

Life in the Foreign Service

Kinshasa diary: countdown to evacuation

26 more days in a riot-torn African capital

BY ALAN ROECKS

The post computer chief has returned to the United States with more entries in his journal (STATE, December).

Saturday, September 28

A SAD DAY as the last group of Americans departs post—nonessential embassy employees and their families, dependents of essential employees, missionaries and other American citizens. There are tearful goodbyes. Because the airport in Kinshasa is closed, having been vandalized earlier in the week, those departing must take a ferry across the Zaire River to Brazzaville, the capital of Congo.

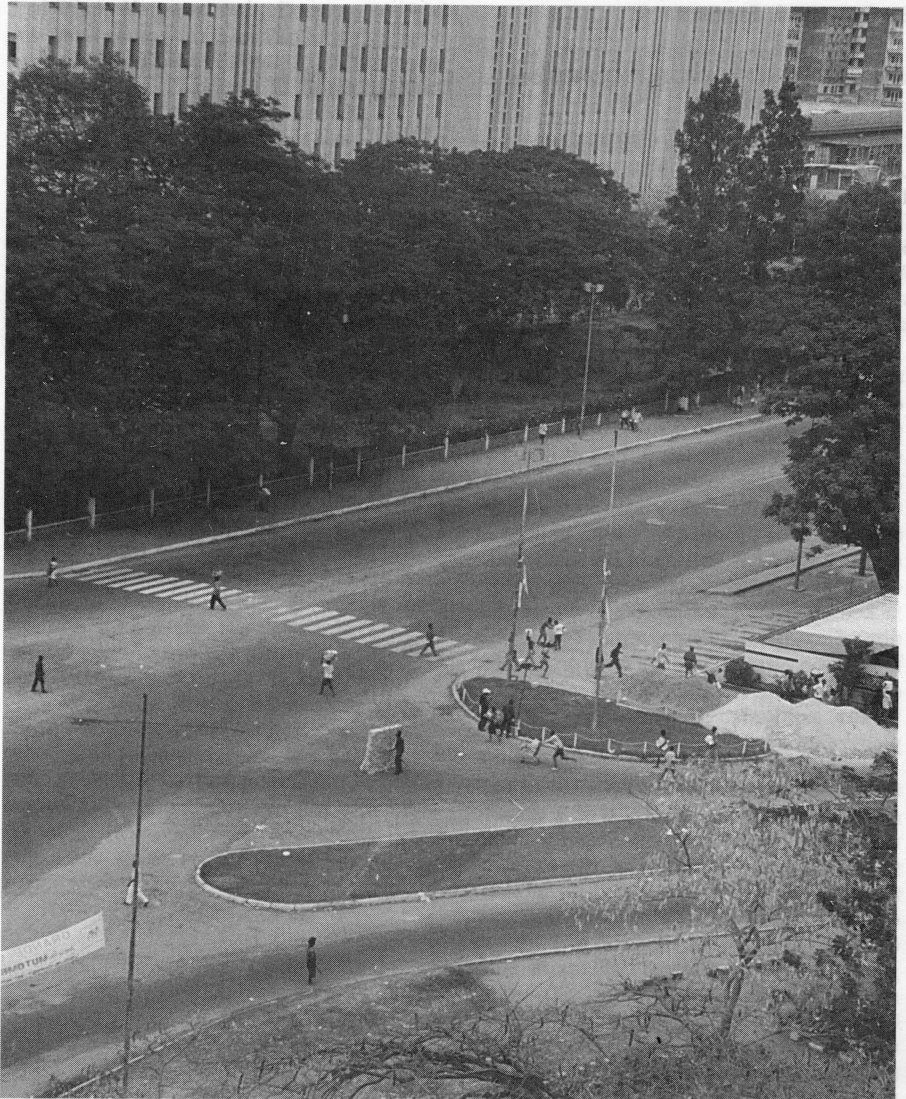
I take my wife, Jane, an elementary teacher at the American School of Kinshasa, to the administrative building. She is in one of the first groups to depart via bus to the beach. Getting 300 people across the river for the scheduled 7:30 p.m. departure will require a lot of cooperation both here and across the river.

