Washington in late 1979. This has continued under the Reagan Administration, which appears to value Mobutu as an ally. This support stems from Mobutu's strong anti-communist stance and Zaïre's strategic resource potential. Zaïre is a principal exporter of industrial diamonds and produces 60-70% of the world's cobalt. State Department officials have few illusions about Mobutu, as they are aware that Zaïre is a one-party dictatorship and that institutionalised corruption is an essential part of the system of government. However, they are concerned that an alternative to Mobutu might be a worse option.

The testimony of Nguza Karl-I-Bond before the Africa Subcommittee of the House of Representatives Foreign Affairs Committee in 1982, generated investigation of the regime's policies and resulted in a dramatic cut in the proposed US aid allocation to Zaïre, because of alleged misuse of funds and the inability of Zaïre to service the debts adequately. Mobutu reacted by renouncing US aid because of the 'insulting remarks' of US Congressmen. However, relations were patched up mainly because efforts to renegotiate a three-year IMF programme (begun in 1981) had effectively collapsed following Zaïre's failure to meet the programme's requirements. US support was needed to re-start the negotiations. It is significant that the release of political detainees and the offer of amnesty to opponents in exile coincided with Mobutu's trip to the United States in 1983.

On the whole Zaïre has been supportive of US foreign policy objectives in Africa and elsewhere. In the UN Security Council, Zaïre has supported the US on the Nicaraguan question and has also made troops available as part of a Pan-African Peace Keeping Force in Chad. However, if Mobutu's position is threatened, the future of this relationship may prove to be problematic, as the US sees Zaïre, under Mobutu, as the 'linchpin' of Central Africa. With a weak domestic situation in Zaïre, regional instability might increase, which would prove problematic for US foreign policy in the region.

b) Relations with Israel

In May 1982 Zaïre was the first African state to restore diplomatic links with Israel, after the return to Egypt of the Sinai Peninsula. Diplomatic ties had been cut in 1973, in line with the other members of the OAU, but economic links were maintained. The reasons for the resumption of ties were given as personal (Mobutu trained in an Israeli Parachute School), the need for Israeli agricultural expertise, and disappointment with Arab assistance to Zaïre as a whole.

Zaire suffered the wrath of the Arab world for this decision, with the Khartoum-based Arab Bank for Economic Development in Africa (BADEA) suspending its operations in Zaire, because of what was termed 'the gravest breach of Afro-Arab solidarity'. Saudi Arabia, a major BADEA donor, severed diplomatic links, followed by Qatar, while Syria threatened any country that followed Zaire's lead with economic and political sanctions. Algeria recalled its ambassador from Zaire, and Morocco, which had twice sent troops to rescue Mobutu's regime from domestic uprisings, found it convenient to withdraw its forces from Zaire. Mobutu rejected Arab criticism of his move, refusing to submit to what he termed 'Arab neo-slavery', but it also provided him with a convenient excuse to suspend repayment of US \$350 million owed to Arab lenders. It is interesting to note that only the Arabian Peninsula and Gulf Arab states have severed diplomatic relations with Zaire, and not the African-Arab members of the OAU.

Seemingly undeterred by the criticism, Mobutu completed the normalisation of relations with Israel, and signed a long-term deal with Israel for re-equipping and running the disorganised Zairean army. Israel has not pledged vast sums of financial assistance, instead encouraging private sector involvement. Mobutu visited Israel in May this year, and accords were signed securing Israeli agricultural assistance, increased investments and air links to Zaire. This visit has evoked some criticism from member-states of the OAU, particularly Colonel Gadhaffi - whom Mobutu in turn accuses of attempting to destabilise Zaire.

c) Relations with Africa

If relations between Zaire and the rest of Africa were damaged by the decision to resume links with Israel, this was not reflected in the African attendance at the Franco-African Summit held in Kinshasa in October 1982. The Summit was attended by observers from Egypt, Sudan and Somalia, three non-Francophone states, and was even better attended than the abortive OAU Summit in Tripoli. Despite this, bilateral relations between Zaire and other African states have not been particularly fruitful. There have been regular contacts between Mobutu and Kenya's Moi, and following a meeting of a Chad-Zairean Commission in Kinshasa, Zaire's Foreign Minister announced his country's participation, in an unspecified manner, in the 'reconstruction' of Chad.

