

Congo VNSA Cases
Last Updated: 4 March 2017

torg	gname	onset	min	max
T186	FRONT FOR THE LIBERATION OF THE ENCLAVE OF CABINDA (FLEC)		1963	2010
T1446	PEOPLE'S REVOLUTIONARY PARTY (PRP)		1975	1975
T1208	NINJAS	1993	1993	2003
T2196	COCOYES	1997	1997	1999
T2008	CONGOLESE RALLY FOR DEMOCRACY (RCD)		1998	2003
T2302	NTSILOULOUS	1998	1998	2002

I. FRONT FOR THE LIBERATION OF THE ENCLAVE OF CABINDA (FLEC)

Min. Group Date: 1963

Max. Group Date: 2016

Onset: NA

Aliases: Front For The Liberation Of The Enclave Of Cabinda (Flec), Flec/Original, Frente De Liberacao Do Enclave De Cabinda (Flec), Frente De Liberacao Do Enclave De Cabinda (Flec), Front For The Liberation Of The Cabinda Enclave, FLEC

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Part 2. Narrative

Group Formation

In 1963, the Movement for the Liberation of Cabinda, which was led by Luis Ranque Franque, as well as the Action Committee for the National Union of Cabindans, which was led by Henrique Tiago N'Zita (alias Nzita Tiago) (Brown 2016), and the Mayombe alliance, merged to form the Liberation Of Cabinda's Enclave (Dos Santos 1983, 104). FLEC originally fought for independence from Portuguese rule, but continued to resist the government even after Angola gained independence on November 11, 1975 (Human Rights Watch 2004). FLEC raised an army in 1974, and began fighting against the People's Movement for the Liberation of Angola (Adelman 1975, 565).

Geography

FLEC is based in Cabinda, in the northwestern corner of Angola. FLEC operated in Kinshasa in 1974 (Dos Santos 1983, 104). FLEC only controlled territory in the heavily forested inland areas of the Cabinda province before briefly moving to Brussels and Lisbon (Human Rights Watch 2004, Dos Santos 1983, 107). A faction of FLEC operated in the capital of Zaire (Adelman 1975, 565).

Organizational Structure

Both the Congo and Zaire financially backed FLEC (Adelman 1975, 565). Leaders included Luiz Franque Ranque, Henriques Tiago N'zita, and António Eduardo Sozinho (Global Security 2012). On August 1, 1975, FLEC announced Cabinda's independence from Portugal, though Angolan government forces reclaimed control of the area from the separatists (Al-Jazeera English 2010).

External Ties

FLEC was at first supported by Abbé Youlou, the first president of Congo-Brazzaville because he wanted to annex Cabinda (Dos Santos 1983, 104). Zaire, as well as the United States, supported Luis Ranque Franque as the leader of FLEC (Dos Santos 1983, 105). Since then, FLEC has been linked to foreigners and mercenary killings, some of which famously include Jean Kay and Jean da Costa, who worked with the armies of France and Congo and who allegedly had ties to the French Minister of Justice

(Dos Santos 1983, 105). President Mobutu of the Congo generally supported the FLEC army (Adelman 1975, 565).

FLEC gave rise to two splinter groups during the late 1970s (Global Security 2012). The first is the Military Command for the Liberation of Cabinda, which splintered from FLEC in November 1977 (Ibid.). Almost two years later, in June 1979, another faction within FLEC broke away, founding the splinter group known as the Popular Movement for the Liberation of Cabinda, abbreviated MPLC (Ibid.).

Group Outcome

FLEC continues to attack foreigners in Cabinda, especially the Portuguese. (Global Security 2012). In September 2016, FLEC claimed responsibility for an ambush near oil fields in the northern region of Angola, in which twelve Angolan soldiers were killed (Brown 2016). One of FLEC's most notorious attacks occurred in 2010, when the group raided a bus that was carrying Togo's national soccer team (Brown 2016). After Nzita Tiago (one of FLEC's founding leaders) passed away in June 2016, FLEC violence against Angolan government forces proliferated (Brown 2016). According to Brown 2016, FLEC is attributed with 50 deaths in the period of just over one month in 2016 (Brown 2016).