Steve Kapner, the school superintendent, is advised not to stay overnight at his compound. About eight miles from the embassy, on a hill overlooking the city and river, its 50 buildings are too isolated for the embassy to provide security support. Mr. Kapner, his wife, Barbara, and maintenance supervisor Joe Felkel leave reluctantly, taking up temporary residence in a recently vacated home downtown.

I spend a sweaty afternoon moving computer hardware from the school's new computer laboratory to safer quarters, near the embassy. It has taken the school nearly two years and \$100,000 to assemble all the right pieces and get the laboratory operational. In Africa, a missing or broken part can mean a wait of months until the correct part is mailed or, if you are lucky, hand-carried by someone returning from Europe.

Bill Steuer, embassy communications officer, somehow has identified one of the few bakeries still in operation, and several hundred-foot-long baguettes are purchased to be distributed to the families of local embassy employees tomorrow.

The regional medical officer, Dr. Cedric Dumont, is helping organize evacuation of pets, dedicating much of his free time, as the Government, under law, cannot fund the undertaking. We are calling the operation "Noah's Ark" (we don't have the variety they had in biblical times, however). The animals will be transported across the



Looting begins downtown. (Photo by Christine Harrington)

river on a specially chartered ferry.

Sunday, September 29

I find out this morning that the departure of yesterday's evacuees, numbering about 400, was delayed six hours, and that the plane left at 1:30 a.m. The plane developed engine problems just before arriving in Brazzaville and, finally, had to wait for the last of the Peace Corps volunteers to arrive from the interior of Zaire. Embassy personnel in Brazzaville tried to

make things bearable, providing food, drinks, a tent and lavatories.

According to the evacuation orders, three of us—Tootsie Sterenberg in person, Robert Hurlbert in shipping and I in the computer center—are to remain at post four to six weeks, to prepare our sections so that we can be evacuated. I will need to train those remaining at post, including my own staff, on the operation of computer systems. Since only 41 persons can be in Kinshasa at any one time (apparently this is the number that can fit on helicopters or boats in case of emergency evacuation), another group of embassy personnel is staying in Brazzaville.

The plan is that they can come to Kinshasa during the day and/or exchange places with those staying in Zaire.

Monday, September 30

I am training my staff on the basic operation of the large Wang computer, and I work with them on getting it up and running. Because of power problems, we cannot keep the computer running continuously. Foreign Service National Jeanne Meta arrives at 6:30, and we practice bringing the system up.

Economic conditions continue to deteriorate. Few stores are open and prices are high. A loaf of bread goes for just under \$2, and people fight to get it. Ten kilos of rice (22 pounds) costs \$49, up from \$28 in July. Bakeries are not open, so you buy from the few street vendors who "bake their own." People mill about the street. Schools have not started their fall term and the university has been closed since March. Hundreds of thousands of Zairians have lost their jobs, but reality hasn't yet set in. As in most developing countries, this is a society that lives one day at a time.

Tuesday, October 1

The Japanese were putting in an underground telephone system in the downtown area (Gombe), but they left the country before they could finish. Had they completed this much-needed project, Gombe would have become the only area of the city with reliable phone connections. Existing lines either run above the ground or, if below ground, are buried only a few inches deep so they can be easily pulled, cut or eaten by insects or animals. Whenever the city has a heavy rain, it's a given that phone lines won't work for several days.

The mass evacuation went well. One reason was the well-orchestrated effort by Mike Gutensohn's administrative section. Another is that we had no problems at the Zairian portion of the beach. Why? The French had control of it. For the past two days, the beach has again been in the hands of the Zairians. The bribes, inefficiency and beatings have started again. Future evacuations will have to find a way to work around this bottleneck.

