

Democratic Republic of the Congo (Zaire)

- **1960:** Independence from Belgium; Patrice Lumumba, the first legally elected Prime Minister of the Republic of the Congo, deposed in a CIA-sponsored coup.
- **1961:** Patrice Lumumba assassinated. Tens of thousands died in subsequent civil war.
- **1965-1997:** With the help of the CIA, Mobutu seized power from President Kasa-Vubu and ruled for over 30 years. Mobutu had the political and military support of Western countries, who saw him as an ally against communism in Africa. He established a one-party state, banning all other political organizations except his own. Early in his rule, Mobutu consolidated power by publicly executing political rivals, secessionists, coup plotters, and other threats to his rule. To set an example, many were hanged before large audiences. He was re-elected in single-candidate elections in 1977 and 1984. In 1984 his personal fortune was estimated to be \$5 billion (US dollars). In spite of his corruption and economic mismanagement, Mobutu was able to successfully capitalize on Cold War tensions and gain significant support from Western countries like the US and international organizations such as the International Monetary Fund.
- **1997-1999:** Mobutu overthrown in a civil war in which four million people died, and the country was reverted back to being called the Democratic Republic of Congo. The civil war ended when the warring factions involved signed the Lusaka Accord in 1999.
- During his 2001 testimony to the House Subcommittee on International Operations and Human Rights, investigative journalist Wayne Madsen remarked, "The United States has a long history of supporting all sides in the Democratic Republic of the Congo's civil wars in order to gain access to the country's natural resources."
- **July 2006:** Elections to form a new government was the first fully democratic vote in the country in more than 40 years.