Part 3. Proposed Changes

Aliases: Liberation Front of Cabinda's Enclave (Dos Santos 1983, 104)

Group Formation: no proposed change

Group End (Outcome): Active (Brown 2016)

II. PEOPLE'S REVOLUTIONARY PARTY (PRP)

Min. Group Date: 1975

Max. Group Date: 1975

Onset: NA

Aliases: People's Revolutionary Party (PRP), Popular Revolutionary Party (Prp), Zaire's People's Revolutionary Party, Zaire's People's Revolutionary Party, PRP

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Part 2. Narrative

Group Formation

Laurant-Désiré Kabila was born in the Katanga province and came from the Luba ethnic group (Panafrican News Agency 2001). Kabila opposed the Congolese government for three decades, before leading a coup in 1997 and becoming military leader and president of Congo (Appiah 2010, 623). Kabila formed the PRP in 1965 on Marxist ideals (TORG dataset; Kisangani 2016, 496) or 1967 (Encyclopedia Britannica 2001; Appiah and Gates 2010, 623). Sources agree that, by 1967, PRP was an established group. According to Schmid and Jongman (1988, 699), by 1967 PRP controlled strongholds in the area of Fizi Baraka. The group's ideology was leftist (Panafrican News Agency 2001) and they were willing to use violence to overthrow the then-dictator of Congo, Mobutu Sese Seko (Onwar).

Kabila directly governed Congo from 1997-2001 (Ibid.). The PRP gained international attention in 1975 when it held three American students and a Dutch citizen hostage for 67 days (Appiah 2010, 623; Kisangani 2016, 496).

Geography

In the 1970s, the PRP established a “liberated zone” in southeastern Kivu, specifically the mountainous Fizi (Appiah 2010, 623). The PRP ruled this “liberated zone” as a Socialist state for two years, though the group was ultimately forced to flee by Congolese government forces (Ibid.). PRP members then fled to Tanzania (Ibid.)

Organizational Structure

The group’s founding leader was Laurent Kabila (Onwar n.d.). Other leaders included Gabriel Yumu, Kashimu, and Gaston Soumalot (Schmid and Jongman 1988, 698). The PRP’s armed branch was formed in 1969 and named Forces Armées Populaires (FAP) (Ibid.). In 1980, the PRP joined an umbrella organization called the Council for the Liberation of the Congo-Kinshasa (Ibid.). The PRP’s estimated group size was approximately 3,000 members at the time (Ibid.).

The PRP funded itself through gold mining and ivory trading (Global Security n.d.). The Zairian officers positioned in Kivu, who were supposed to drive the PRP out of power in the region, often smuggled out ivory, gold and other commodities which were used to enriched both themselves and the PRP (Onwar n.d.).

External Ties

The PRP regularly received funding from China (Appiah 2010, 623). Members fled to Tanzania after defeat in 1977 (Ibid.). Prior to founding the PRP, Laurent-Désiré Kabila had been educated in France and in 1965 had briefly collaborated with Che Guevara in connection with an insurrection in eastern Congo (Ibid.).

Group Outcome

In 1977 President Mobutu's troops forced the PRP to abandon their liberated Zone and the PRP members fled (Appiah 2010, 623). According to Kisangi (2016, 496) the PRP re-emerged in October 1996 as part of the umbrella organization Alliance des Forces Démocratiques pour la Libération du Congo (AFDL), however the connections between PRP and the later AFDL are not entirely clear. The AFDL successfully conducted a coup in May 1997 and Kabila then became president of Congo until 2001 (Ibid.)

Part 3. Proposed Changes

Aliases: no proposed change

Group Formation: 1965 (TORG dataset; Kisangani 2016, 496) or 1967 (Encyclopedia Britannica 2001; Appiah and Gates 2010, 623)

Group End (Outcome): 1977 (military defeat) (Appiah 2010, 623)

III. NINJAS

Min. Group Date: 1993

Max. Group Date: 2003

Onset: 1997

Aliases: NA

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Part 2. Narrative

Group Formation

The Ninjas were originally established in the early 1990's, and they were loyal to the former mayor of Brazzaville, Bernard Kolelas (Buchanan 2016). They initially formed because conflict broke out between the three main political factions in Congo over fraud allegations in the 1993 elections (Gleditsch et al. 2011). Some sources claim that the Ninjas were part of a messianic religious sect that believed in an impending apocalypse (Ibid.).