Wednesday, October 2

The banks finally open today, after being closed for nine days. Ever try to do business in a country when no banks were open?

Cercle Elaeis, a recreational club, formally reopens today. It has a large swimming pool and tennis courts but hardly anyone to use them. This is a good news for

'10 kilos of rice costs \$49, up from \$28 in July'

me, as I regularly swim during noon, bringing a lunch from home. A few days ago, about 20 newly-arrived Belgian troops began using the facility. Their standards of modesty are more liberal than ours in the States, and they change into their swimming trunks on the pool deck. When finished swimming, they took pictures of themselves in the briefest of swimming suits, with red and green beret army hats and holding machine guns. We can be assured that our area of town will be well-guarded and the pool kept in top shape.



Zairian soldiers with stolen goods. (Photo by Christine Harrington)

Thursday, October 3

Noah's Ark leaves today with 61 cats, dogs and chimpanzees. The animals are transported in the morning to a barge which carries them across the Zaire River. Then they board commercial aircraft to join their owners in the United States. Seeing the animals leave is a real morale-builder. The organizers, transportation officer Mike Small and regional medical officer Dumont, deserve kudos. I now have eight less cats

and one less dog to care for; I still have a gray African parrot in my care. It has a black beak, rose-colored tail and an expected life span of about 70 years.

The requirement of lengthy quarantine makes it difficult to transport pet birds back to the States. Since the bird I'm caring for, named Bandu, hasn't had its wings clipped, I take it to the third-story balcony window, put it in the palm of my hand and let it fly away. I hope it hasn't become too domesticated. If it's too tame, I will see it in a cage, for sale by a street vendor.

Whenever you feel you have it bad, you can always find someone worse off. The Yugoslavian ambassador, a fellow tennis player at Cercle Elaeis, comes from the breakaway republic of Croatia. He, his wife and staff of eight have nowhere to go. They cannot return to Yugoslavia due to the war. He will wait until October 7, at which time he will see if Croatia is independent.

Friday, October 4

It has been 12 days since the riots began. We are cut off from the outside world. We receive no mail (our Army post office is closed). Newspapers and magazines aren't arriving, as the airport hasn't reopened and telephones aren't reliable, though we do receive a few telephone calls transferred from Brazzaville. Our best information sources are people coming from Europe and the States, generally military people. A limited source of information is the embassy radio network. Everyone has a radio and call sign. People keep the radios on just to "keep in touch." Twelve to sixteen hours of hearing people talking to each other (married couples are the worst), and the loud buzzing call signs wears on one's nerves quickly. Not having family present makes the time pass even more slowly.

What is there to do? You can sleep, party, read, write (hence, this journal), play sports during the day (if you have time), listen to music and visit with friends (evening curfew prevents socializing outside your compound).

The security office gives all employees a briefing on contingency plans for evacuation. The demonstration of the operation of gas masks is especially sobering.

Security arrangements for American homes are so good that looters hide booty on our property, convinced the goods will be protected. Gendarmes watching the homes apparently have been bribed to allow the stolen goods to be placed on the premises during the night. Materials stolen from the local Renault dealer are discovered in a vacant but guarded American residence.

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They include a freezer, stereo, television, couch, stove and computer equipment. The security officer returns the items.

Sunday, October 6

Ambassador Melissa Wells has directed that all embassy personnel be "consolidated" in residences near to the embassy and the likely evacuation point at the river. My second home, the Sozocom building, is just a block away from the embassy; my new roommate is Bob Lane, administrative officer, and my room, complete with teddy bears and toys, was previously occupied by Bob's infant son, Ricky. Bob is a gracious host, but you quickly see that he misses his wife and son.

Monday, October 7

Ambassador Wells has spent the night at Sozocom instead of her residence about three miles from the embassy. Things must be serious.

