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## General

Zaire, now known as the Democratic Republic of Congo, is located in the central part of Africa. It is bounded on the N side by Central African Republic; on the NE side by Sudan; on the E side by Uganda, Rwanda, and Burundi; on the S side by Zambia; on the SW side by Angola; and on the NW side by the Republic of Congo.

Cabinda, an Angolan enclave, lies on the NW side of the strip that extends to the Atlantic Ocean.

A low plateau extends between the highlands of E Africa and the coastal ranges of W Africa from the basin of central Zaire. Dense rain forests cover the central lowlands. They are bordered on the SE side by the Shaba region, a high plateau, and on the S side by the lower lands of the Angola plateau. Rain forests in the E part of the country rise to the mountains bordering the lakes.

The climate is varied, the central region having an equatorial climate with yearlong high temperatures and rain in all seasons. Elsewhere, depending on position N or S of the Equator, there are well-defined wet and dry seasons. The mountains of the E and S regions have a temperate climate with the highest summits having considerable snowfall.

## Buoyage System

The IALA Buoyage System (Region A) is in effect. See Chart No. 1 for further IALA Buoyage System information.

It is reported that obsolescent buoyage (Uniform System of Buoyage) may still be encountered in some waters.

## Currency

The official unit of currency is the new zaire, consisting of 100 makuta.

## Government

Zaire, formerly the Belgium Congo, gained independence in 1960. Under the constitution of 1978, the country was ruled by one political party whose leader and President automatically became the head of state. In 1990, President Mobutu announced a transition to a multi-party state.

A state of emergency was declared in 1996 when secessionist forces lead by Laurent-Desire Kabila established a rebel administration and formed a coup. In 1997, Kabila's forces advanced on the capital of Kinshasa, ousted President Mobutu, and assumed power. President Kabila then formed a Government of National Salvation and changed the name of the country to the Democratic Republic of Congo.

The legal system is based on Belgian civil law and tribal law. The capital is Kinshasa.

## Holidays

The following holidays are observed:

Jan. 1, New Year's Day; Feb. 4 (MPR) Popular Movement of the Revolution Anniversary Day; May 1, Worker's Day; Sep. 17, National Hero Day; Nov. 11, Independence Day; and Dec. 25, Family's Day.

### **Industries**

The major industries include mining for copper, zinc, cobalt, gold, diamonds, coal, tin, and silver; crude oil production; forestry; livestock raising; and fishing. Other industries include the production of textiles, footwear, cigarettes, processed foods, and beverages. The principal crops are coffee, cassava, plantains, sugarcane, maize, groundnuts, bananas, yams, rice, palm oil, cotton seed, and various fruits.

### **Languages**

The official language is French, but English is also used. Of the 200 native dialects, four have been recognized as national languages (Swahili, Tshiluba, Kikongo, and Lingala).

### **Time Zone**

The country covers the two Time Zone descriptions of Alfa and Bravo (-1 and -2).

### **U.S. Embassy**

The U.S. Embassy is situated at 310 Avenue des Aviateurs, Kinshasa.

The mailing address is Unit 31550, APO AE 09828.