Relations with Zambia have been cool as a result of a series of border incidents, involving smuggling and uncontrolled refugee and migrant labour movements, among others. A meeting between Mobutu and Kaunda was held in October 1983, but nothing concrete was decided other than that regular consultations should be held to prevent tensions. Relations with Tanzania have also been tense since Mobutu's accusations following the Shaba incident in November 1984.

Zaire's application to join the Southern African Development Co-ordination Conference (SADCC) has been shelved by the current member-states, principally because of Mobutu's domestic and foreign policies. Transportation infrastructure in the region could make Zaire a vital constituent in SADCC's sectoral project programme in transport.

Mobutu has attempted to secure Zaire's border with Angola and to reopen transportation links between the two countries. With US encouragement, diplomatic links were re-established between Zaire and Angola in late 1978

after reciprocal visits by their respective Presidents. This stimulated detente between Angola and Zaire which was followed by President dos Santos' visit in early February 1985 to Kinshasa. A security and defence pact was signed immediately thereafter on 9 February 1985, which excludes the use of one territory to launch attacks on the other. It had been widely reported before the pact, that Zairean territory was used to provide logistical support for UNITA rebels. Exactly how this agreement will affect the relationship between Mobutu and Savimbi remains to be seen, but it appears likely that support for UNITA will continue despite recent developments on the diplomatic front. In fact, it has been reported that any Angolan reopening of the Benguela railway line is linked to Zaire scaling down 'external aid' to UNITA.

d) Relations with South Africa

The nature of Zaire's relationship with South Africa is determined mainly by its strategic and economic position in the region and by the nature of Mobutu's regime and the way it discerns its interests. The relationship between Zaire and South Africa can, at best, be described as one of mutual convenience. Both countries have been able to manipulate the relationship to a certain degree to protect their national and regional interests. Earlier this year Zaire's Foreign Minister, Mokdo Wa Mpombo, reaffirmed his country's commitment to fight against apartheid and racial discrimination, while at the same time neglecting any reference to ongoing trade with Pretoria. (More in-depth analysis of Zaire's economic relations with South Africa will be provided in Part Two of this briefing.)

The Zaire/South Africa relationship has further been described as 'public vilification and quiet co-operation'. Zaire has, on occasion, condemned South Africa's apartheid policies both at the UN and at the OAU, as well as in Mobutu's speeches, while at the same time co-operating with South Africa. An example of this was in 1973, when Mobutu publicly agreed to terminate Zaire's membership of the South African-based International Red Locust Control Service along with the other member countries, Zambia, Tanzania, Uganda, Rwanda and Burundi, because of South Africa's domestic policies. However, he privately requested South Africa not to withdraw its aircraft, equipment and expertise.

The rhetoric of condemnation has intensified when Mobutu periodically seeks to assert his somewhat questionable leadership position among the less developed countries as a whole or Africa in particular. This rhetoric has toned down whenever an internal or external crisis dictates increased dependency on South Africa. A prime example of this has been Zaire's overt and covert support for UNITA during the Angolan civil war and subsequently, which has in turn necessitated closer political, military and economic ties with South Africa. The contradictory nature of the relationship was again revealed when South African military supplies and advisers were used by Zairean units inside Angola in 1975. Zaire, however, condemned South Africa's intervention in Angola in the Security Council in December 1975, but then opposed General Assembly calls for South Africa's expulsion from the United Nations in the same month. The then exiled Karl-I-Bond claimed, in 1983, that Israel, Zaire and South Africa were orchestrating the destabilisation of the MPLA regime in Angola and other Southern African countries. This was later denied by Mobutu.