Geography

The Ninjas were present in the Makélékélé and Bacongo neighborhoods, in the southern part of Brazzaville, until they were driven out in 1998 (Buchanan 2016). In 1993, the group attacked and took 53 hostages from the Oka village in the Plateaux region (US CIS 2000). From 1996 to 1997, the Cocoye, as well as Kolelas' group, Ninjas and Sassou's group, the Cobras, each controlled zones of the capital city Brazzaville (Englerbert and Ron 2004, 66). The Ninjas perpetrated a number of violent attacks in Pool throughout the early 2000s, particularly in 2002 and 2003, which, coincidentally, was the birthplace of the Ninja's founder Bernard Kolelas (Buchanan 2016).

Organizational Structure

The group recruited rural youth, typically picked according to its affiliated regionally- and ethnically-based political party (Englebert and Ron 2004, 66). The Ninjas got funds through extortion and looting, however they often lacked weapons and supplies (Global Security; Bazenguissa-Ganga 1999, 42).

Although Kolelas initially founded the Ninja group to help him vie for power after the disputed 1993 elections, a State Department report suggests that Kolelas may have lacked centralized command and control over the militia's operations (US CIS 2000). Frédéric Bintsangou, also known as "Pastor Ntoumi," took charge of the Ninja's military operations after Kolelas was exiled in 1997 (Global Security n.d.; Buchanan 2016). Ntoumi is considered to be more influential over a certain faction of the Ninja group, while a second faction was more loyal to Kolelas (Global Security n.d.; TDRP n.d.). However, some members fought for both factions over time, as they have shared ties, and are often considered part of the same overall movement (Global Security n.d.; TDRP n.d.).

As a result of a ceasefire signed on March 17, 2003, many Ninja rebels disarmed (Global Security n.d.). Although the group has been criticized for being slow to disarm, at least 2,000 Ninja rebels have disarmed in the years since 2003 (Ibid.).

External Ties

The Ninjas were reportedly allied with the Congolese militant group known as Cobra, led by Sassou Nguesso, during the 1993-1994 war (US CIS 2000). The groups shared weapons, though there is not much evidence that the groups integrated their operational planning (Ibid.). The groups were considered allied mainly because both fought against the third powerful militia in Congo, which was loyal to then-President Pascal Lissouba (Ibid.). Since 1994, the Ninjas and Cobra have been separate groups (Ibid.).

Given the existence of three rival groups, the Ninja's leader Kolelas appeared to switch his preference from Nguesso (whom the Ninja had somewhat allied with from 1993-1994) to Lissouba in the late 1990s (US CIS 2000). Kolelas joined then-President Lissouba's government in the role of Prime Minister in September 1997 (Ibid.). However, Kolelas maintained the Ninja as his own private militia throughout the 1990s and 2000s (Ibid.).

Group Outcome

The Ninjas signed a ceasefire in January 1994 that ended the first Congo-Brazzaville civil war (US CIS 2000). In 1999, the Ninjas signed another peace agreement along with then-President Sassou's government and the Cocoye militia (Ibid.). More than 2,000 Ninja members disarmed, though it is estimated that as many as 16,000 Ninjas remained armed as of 2000 (Ibid.). The Ninjas signed another ceasefire agreement in 2003, which has been considered the formal end of their organized militant activity, although some sources have continued to blame the group blamed for attacks since 2003 as well (Global Security).

Kolelas' son, Guy-Brice Parfait Kolelas, ran in the presidential election in March 2016 and lost after receiving only 15% of the vote. Government buildings in the capital were attacked shortly after the election; the Congolese government blamed the attacks on the Ninjas, though this claim may be politically-motivated and some analysts say there is no evidence that the Ninjas are organizing a remobilization (BBC 2016; Buchanan 2016).