Each morning, she must report which 41 Americans are at post. Deciding just who these 41 will be is becoming a sensitive subject. Those in Brazzaville want to come to Zaire to work in their office and those here don't want to leave. Living conditions are better in Brazzaville, but it's more difficult to get work done when the things you need are in Zaire.

Tuesday, October 8

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control, actively studying Aids, has collected data and had planned to analyze the data on new personal computers. An order for \$140,000 worth of computer equipment has somehow arrived at post unharmed, and I have my staff put it in a safe place. State-of-the-art equipment like this is worth considerably more in a developing country like Zaire and could easily be sold for half a million dollars.

At 8:30 this morning, my computer maintenance technician, Belgian Pierre Catoul, arrives at my office, breathless. He proclaims that Zaire is not fit to live in, and advises me to leave the country at first chance. He has just finished visiting his best friend in the local Belgian hospital, who is in critical condition from gunshot wounds. Yesterday the police stopped his friend (likely to demand a bribe), who foolishly pulled a gun and ended up taking three shots in his leg and stomach. Pierre and his Belgian friend live in the same block in a part of the city hit hard by the riots. To protect themselves, they have talked the Belgian troops out of guns and grenades, and have concealed them in their vehicles

'To protect themselves, they have talked the Belgian troops out of guns and grenades'

and stockpiled them in their homes.

Problems are predicted for the city tonight. Locals have guns, and we try to avoid the streets at night. Americans are required to be in residence by 8 p.m.

Thursday, October 10

Political conditions continue to deteriorate. A new prime minister is designated, but he and President Mobutu can't work

Boat traffic between the cities is brisk, carrying primarily diplomats, and the Zairian government has stopped granting general visas. Brazzaville is running short of food, people are getting sick due to unsanitary conditions and security incidents are on the rise.

The Yugoslavian ambassador has left today, resigning his position. He plans to return to his Croatia to help with its fight for independence.

Consolidated housing in unsettling. Waiting until 4 p.m. for the now-familiar radio call, "Attention, American com-



French paratroopers near the beach. (Photo by Leonard Dees)

together. People are getting restless—there is really no government in place—and there is talk of renewed demonstrations. To appease the government and military, Mr. Mobutu has promised them a 12-fold—yes, a 1,200% increase—in base salary. Nobody knows where this money will come from.

For the first time in many years, the official exchange rate (one dollar = 21,600 Zaires) is higher than the unofficial or black market rate (one dollar = 21,200). This is because there is insufficient money in circulation to meet the demand. The price of food is about double what it was before the demonstrations. Seventy percent of the bakeries are destroyed, and those producing are limited due to the scarcity of yeast. About half of the restaurants in the downtown area have reopened, but the owners foresee severe food shortages next week if the airport does not open.

Brazzaville, whose population of 800,000 is minuscule compared to Kinshasa's 4.5 million, is beginning to show the strain of an additional 20,000 Zairian refugees, many arriving illegally.

munity," to find out where you will be spending the night, and at what time curfew starts, compounds already uncertain conditions. Having to have your bags always packed for departure—one suitcase for a "planned" and a small bag for "emergency"—is distressing enough. Some people have lived in four different residences during the last two weeks. Others, including myself, wake up at night and don't know where they are.

Today we celebrate Foreign Service national Nyonga Mubikayi's 27th birthday. I am definitely not a cook—my wife has the expertise in that area—but I decided last night to bake him a cake anyway. Apparently the pan wasn't floured enough, so the bottom came off. My staff, however, is hungry; they eat it all.

Nyonga, with the embassy eight months, is just over six feet tall, but like a football center linebacker, with movie star good looks. He is single, waiting until he has saved money to be married. Nyonga's goal is to complete a graduate degree in the United States. He has spend six years studying at the local university, getting two degrees, in English, in computers. He had

had no place to work with computers, and he came to my office six months ago and volunteered to work for free. I admired his initiative and honesty, and worked with our personnel office to put him into a special training program. As it turned out, his only experience working with computers was with a wooden keyboard. He spends his free time working with the computers in the office and takes home computer software manuals to study. I am working with two American schools in Spokane, Wash.—Whitworth College and Gonzaga University—to see if we can provide hard-working, motivated individuals like Nyonga an opportunity to study in the United States.

