

African nations defend Congo against Ugandan-backed rebellion

by Linda de Hoyos

The governments of Zimbabwe, Angola, Zambia, and Namibia have taken steps to defend the sovereignty of the Democratic Republic of the Congo against a rebellion which has been instigated and sponsored by London's marcher-lords in the region: Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni and Rwandan Defense Minister Paul Kagame. The action has been taken under the aegis of the Southern African Development Community (SADC), but without the approval of South African President Nelson Mandela, whose country supplies weaponry to Uganda and Rwanda.

On Aug. 19, after a meeting in Zimbabwe, the SADC countries sent a message to rebellion headquarters in Goma stating, according to Kenyan Foreign Minister Bonaya Godana, "If you continue fighting and move into Kinshasa, you can expect to engage units of our forces." The meeting "unanimously agreed," said Zimbabwean Defense Minister Moven Mohachi, "that we must with urgency make sure that practical assistance, both materiel and manpower, is given to the [Congo] in order to restore peace and stability."

Although Angola has a special interest in maintaining a regime in Kinshasa that will not aid Jonas Savimbi's Unita, the deployment on Aug. 24 of Zimbabwean, Angolan, and Namibian troops against the Rwandan-Ugandan rebellion, reflects a concern for the future not only of the Congo, but all of southern Africa. The aim of the deployment is to ensure that the government of the Congo is *not changed through foreign military intervention*. The fear is that a new regime—backed by Rwanda and Uganda, as Congo's Laurent Kabila was himself originally—will only bring more war to the Congo, and hence a heightening wave of instability across all central and southern Africa, in which the Congo is a geopolitical linchpin. Such instability will threaten the very existence of the SADC countries, many of them already under siege by the International Monetary Fund and by demands for British Commonwealth private ownership of their resources.

Zambian President Frederick Chiluba expressed his nation's concerns while in Harare, Zimbabwe on Aug. 27, where he met with Zimbabwean President Robert Mugabe. "We have the same understanding with Zimbabwe and all SADC countries on the D.R.C. issue. We recognize and accept that there is a Congo with a government and whose President is Laurent Kabila, and as such we cannot accept anything that violates that understanding. . . . It's a conflict not particularly

against the Congo, it's a conflict that honestly questions the very essence of our unity on the continent, and we cannot tolerate it. We cannot allow it to carry on."

The day before, Zimbabwe President Mugabe had called for the Organization of African Unity to negotiate a peaceful settlement in Congo. "We want the solution to come from the OAU," he said. "It will have to work out an effective plan which will ensure the invading troops withdraw in the context of a cease-fire." He rejected a call by U.S. Special Envoy Howard Wolpe for all foreign troops to leave the Congo, saying that "the illegitimate ones purporting to be rebels are the ones that must go, because they have invaded the territory of the D.R.C." Kabila had invited SADC assistance.

As of Aug. 28, Zimbabwe has reportedly committed 4,000 troops to Congo, including 2,200 specialized airborne troops. Namibia has also supplied troops to defend Kinshasa. On Aug. 24, Angolan troops and tanks poured across the border from Cabinda to take back the Kitona airbase and nearby towns from the rebels.

A counteroffensive is expected from Rwanda and Uganda, and possibly other countries whose leaders line up with London's "new breed" of leadership. Both Rwanda and Uganda have threatened to officially send troops to the Congo, if the SADC forces are not withdrawn. Signaling military escalation from the Uganda-dominated east, Ugandan Maj. Gen. Salim Saleh announced on Aug. 28 that Uganda "is physically being attacked by Kabila, Zimbabwe, and Angola," in order to explain the fact that Ugandan soldiers have been taken prisoner or have been killed in the D.R.C. "We are not going to leave Congo," he said.

The possibility that the Congo conflict will become a regional conflagration is now mounting. But this is a risk that SADC governments evidently believed they had to take—an indication of the danger they perceive coming from the British marcher-lords of East Africa.

Ugandans protest troop deployment to Congo

Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni's deployment of Ugandan troops into the Democratic Republic of Congo (D.R.C.)—either covertly or overtly—has created a major