Part 3. Proposed Changes

Aliases: no proposed change

Group Formation: no proposed change

Onset: 1993 (US CIS 2000; Global Security)

Group End (Outcome): no proposed change (politics/ceasefire (Global Security; Buchanan 2016)

IV. COCOYES

Min. Group Date: 1997
Max. Group Date: 1999
Onset: 1997

Aliases: Mambas

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Part 2. Narrative

Group Formation

After the disputed legislative elections of 1993, the Cocoye formed to defend then-President Pascal Lissouba, and to fight against the Cobra and Ninja militias loyal to Lissouba's political rivals (US CIS 2000). The Cocoye increased their violent attacks leading up to the 1997 elections (Ibid.). The Cocoye systematically assassinated political leaders with ties to northern Congo ethnic groups, notably from December 18-21 in 1998 (Global Security n.d.).

The Cocoye and other Congolese militias in the 1990s did not have a coherent political ideology. Rather, supporters' allegiance was typically determined by ethnicity and personal loyalty to certain leaders (Englebert and Ron 2004, 66; Bazenguissa-Ganga 1999, 45-46). Some sources argue that political party elites exaggerated ethnic tensions to rally support for their private militias (Englebert and Ron 2004, 66; Bazenguissa-Ganga 1999, 45-46). Also, in reality each militia did have members of varying ethnic groups and sometimes distinct ethnic differences were not clearly identifiable (Global Security n.d.; Bazenguissa-Ganga 1999, 45-46)

Geography

Cocoye militants carried out attacks in the regions of Bouenza, Niari, and Lekoumou (Global Security, n.d.). The Cocoye had strongholds Bacongo and Makélékélé districts of Brazzaville, however one of their rivals, the Ninja group, was also very active in these regions (US CIS 2000). From 1996 and for part of 1997, the Cocoye, as well as Kolelas' group Ninjas and Sassou's Cobras, each controlled zones of Brazzaville (Englebert and Ron 2004, 66). In 1997, the same year their leader Lissouba fled into exile, the Cocoye retreated to the Nibolek region, though the group resumed attacks the subsequent year (Dicke 2015, 2; Englebert and Ron 2004, 66). In December 1998, the group briefly took control of the town of Nkayi in Bouenza (Global Security n.d.). The majority of ex-Cocoye combatants live in Niari, Bouenza, and Lekoumou, and a smaller number are in Kouilou (Demetriou et al. 2001, 3).

Organizational Structure

The Cocoye originated from then-President Pascal Lissouba's Presidential Guard corps (US CIS 2000). They were loyal to Lissouba instead of his two main political rivals, Kolelas and Sassou, who also each set up private militias following the disputed 1993 legislative elections (US CIS 2000; Global Security n.d.). However, a State Department report from 1999 suggests that Lissouba may have lacked centralized control over the Cocoye's violent acts (US CIS 2000). Lissouba fled into exile in October 1997, and by 1999, the Cocoye were significantly weakened as a result of the fighting (Dicke et al. 2015, 4).

Bernard Kolelas, a former Prime Minister of Congo, is also credited as a founder of the Cocoye (Gleditsch et al. 2011, 700) The group mainly recruited rural youth, according to

its affiliated regionally- and ethnically-based political party (Englebert and Ron 2004, 66). Cocoye members engaged in widespread looting, particularly in 1997, which was fueled by members' frustration at not being paid for their participation in military operations. In Brazzaville, this looting even targeted elite members of the Cocoye's own affiliated ethnic and political groups (Bazenguissa-Ganga 1999, 46-48).

Given that Lissouba was President of Congo from 1992-1997, the Cocoye acquired weapons during the 1990s via Congolese government channels (Demetriou et al. 2001, 9). When Cocoye forces suffered military losses during 1998-1999 (many fled Brazzaville to the Bouenza, Niari, and Lekoumou regions), Cocoye militants often took weapons from police stations as well as from defeated Angolan and FAC troops (Ibid., 13).