Friday, October 11

I spent last night in the ambassador's office. The embassy needs to have 24-hour coverage in case of emergency, and we alternate the duty. The couch was quite comfortable; there were no major problems. A caller at 6 a.m. states that American homes in an outlying area, Binza, may be hit this weekend.

Nyonga comes in and thanks me again for the cake. It was the only present he received. Times are tough here, and his sis-

'The importance we place on human life is difficult for our friends to understand'

sorted in Europe, rerouted to Brazzaville, brought across the river in big bags and sorted individually. It's great to get the mail, but I don't know how I will get mail back to the States to pay bills. The best way is to find someone going to the United States who will carry mail.

One of the happiest to see mail arrive is the chief local postal employee, Tony, who has been with the embassy for over 20 years. Tony, who walks with a pronounced limp, is a cheerful, capable Zairian in his early 50s. Being one of the more prosperous Zairians, he has two wives and 12 children, including an infant son. He, like many other locals, may be laid off in the next few weeks. For Tony, the severity of the situation is beginning to sink in. We, as Americans, are powerless to help out. If he is laid off, the Americans who worked closely with him likely will help him out until he can get some sort of aid. Finding another job, however, will be nearly impossible.

I am called in to fix the computers in

computer technology and have trouble mastering the less than user-friendly system. After several hours, the system is up and running, and the security office is able to resume work.

Monday, October 14

The immediate task for the administrative section is to pack a small amount of air freight for each family which, we hope, will reach them in the United States. This freight may represent the last things each family gets out of Zaire, if we can get it packed up in time. A family's weight allowance is based on its size. My wife and I, for example, get 450 pounds, which includes the weight of the packing crate. Larry Blackburn, general services officer, is arranging for a special plane to land in Zaire and transport the air freight back to the States—a real logistical headache given that the airport is closed to commercial flights.

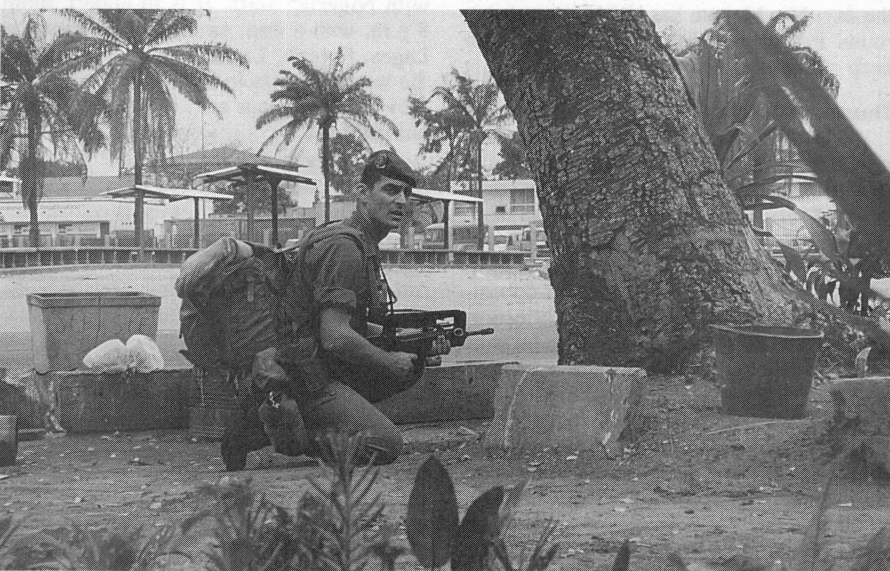
The administrative section is doing everything it can to get houses packed out as soon as possible. We have worked every day, including weekends and holidays, since the problems started on the 23rd of last month. Robert Hurlbert handles shipping for State, and Linda Gregory oversees it for A.I.D. Robert has two teams of four and Linda has one. All teams are overseen by an American employee. Theirs is a particularly difficult task because they have to select what items people would like to have packed. Choices are not easy without input from the occupants of the house: "Should the ornate wall-hanging, videocassettes or food processor be packed? Or should the children's winter clothes and coats or additional summer clothes be sent instead?"

