

Where in the World is . . .
Democratic Republic of Congo (9Q)
CQ Zone 36 ITU Zone 52

Never has one country had so many names! The **Democratic Republic of the Congo** also known as **DR Congo**, the **DRC**, **DROC**, **Congo-Kinshasa**, or simply the **Congo** and before that it was the **Belgian Congo** and still earlier it was the **Congo Free State**. Can you say that all in one breath?



Where is it? In Central Africa. Right next to the Republic of the Congo. It is a country located in Central Africa. It was formerly called Zaire (1971–1997). It is, by area, the largest country in sub-Saharan Africa. With a population of over 84 million, the DRC is the most populous officially Francophone country, the fourth-most-populous country in Africa. The Eastern DR Congo has been the scene of ongoing military conflict since 2015. So not a good place for a DXpedition or a vacation.



In the 1870s, an exploration of the Congo Basin was carried out, first led by Henry Morton Stanley (as in Stanley meets Dr. Livingston, I presume) under the sponsorship of King Leopold II of Belgium. Leopold formally acquired rights to the Congo territory and made the land his private property, naming it the Congo Free State. It's good to be king, right?

During the Free State, his colonial military unit, forced the



local population to produce rubber. Millions of the Congo people died because of disease and exploitation. In 1908, Belgium, formally annexed the Free State, which became known as the Belgian Congo.

The Belgian Congo achieved independence on June 30, 1960, with more name changes and an ongoing cast of notoriously corrupt people like Patrice Lumumba, Joseph Kasa-Vubu, Moïse Tshombe, Joseph-Désiré Mobutu, who later renamed himself Mobutu Sese Seko, officially came into power through a coup d'état. In 1971, he renamed the country Zaire. The country was run as a dictatorial one-party state.

After two civil wars, led to the deaths of 5.4 million people, the two wars devastated the country. President Laurent-Désiré Kabila was assassinated by one of his bodyguards in January 2001 and was succeeded eight days later as President by his son Joseph.



What makes this country such a prize to fight over? The DRC is extremely rich in natural resources but has political instability, a lack of infrastructure, issues with corruption and centuries of both commercial exploitation with little development. Congo's largest export is raw minerals, with China accepting over 50% of DRC's exports in 2016. In 2016,

DR Congo's level of human development was ranked 176th out of 187 countries by the Human Development Index. So, no McDonald's by the roadside.

As of 2018, around 600,000 Congolese have fled to neighboring countries from conflicts in the center and east of the DRC. Two million children risk starvation, and the fighting has displaced 4.5 million people.

As a result of its equatorial location, the DRC experiences high precipitation and has the highest frequency of thunderstorms in the world. The annual rainfall can total upwards of 80 in in some places, and the area sustains the [Congo Rainforest](#), the second-largest rain forest in the world after the [Amazon](#). This massive expanse of lush jungle covers most of the vast, low-lying central basin of the river, which slopes toward the Atlantic Ocean in the west

There is a very sizable Christian population, the largest proportion of which is Roman Catholic. Other Christians include Protestants and followers of the local sect of the Church of Jesus Christ on Earth. Their prophet, Simon Kimbangu, was reputed to heal the sick and raise the dead. Thousands came to hear his preaching. He was called Ngunza, the word for "prophet" in the Baptist translation of the Bible. Although Kimbangu's preaching had no overtly political content, Belgian



Figure 1 Simon Kibangu

authorities, alarmed by the disturbances that he provoked, arrested him and his immediate

followers in September 1921. He was condemned to death, but his sentence was commuted; he spent the rest of his life in prison.



Figure 2 Kinshasa Pop. 11 million

More than 200 languages are spoken in Congo. There are four "national" languages: Swahili, Tshiluba, Lingala, and Kongo. French is the official language and the language of instruction, business, administration, and international communications. The national languages are used in regional

commerce and on the radio.

The Democratic Republic of Congo is number 173 on the Club Log Most Wanted list. Have fun in the Jungle. There are 76 listings in QRZ.com for the 9Q prefix but many are for foreigners. Currently Italian Ham Paolo Pristipino, 9Q1C is on the air from Kinshasa, the capital.

Reporting from the Dark Side, Ron, K5HM