Zaire's voting pattern on South African issues at the United Nations has been somewhat erratic. On most occasions it votes in favour of such resolutions, but abstentions were not infrequent, especially, as mentioned, in times of

crisis. After the Shaba invasion of 1977, Zaire voted in favour of ten anti-South African resolutions, but not on two others - one condemning Israel for its collaboration with South Africa and the other condemning all military and nuclear collaboration with South Africa. Similarly, after the second Shaba invasion, Zaire abstained on a resolution condemning all economic co-operation with South Africa.

Much like Zambia, Zaire has of necessity been forced to trade with South Africa because of regional transportation bottlenecks. In 1975, there were rumours of 'underground dialogue' with South Africa as the situation in Angola grew more tense. It was reported that Vorster tried to set up an interview with Mobutu and a Zairean minister allegedly visited Pretoria. In August 1975 the Star reported government-to-government contact between the two states. No subsequent meetings have been reported, despite the increasing dependence of Zaire on South Africa for transportation of copper exports and imports of a variety of goods and equipment.

Despite its periodic anti-South African stances then, Zaire is generally viewed by South Africa as a moderate, anti-communist potentially co-operative regional power.

Conclusion

Zaire's international standing in general, and that of Mobutu in particular, have remained high despite periodic internal disturbances and reports of widespread and institutionalised corruption and nepotism. Despite the repressive nature of the regime, a peculiar mix of popular respect and fear keeps Mobutu in charge of what is perhaps one of Africa's least-governable countries.

Through his twenty years in power, Mobutu has managed to impose a considerable degree of peace and unity on a country which has some 250 tribal groupings and at least six major languages. His main failure has been to bring sustained prosperity to Zaire despite its massive potential in mineral and agricultural resources. Despite Mobutu's personal wealth and the regime's corruption, mismanagement and human rights abuses, Mobutu has built up a certain mystique, even a personality cult, among Zaireans. However, rule by popular mystique and repression can be tenuous. For the present, there is no unified political opposition, but this may not always be the case. Mobutu has attempted to assure a peaceful succession process by surrounding himself with mixed race sycophants, whose personal power potential under recent constitutional provisions have been cut short. The Presidency may only be assumed by second generation Zaireans, which narrows the field of possible heirs.

Mobutu has said that he will not become president for life and that he will not choose his own successor. Following on this has been the constitutional amendment which stipulates that only second generation Zaireans qualify for the presidency. However, his recent appointment of his son, Nyiwa Mobutu, as Secretary of State for International Co-operation (Foreign Affairs) seems to refute this, and it is possible that this may indicate his way to the Presidency.

Until recently, a potentially serious rival to Mobutu was Nguza Karl-I-Bond, a former Foreign Minister who has won a reputation for honesty and diplomatic skill. He was responsible for Zaire's successful negotiations with the IMF in 1980. Although he has no traditional political base, he has support amongst the young, urban-based, Western-trained élite who favour reform.

Exiled in Brussels since 1981, he has called on Mobutu to restore democratic institutions in Zaire and urged the United States to end support to the regime.

However, in a reversal of his political stance, Nguza Karl-I-Bond has recently returned to Zaire, following an offer he had extended to Mobutu on the occasion of the 25th independence anniversary. Nguza has resigned as President of the exiled opposition party - The Congolese Front for the Restoration of Democracy - and has announced his willingness to observe a political truce. Nguza believes 'it may be possible to allow for the expression of ideas and recognition of existence of various trends within the sole party'.

Nguza's actions have prompted strong criticism from the exiled political groups, who see this development as a treacherous move and more of an unconditional rallying to the Mobutu regime than 'national reconciliation', as stressed by Nguza. Whether he will remain active on the political scene is as yet unclear. There has been speculation that he may once again be given high office, but the Zairean government has stressed that Nguza has returned home as a private citizen, thus suggesting that he has been effectively neutralised.

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