My section, the computer center, also is busy. In addition to supporting the needs of the shipping effort, we must provide other sections the capability to do unclassified processing and show them how to use the equipment. A potential bottleneck is that information for each section is stored on a large minicomputer. Maintenance for this computer is contracted out. If the contractor leaves the country or is not able to receive parts (a real possibility, given the airport is closed) then processing cannot continue.

Wednesday, October 16

A new government is in place, led by the head of the opposition party. But knowing what is happening is nearly impossible. There are few reliable intelligence sources. This must be especially frustrating for the ambassador and deputy chief of mission.

The tremendous importance that we in the West place on human life is difficult for



French paratroopers in action. (Photo by Christine Harrington)

ter, with whom he lives, barely has enough to feed her family. His mother, whom he last saw six years ago, is a nurse in a remote part of the country.

Saturday, October 12

We receive mail today, for the first time in 22 days. Because our Army post office is closed, the mail has been specially

the security office tonight. Our Wang maintenance support technician, Pierre, is not required to work after hours, and this is the third time I have been called to the security office this week. Why so many problems? The computer is an old one (we quit using this same model in 1985, when I was with the Department of Defense), and we have a special forces security team of 6 to 10 persons stationed in the office 24 hours a day. They're used to the more modern personal

our African friends to understand. Many of them lost their parents years ago, and have suffered through several brothers and/or sisters dying while growing up. Today, a member of the special forces security team visits our offices and takes our pictures, using a camcorder. These are to help outsiders, for instance, members of a Navy Seals team, identify us.

The special forces team is a fascinating group. The 6 to 10 members, who include one woman, spend most of their time in the security office. One of their missions is to travel to troubled embassies to protect Americans still at station. Their work to date has been first-rate: their briefings are clear and have a common sense theme, which reflects that they have been through situations much worse than Zaire's.

Thursday, October 17

The prime minister will not sign that part of the oath swearing allegiance to the constitution. His reason reportedly is that this is a corrupt document that grants President Mobutu's friends a license to steal.

I learn this afternoon that a shipment of computer equipment, which arrived at the airport two days before the demonstrations began, has been destroyed. This is especially bad news, as the equipment was a bonus to post for dollars saved the State Department on computer maintenance costs. A.I.D. has taken big losses at its warehouses near the airport, apparently losing several million dollars worth of equipment. The only things not taken were condoms.

Saturday, October 19

Demonstrations scheduled for Monday have been canceled. President Mobutu somehow has come up with the billions of Zaires (local currency) needed to pay government workers. No one is sure where the money came from. He continues to amaze the West.

Sunday, October 20

This afternoon, Mr. Mobutu dismisses the prime minister's government, announcing his decision over national television and radio (which he controls).

Monday, October 21

Last night I was at the embassy as the duty officer. Ambassador Wells was quite concerned about the political situation and kept repeating: "Why can't they get a government?" She spent the night in her office.

Tuesday, October 22

Helga Muller, personnel assistant and long-time resident of Zaire, tells me this morning about a maintenance man for a

'He watched while they looted his home'

missionary group who has been robbed by those he had taken care of for 30 years. He watched while they looted his home, leaving him only the clothes he was wearing.