External Ties

During the 1993-1994 civil war, Cocoye briefly allied with the Ninja militia to combat the Cobra forces (US CIS). Sources offer remain unclear about whether the Aubevilloi and Zoulou militias, considered loyal to Lissouba during the 1993-1994 war, are distinct from the Cocoye (Clark 1998, 32; Demetriou et. al. 2001, 8; Dicke et al. 2015, 1; Englebert and Ron 2004, 65). According to Demetriou et al. (2001, 13), the Aubevilloi and Zoulou were militias that merged with the Cocoye either during or after the 1993-1994 war.

Group Outcome

In 1999, the Congolese government and rebel groups signed peace agreement calling for the disarmament and reintegration of militants (Global Security n.d.). However, many Cocoye did not disarm (Demetriou et al. 2001, 9). Instead, Lissouba formed the "Conseil National de Resistance" (CNR) and the Cocoye were made into the military wing of the CNR (Ibid.).

Part 3. Proposed Changes

Aliases: Mambas (Global Security)

Group Formation: 1993

Group End (Outcome): no proposed change (politics/ceasefire)

V. CONGOLESE RALLY FOR DEMOCRACY (RCD)

Min. Group Date: 1998

Max. Group Date: 2003

Onset: NA

Aliases: Congolese Rally For Democracy (Rcd), Congolese Rally For Democracy, Congolese Rally For Democracy (Rcd)/Rcd-Goma, Congolese Rally For Democracy/Liberation Movement, Congolese Rally For Democracy/Rcd-Kisangani, Rcd-Kisangani

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Part 2. Narrative

Group Formation

RCD/Goma was founded in August 1998 and the splinter group RCD/Kisangani originated out of RCD Goma (Global Security n.d.). The RCD (Congolese Rally for Democracy) was initially a front made up of three factions that had different political ideologies: one faction was politically conservative and loyal to the deceased Congolese dictator Mobutu Sese Soko; another faction was the umbrella group AFDL, composed of opposition groups to then-President Joseph Kabila; and finally, a third faction was dedicated to “democratic resistance” (Global Security n.d.). RCD had the initial goal of regime change, including the overthrow of then-President Kabila (Global Security). The RCD was connected to military operations from its founding, although its first leader Wamba dia Wamba’s official statements supported non-violence (HRW 2001).

Geography

From 1998-2003, the RCD governed North Kivu as a proxy for the Rwandan Government (Global Security n.d.). The RCD was active in northeastern and eastern Congo, specifically in the towns of Beni and Bunia (HRW 2001; Podur 2012). In August 1999, Rwandan government forces defeated Ugandan forces in Kisangani (Ibid.). Due to the instability in Kisangani, Wamba relocated the RCD-Kisangani’s capital to first

Kampala and then Bunia; he also renamed the Kisangani faction to Rally for Democracy-Liberation Movement (RCD-ML) (Ibid.). The Rwandan army provided military support to the RCD-Goma throughout South and North Kivu (Human Rights Watch 2002). The Burundian army also backed RCD-Goma in South Kivu near the border with Burundi, such as Ruzizi plain and Lake Tanganyika (Ibid.).

Organizational Structure

Ernest Wamba dia Wamba was the group's leader until 1999, when in-fighting resulted in his being ousted (Global Security n.d.). Emile Ilunga became the leader of RCD-Goma (Ibid.). Also over a period from 1998-1999, RCD further split into two factions: RCD-Kisangani (led by Wamba) and RCD-Goma (Global Security n.d.). The RCD-ML faction had a military wing named Armée Populaire Congolaise (APC) (HRW 2001). The majority of the RCD-ML army recruits included the ethnic groups Lendu, Hema, Nande, and Alur ethnic groups (Ibid.).

Wamba's background was as professor of history and he had long been involved in Congolese politics as an opponent of the former president Mobutu (HRW 2001). Prior to becoming the RCD's first leader, Wamba had lived in Tanzania for many years (HRW 2001).

The RCD constantly experienced in-fighting (HRW 2001). The three top officials at the group's founding, Wamba, Mbusa Nyamwisi, and Tibasima Ateenyi, created parallel political administrations in areas of Bunia and Beni that the RCD controlled (Ibid.). The group's military wings were also divided based on personal or ethnic ties, and each military unit tended to be primarily loyal to one of the RCD's leaders (Ibid.).

