

Failed pro-imperialist coup targets Democratic Republic of Congo

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Early Sunday morning, several dozen heavily armed men attacked the Palace of the Nation, a presidential palace and home of the Minister of the Economy in Kinshasa, the capital of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). Men in fatigues opened fire, killing two of Economy Minister Vital Kamerhe's 15 guards. The attack lasted about three hours before it was crushed.

The spokesman for the Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of Congo said the "attempted coup d'état," involving "foreigners and Congolese," was foiled. It was "nipped in the bud by the defence and security forces," General Sylvain Ekenge said in a short message on national television. He said several Americans, including "two whites" and a Congolese "naturalized British" citizen, were involved.

The leader of the attempted coup was identified as Christian Malanga, a Congolese naturalized American. Malanga and three other men were killed after resisting arrest, and some 50 people, including three US citizens, were arrested, according to a Congolese army spokesman. The arrested US citizens include Malanga's 21-year-old son Marcel Malanga and Benjamin Zalman-Polun, a 36-year-old former cannabis dealer from Maryland.

The coup took place as Washington and its NATO allies wage a bitter struggle for influence in Africa with China and Russia, amid the NATO-Russia war in Ukraine. The NATO imperialist powers are dissatisfied with the current DRC regime's development of economic ties with Beijing and Moscow.

The coup leaders made clear their support for the bloody imperialist-backed dictatorship of Mobutu Sese Seko, who ruled the DRC under the name Zaire from 1965 to 1997. In a livestream posted on Facebook during Sunday's attack, Malanga threatened DRC President Félix Tshisekedi, shouting: "Felix, get out!" Surrounded by several dozen men dressed in fatigues, with some wearing red berets, Malanga claimed to have taken power

and waved the flag of Zaire, saying in Lingala: "The time has come. Long live Zaire, long live Mobutu's children!"

As his troops occupied the president's offices, Malanga told the camera in Lingala: "We cannot drag on with Tshisekedi and Kamerhe, they have done too many stupid things in this country."

Malanga, a US resident, reportedly had served in the DRC and US armies and was a well-known figure in the Congolese diaspora. He ran in the 2011 legislative elections and was arrested and detained for several weeks under former President Joseph Kabila. Upon his release, he went to the US and two years later founded the United Congolese Party. *Al Jazeera* reported, "over the years, Malanga campaigned for religious freedom in Africa and led anticorruption training initiatives for young Africans in Europe."

US State Department Spokesperson Matthew Miller said he was aware of reports that two other US citizens are in custody after the failed coup. He refused to confirm whether US officials had contacted the Congolese government to be granted consular access to them. On X/Twitter, US Ambassador to the DRC Lucy Tamlyn said she was "shocked" by reports of the failed coup. She pledged to "cooperate with the DRC authorities to the fullest extent as they investigate these criminal acts and hold accountable any US citizen involved in criminal acts."

In Paris, *Le Monde* tried to downplay the coup, claiming it was "far from being the most significant event." However, about Malanga, it admitted: "He had hoped since 2015 to topple the Congolese regime, first of Joseph Kabila and then of Félix Tshisekedi. This man's profile and the unfolding of the attack nonetheless raised questions, according to several observers contacted by *Le Monde*, about possible help the coup plotters could have had and what the real objectives were of what is officially being treated as a coup d'état."

Whatever precise relations they had with the NATO imperialist powers, the coup plotters clearly decided to act amid the escalating global conflict of the NATO powers with Russia and China. As NATO wages war against Russia in Ukraine and backs the far-right Israeli regime of Benjamin Netanyahu in waging genocide against the Palestinian population in Gaza, conflict between the imperialist powers and Russia and China is intensifying in Africa.

The French war in Mali and the Sahel since 2013 has led to several military coups and, amid mass protests against the French army presence, demands by the military regimes in Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger that France leave their territory. These regimes have then sought military collaboration with Russian instead of French troops.

In Congo, the imperialist powers are waging a bitter struggle for influence against Russia and China. There is deep anger among mining companies from the NATO countries at Tshisekedi's "contract of the century" deal with Chinese mining companies. In exchange for purchasing the output of several key Congolese mines, Beijing agreed to invest \$3 billion in mine infrastructure and \$6 billion in infrastructure across the rest of the DRC.

The DRC has massive, strategic mineral resources including uranium, copper, gold, tin, cobalt, diamonds, manganese and zinc, with a value estimated in the tens of trillions of dollars. It is by far the world's largest producer of cobalt, accounting for roughly 70 percent of global production. Cobalt is a key component in batteries for electric cars and mobile phones. The DRC is also the world's third-largest copper producer.

Although Washington is distancing itself from the failed coup, the NATO imperialist powers are notorious for their clandestine military operations in Africa. In the DRC, US and Belgian imperialism conspired with forces of the Congolese bourgeoisie to assassinate Patrice Lumumba, the leader of the anti-colonial struggle in the Congo and its first democratically-elected prime minister. Lumumba was murdered in 1961. The Mobutu dictatorship that emerged after his assassination had close ties to the imperialist powers, in particular to France.

The US-backed takeover of neighboring Rwanda by President Paul Kagame's forces in 1994-1995 against the French-backed Hutu government, during the Rwandan genocide, ultimately brought down Mobutu's regime. After Kagame had consolidated his regime, Rwandan-backed forces attacked westwards into the eastern Congo. The DRC was ravaged by war from 1996 to 2008. It is

estimated to have cost an estimated 5.6 million lives.

The eastern Congo is still to this day in a state of civil war, which has deepened since a rebellion, the March 23 Movement (M23), went on the offensive again two and a half years ago, backed by Rwanda. There are frequent clashes between Congolese security forces and armed groups, especially the M23 and the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF). In the recent period, these clashes have dramatically increased, provoking a humanitarian crisis. In October 2023, the UN announced that the number of internally displaced people in DRC had reached a record 6.9 million.

Tshisekedi, who has been in power since 2019, was reelected with 73 percent of the vote in December 2023. The failed coup hit the DRC as he intensifies ties with Russia and China. He recently said Eastern influence is outshining Western influence in Africa, rating Russia and China over Western countries in transparency and ease of doing business.

He said that his country has the right to deepen its ties with Russia: "In France, Israel was condemned for some actions in Gaza. Does this prevent France from maintaining its relations with Israel? Why do they want to judge us when it comes to Africans? One should not judge us. We have the right to the friends we want, and we are friends to all those who want to be our friends. ... Russians want friendship with Africa and DR Congo, so why should we refuse?"

Whatever precise assistance they received from the NATO powers, it was amid NATO's growing global conflict with Russia that the coup plotters in Kinshasa launched their failed bid to reimpose a regime in Congo harking back to Mobutu's bloody, pro-imperialist regime.



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