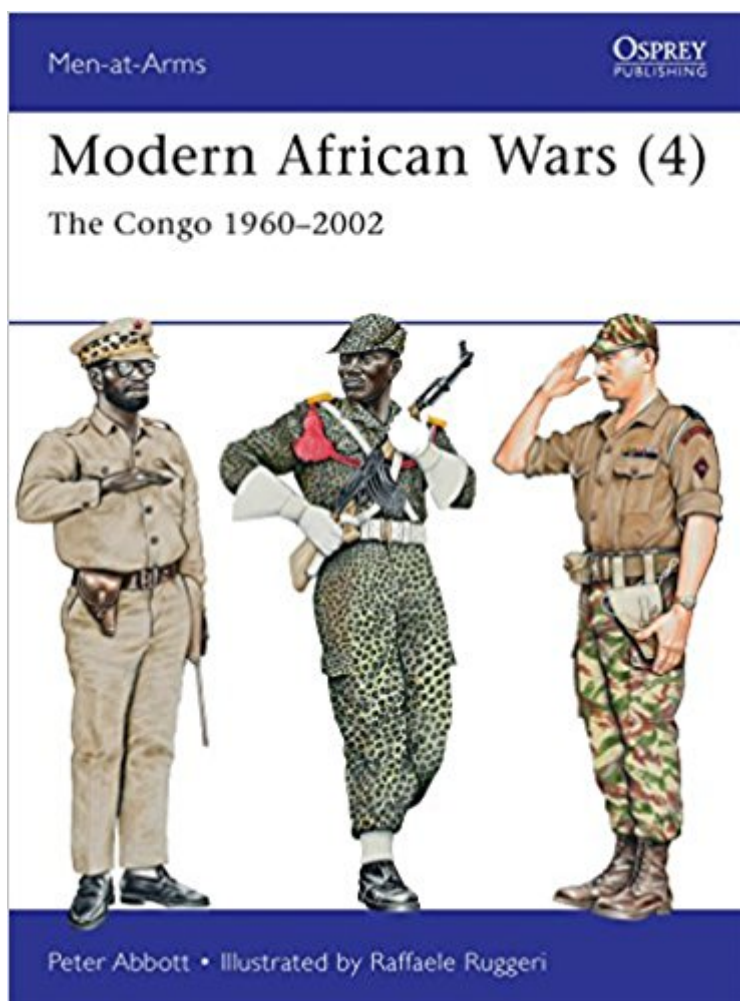


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# Modern African Wars (4): The Congo 1960–2002 (Men-at-Arms)



## Synopsis

From Belgian and French paratroops to Che Guevara and CIA funded Cuban B-26 pilots, the Congo has been a hotbed of African conflict in the late 20th century. When the colonial powers began retreating from Africa in the 1950s and 1960s, the Belgian Congo/Zaire became the bloodiest, most chaotic example of 'how not to do it', and has remained so ever since. A vast region with huge mineral wealth, abandoned in 1960 with virtually no infrastructure or functioning government, it was immediately torn by civil wars. Many whites remained in-country, both as missionaries and to exploit the mines, and Belgian military advisors were caught up in the chaotic conflict that threatened them. White mercenary troops were hired, and in the 1960s these became famous world-wide for some dramatic rescue missions. Manipulated by mining interests, the rich province of Katanga/Shaba seceded from the Republic; Swedish, Irish and 14 other UN contingents had to intervene, and the UN Secretary General was killed there under suspicious circumstances. In the late 1960s even Che Guevara tried to stick his nose in, so the CIA got involved, providing T-28s and B-26s with mercenary Cuban exile pilots. In the 1970s, during the ruinous 30-year dictatorship of General Mobutu, periodic rebellions required the hasty insertion once again of Belgian and French paratroops to save European lives. From the mid-1990s the country split again, becoming the battleground for the largest African war in history, as armies and rebel groups from Rwanda, Angola, Zimbabwe, Uganda, Namibia and other countries crossed into the Congo to support one side or the other, or simply to loot the rich resources. Major operations ended - or paused - in 2002, but the old hatreds and constant lure of the Congo's natural resources continue to boil over into periodic outbreaks. Featuring specially commissioned full-color artwork and rare photographs, this is the harrowing story of the wars that ravaged Congo for four decades.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

• The historical context is chaotic and complex, but some interesting military units and uniforms are covered...The author concisely recounts the convoluted history of four decades of fighting that have wreaked havoc in the Congo. • Toy Soldier and Model Figure

Peter Abbott is a retired university lecturer. He has written or co-authored a number of Men-at-Arms titles for Osprey, including Men-at-Arms 379: Armies in East Africa 1914-18. He is particularly interested in 19th and 20th century armies that are less well known to the English-speaking reader. The author lives in Stockport, UK.

This book was a complete disappointment. While it covers the subject with necessary broad brushstrokes to encompass the period from 1960-2002, it does not meet the high standards set by the other volumes in the series (#1 Rhodesia 1965-80; #2 Angola & Mocambique 1961-74; and #3 South-West Africa) even though this volume was edited by the incomparable Martin Windrow (known for his amazingly presented volumes of the French Colonial Wars in the Osprey Man-at-Arms and Elite series, among others.)The book is full of statements like, "The FAZ's weakness did not stop Mobutu from trying to act as the 'Gendarme of Central Africa'. Troops were deployed in Bokassa's Central African Empire in early 1979, in Tchad in 1981-82 and again in 1983, while some joined a French intervention force in Togo in 1986 after a mercenary attack there." (p. 23) Wait,... what? When other Osprey books make statements that are not general know or from limited sources, they provide reference sources. Where did this information about Zairean Army interventions come from?The best of the Osprey books that I have had the pleasure of reading gave example narratives of encounters/contacts with the enemy that the troops experienced in the covered conflicts as a way of putting the reader in the boots of the soldiers on the ground. This volume has none of that. While this is probably a result of the fact that this volume covers 2-3 times the number of years covered by the other volumes in the Modern African Wars series, it creates a volume that feels incomplete. It probably would have been better to break this into two separate volumes (1960-79 and 1980-2002.)Lastly, unlike the earlier volumes in the series (and most of the earlier Osprey books), there is no final page in the book with the plate descriptions in French and German. While this is not unique to this 2014 volume (many of the newer reprints have eliminated

this page as well), I always enjoyed having this page as it has allowed me to practice my skills in these languages (and helped when I have had to go to original sources in those languages.)

Peter Abbot has done very well with the latest Osprey Booklet he give the reader in broad strokes the war that have gone in the Congo/Zaire since 1960. I have the other three books in the series which start with the Rhodesian Bush War. It is an excellent addition.

Very well done capsule account of a very complicated era.

I gave it a 4 star because it was very good for what it is, a good survey of the situation in the Congo at that time.

Another good book by Osprey, Reader will like the colored pictures and brief history of this complicated war. Gives the reader a basic overview of the conflict. What I liked the most was the colored pictures of the Congo army during the many stages of war.

As a pre teenager I remember when the Congo broke up and this will be a great addition to my osprey series collection.

Excellent

thank you

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