CONGO: AN OVERVIEW OF ITS GEOGRAPHY, HISTORY AND POLITICS

GEOGRAPHY
The Democratic Republic of the Congo is literally and figuratively the heart of Africa. The country of an estimated 80 million people straddles the equator and is bordered by 9 other countries. It is the size of Western Europe and the fulcrum on which the African continent swings. Congo is the second largest country in Africa in area and the fourth largest in population. Congo is a young country with the majority of its population 18 years old or younger.

HISTORY & POLITICS
Congo is home to one of the oldest mathematical artifacts in the world, the Ishango Bones, a binary counting system and lunar calendar, which dates to 20,000 B.C. The pre-colonial Congo region was governed by federated states. However, since the modern founding of the Congo in 1885 when it was given to King Leopold II of Belgium at the Berlin Conference of 1884/1885 as his own personal property, Congolese have been engaged in a social justice movement to regain control of the country and determine their own affairs.

WHY CONGO MATTERS
Congo is arguably the richest country on the planet in terms of natural resources. It is the storehouse of strategic and precious minerals that are vital to the functioning of modern society. Its minerals are key to the consumer electronics, the technology, automotive, aerospace and military industries. Its diamonds, gold, copper, cobalt, uranium, timber, iron, tin, and coltan (mineral that is central to the functioning of our cell phones, laptops and other technology and electronic devices) are coveted throughout the globe.

Due to Congo’s strategic location in the heart of Africa and the lust for her wealth powerful nations have repeatedly intervened in the Congo over the past 125 years. Congo is literally and figuratively the heart of Africa and the fulcrum on which the African continent swings. Former South African president Thabo Mbeki says “there is no new Africa without a new Congo.”

CONGO’S POTENTIAL
In spite of the remarkable challenges faced by the Congolese people, they can be overcome, especially in light of Congo’s incredible human and natural potential. Congo has the agricultural potential to feed the entire African continent. Congo also has the hydro capacity to provide electricity to all of Africa with some left over to export to Southern Europe and the Middle East. Congo is a part of the second largest rainforest in the world and is vital to the fight against climate change.

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