



KRB Update #2189 – Congo Overview

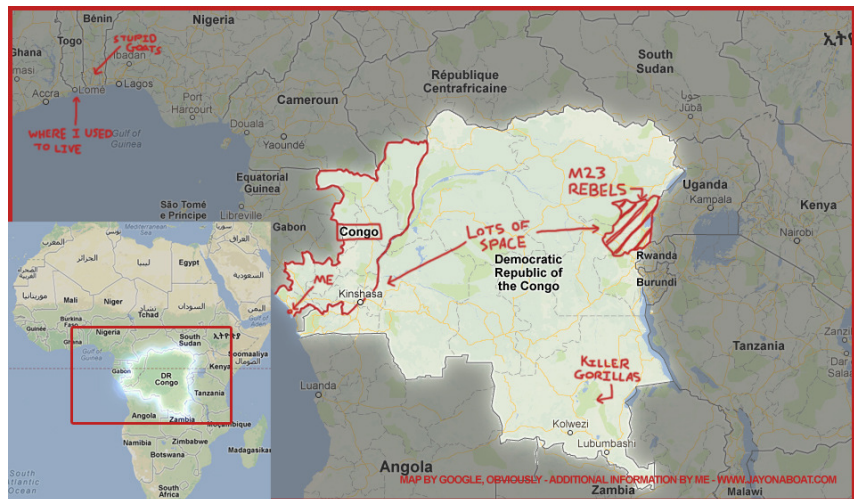
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Greetings from the *Africa Mercy* as we finish up our season in the shipyard in Gran Canaria - completing various projects including: replacing the flooring in the hospital on the ward side, converting the recovery room into a ward, creating a recovery room nearer to the operating rooms, refrigeration and galley projects and many others on the long list. I worked on and completed the Guinea final project reports, summary reports, statistics, etc. and then took a short break. I continue to support our large team in Congo already – those with the Advance Team and Off Ship Projects.

I want to take this opportunity and share a bit more about Congo as we move into a new country and new region for Mercy Ships. Back in 2012, I accompanied our managing director to Cotonou, Benin to meet with the president of the Republic of Congo as he was there for other meetings. It has been a long process, but so thankful for this open door and opportunity for us – exciting to be a part of it.

When you hear ‘Congo’, many think of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), which is a large country in central Africa. It is at the bottom of the United Nations Human Development Index and very needy, though regrettably their ports are not able to take a ship our size for a field service. The nation we set sail for this month is the Republic of Congo – on the northern side of the Congo River. Their port, Pointe-Noire on the western side of Africa is capable to take a ship like the *Africa Mercy* for ten months. The Republic of Congo has many needy people who need our direct medical services and also healthcare professionals who we can mentor and can benefit from our courses – as together we bring hope and healing.



The population is less than 4 million with their capital in Brazzaville and the port in the second city, Pointe-Noire. The country ranks as number 142 on the Human Development Index (out of 187 countries) with life expectancy at birth 57 years. Unlike Guinea which was over 85% Muslim, Congo is over 50% Roman Catholic, 40% Protestant and less than 2% Muslim.

Map from one of my fellow crew members who does amazing graphic work.

As we have done in previous countries, we will conduct extensive surgical screenings throughout the country in cooperation with local non-government organizations, missionaries, churches and the government of the Republic of Congo. This is a French speaking nation and unlike in Guinea where I found many of my patients didn't speak French, they say the majority of people in Congo do, so I think I need to start my study of French again. As I write future KRB Updates, I will include more information about the country and on our activities planned for August 2013 – June 2014.

Please pray *Our team already in-country work on all the finalizations of a multitude of details, hiring over 200 day crew (local workers), arranging for the surgical screenings, dental clinic site, HOPE Center site, eye site and everything with the port. *Finishing up everything in shipyard. *Safety on our long sail to Congo.

Serving Together, **Keith**

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Mercy Ships Mission Statement: Mercy Ships follows the 2000-year-old model of Jesus, bringing hope and healing to the world's forgotten poor.

Mercy Ships Vision Statement: Mercy Ships uses hospital ships to transform individuals and serve nations, one at a time.