

# Spanning the Globe

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## Change of Plans

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The [Democratic Republic of the Congo](#) has a long, complex and tumultuous history. Beginning in the 1870's, King Leopold II began an exploration into this mineral rich region and slowly began a process to acquire the rights to this country. His reign can only be described as brutal in his attempt to exploit many of the country's vast riches. Once his violent methods came to light, Belgium elected to colonize the country allowing them to continue to utilize the Congo's resources. Eventually, the Congolese people won their independence on 30 June 1960. Unfortunately, the newly independent country began its leadership struggles between the elected president and the first Prime Minister, who was eventually thrown out of office by Joseph Mobutu, chief of the new army.



Mobutu began paying the new army out of his own pocket, whom he later used to overthrow the government, declaring himself leader of the newly named country of Zaire. His years in office were cut off when a coalition of Rwandan and Ugandan armies came in to overthrow him resulting in the First Congo War. In 1997, Mobutu fled when Joseph Kabila and his army marched into Kinshasa, declaring himself the president. In 2001, Joseph Kabila was assassinated and his son (also named Joseph) succeeded him in office. UN peacekeepers worked with Kabila to help the country to settle. By June of 2003 a transitional government was set up and a constitution was approved by its voters. In July 2006, the DRC held its first multi-party elections in which Kabila won. After serving (more than) two five year terms, according to the Congolese constitution, the president is to step down and a new leader will be elected. Recently, a census has been proposed to take place before the next election (a process which could take several years). Due to this, some in the population have expressed their concerns in less than desirable ways.

What does this have to do with our plans? Parliament is set to meet tomorrow morning at 9 AM (3 AM EST) to approve or deny the proposed census. After much consulting with our program manager, it has been decided it would be to our best interest to delay our return to Congo until the results of the decision are known. That being said, we currently have plane tickets for this Tuesday on reserve for us. We will know more when Parliament votes and hope to return without further delay.

In the meantime, feel free to brush up on your Congolese history with "King Leopold's Ghost" by Adam Hochschild, which is the source for much of my above information. If you would like to skip the history lesson and go straight to the news, many news sources are available about the current situation: **BBC News, The Wall Street Journal, The Dailymail, France 24 News, Yahoo! News**, etc.

Please join us in prayer for the country and its leaders to make a decision on behalf of its people.

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