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Democratic Republic of Congo Update 98/055

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- **Planned visits by KABILA**
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 - **KABILA government boycotts Gaborone meeting**
- ◆ President KABILA will depart on a short visit to several African states prior to visiting Europe from 22 to 29 November 1998. He will depart on 20 November 1998 for Sudan, after which he will also go to Chad, Nigeria, Algeria and Egypt, before going to Italy, France, Belgium and Great Britain.
(Classified report)
- ◆ During a recent meeting between the DRC Minister of Development, Jean-Pierre KALEMA and the Algerian ambassador to Kinshasa, the DRC government proposed the following cooperation between the two states in the energy sector:
- * concessions for the exploitation of an oil field in Bas Congo;
 - * an audit of the SOCIR Refinery;
 - * the provision of equipment for the oil industry;
 - * a short term training program for Congolese technicians in Algeria; and
 - * the supplying of 50 000 tons of crude oil by Algeria every 45 days and 10 000 tons of refined products per month on a six monthly revolving credit base, to the amount of US\$25 million.

The Minister also requested the Algerian ambassador to arrange for a delegation from their oil industry to visit Kinshasa and Bas Congo during December 1998.

(Classified report)

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- ◆ Two rebel groups in the DRC said on 19 November they held talks to explore ways of working together to oust KABILA.

Jean-Pierre BEMBA, who heads the newly formed Congolese Liberation Movement (MLC), said he held talks earlier this week in Uganda with Ernest Wamba dia WAMBA, leader of the RCD. BEMBA told *Reuters* by satellite phone that “we are fighting against the same enemy so we are looking at ways to unify”. WAMBA, who confirmed the Kampala meeting from his base in Goma. Meanwhile, BEMBA, who claims his own troops number in the thousands, said the town of Bumba, some 350 kilometers northwest of Kisangani, fell to RCD forces on 17 November after three days of clashes with government troops. According to RCD military leader Jean-Pierre ONDEKANE the rebels were advancing towards the regional capital Mbandaka. *BEMBA refused to say whether the RCD rebel forces captured Bumba on their own or with the support of the MLC.*

SASS reported on 17 November that BEMBA had formed a new rebel group, the MLC, which will operate mainly in the DRC's Equateur province. See Update 98/053 dated 17 November.

(Reuters 19/11/98)

- ◆ KABILA's government said it would stay away from peace talks in Botswana on 20 November, Pierre-Victor MPOYO, Minister of State at the presidency, told *Reuters* on the eve of the two-day meeting which the RCD rebel alliance will attend. The Congolese government would instead attend a ministerial meeting planned for 6 December in Lusaka. Earlier, MPOYO told a news conference that President Nelson MANDELA had called the Gaborone talks without consulting the DRC in advance.

(Reuters 19/11/98)