External Ties

The RCD split into two factions between 1998 and 1999 (Global Security n.d.). The mainstream faction was RCD-Goma, which was established first, in August 1998 (Ibid.). Later, the faction RCD-Kisangani splintered from RCD-Goma (Ibid.). Reportedly, the RCD-ML was funded by Uganda and the RCD-Goma was funded by Rwanda (Global Security n.d.). Burundian forces also provided the RCD-Goma with military support (Human Rights Watch 2002).

Group Outcome

In July 1999, the Lusaka Ceasefire Agreement was offered to all actors in Congo's second civil war (Global Security n.d.). The RCD's first leader, Wamba dia Wamba, was prevented from signing it although the source does not clarify if this opposition came from within RCD or the Congolese government (Ibid.). Eventually, on 31 August 1999, RCD-Goma and RCD-Kisangani signed the Lusaka Ceasefire Agreement (Ibid.). In

2003, RCD-Goma chairman signed an additional ceasefire in Sun City, South Africa (Ibid.).

Eventually, RCD forces joined the Congolese Army through power-sharing processes known as “brassage” and “mixage” (Podur 2012).

Part 3. Proposed Changes

Aliases: Armée Populaire Congolaise (APC) (HRW 2001)

Group Formation: no proposed change

Group End (Outcome): no proposed change (politics/ceasefire)

VI. NTSILOULOUS

Min. Group Date: 1998

Max. Group Date: 2002

Onset: 1998

Aliases: NA

Part 1. Bibliography

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Part 2. Narrative

Group Formation

The Ntsiloulous were a splinter group that emerged from the Ninjas sometime during 1998, eventually becoming an established militia by 1999 (cf. “Ninjas” profile) (Gleditsch et al. 2013, 700). During November and December 1999, the Ninjas agreed to a ceasefire with the Congolese government, while the Ntsiloulous faction continued fighting the government (Ibid., 699; BBC 1999).

The Ntsiloulous were led by Pasteur Ntoumi, whose real name was Frédéric Bitsangou, who believed in a deep connection to mystic religion. He claimed to fight on behalf of the Lari ethnic group (Dicke et al. 2015, 2; Gleditsch et al. 2013, 700). Ntoumi did not appear

to have a coherent political ideology, instead the Ntsiloulous are characterized by a cult-like aspect of his personal leadership, mysticism, and militancy (Dicke et al. 2013, 2; Gleditsch et al. 2013, 700). The Ntsiloulous formed once the Cocoyes (cf. "Cocoyes" profile) fled Brazzaville for the Pool region and began experiencing in-fighting (Dicke et al. 2015, 2).

Geography

The Ntsiloulous fought in the Congolese capital of Brazzaville and in the southwestern region of Congo (BBC 1999; Dicke et al. 2015, 2).

Organizational Structure

The Ntsiloulou were led by Frédéric Bitsangou, a mystic religious leader who went by the alias Pasteur Ntoumi (Dicke et al. 2015, 1-2).

External Ties

The Ntsiloulous splintered from the Ninjas sometime during 1998 and were well-established as their own group by 1999 (Gleditsch et al. 2013, 700). At first, the Ntsiloulous clashed with the Ninjas. However, in March 1999, the Ntsiloulous, Ninjas, and Cocoyes allied to overthrow then-President Denis Sassou Nguesso (Dicke et al. 2015, 2). These three groups formed the umbrella organization 'Conseil national de résistance' (CNR) (Ibid.).

Group Outcome

Although some Ntsiloulous, including Pasteur Ntoumi, had been carrying out attacks against the government, by 2002 an estimated 450 Ntsiloulous were integrated into the Congolese army (Dicke et al. 2015, 5). An additional 500 Ntsiloulous were integrated into the police force (Ibid.). According to the UCDP dataset, in 2002, a new armed conflict occurred between the Congolese government and the Ntsiloulous (Ibid., 8). The Ntsiloulous are not thought to have been active in an armed conflict since 2002 (Ibid.).

Part 3. Proposed Changes

Aliases: no proposed change

Group Formation: no proposed change

Group End (Outcome): no proposed change