The American consulate in Lubumbashi, some 1,200 miles away, is closed as Belgian military troops pull out of the city. Early in the week, unpaid Zairian soldiers have rioted and broken into U.S.-owned buildings—one of the first instances of damage to American property. Money to pay the army was sent but ended up in some Zairian official's pocket before it reached the troops.

For the past two days, there have been minor demonstrations in Kinshasa as a result of the dismissal of the government. Demonstrators congregate at the Parliament but are dispersed by the military.

I nearly total my vehicle tonight when, returning to my permanent home next to the Zairian Parliament, my headlights spot something silver, about four feet high, blocking the entire road. I come to a screeching halt just a few feet from a cyclone-razed barbed-wire fence. Earlier in the day, Mr. Mobutu has had his troops surround Parliament with the barbed wire to keep out demonstrators.

Thursday, October 24

Mr. Mobutu appoints a new prime minister, a decision not popular with the people. Shops do not open, transportation is at a standstill and there are widespread demonstrations, some involving rock-throwing.

A few words about the new prime minister. Purportedly the member of an opposition political party, he holds the distinction of being the only Zairian official to be convicted of embezzlement in Zaire's 30-year history. While minister of education, he managed to sell textbooks, dispose of school buildings and not pay the teachers, with the profit going directly to himself or his colleagues. Predictably, the schools revolted and he took another post. He was later indicted for embezzlement, spent some time in jail and joined an opposition political party. He was appointed ambassador to China, but did not go due to insufficient funding.

Friday, October 25

Two-week notices terminating employment have gone out to certain Foreign Service nationals, some of whom have worked for the embassy for years. Estimates are that over half of them will lose their jobs over the next six months if the political situation

doesn't improve.

A cargo plane has been chartered to transport air freight already packed (about 80% has been packed). During the wait to get the contract finalized, Lloyds of London has raised the plane insurance another \$8,500. As the amount of money available from the government for this work has been fixed, the embassy will now get a smaller Boeing 707 instead of the larger 747. This may mean the plane will not have enough space to haul airfreight.

Saturday, October 26

Members of the administrative section are uneasy about the cargo plane scheduled to come in. Low bid in Central Africa generally means some sharp, often unexpected, corners will be cut. We just hope the plane arrives.

It finally arrives this afternoon, some seven hours late. The pilot tells us they were delayed because they weren't able to get fuel at the scheduled refueling site and had to go to another city. Special arrangements were made with the Zairian government for the plane to land (the airport is still closed to non-Zairian commercial flights). The plan is captained by a Belgian pilot with Nigerian staff. It is to depart about 8 p.m. with a stop, en route to Belgium, at Lagos, Nigeria. Lagos is considered one of the worst airports in the world, and we all pray our belongings are guarded well on the tarmac there.

This evening, at a "block" party at Sozocom consolidated housing, we learn whose air freight was sent and whose was not. Shipping chief Robert Hurlbert tells us the plane was too small, and 30% of the airfreight had to be left behind. He reads the names on the list, and we all eagerly wait to hear ours called. Three in the administrative section fail to have their names called: Tootsie Sterenberg (personnel), Larry Blackburn (general services) and I. We are told the embassy will try to rent a ferry to take the remaining baggage (including that yet to be packed) across the river in the next few days. It's not the best of news.

Sunday, October 27

I set up a computer for consular officer Wanda Nesbitt, installing a printer as well. We tentatively set tomorrow for training. Wanda represents the last section that I need to take care of. My assigned task is finished, and I hope to return to the States later in the week.

How much will operation Noah's Ark cost individual pet owners? Initial estimates are in, and they are high. A cat costs \$540 and large dog \$3,100. Dave Sarisky, budget

and finance officer, is working to get lower costs from the airline.

Monday, October 28

Because of increased security concerns, the embassy has to reduce from 41 to 35 positions by Wednesday. The embassy wants some of us who are scheduled to depart to wait in Brazzaville instead of going directly to the States. To me, as well as many at post, Brazzaville represents a type of purgatory; it is difficult to remain in waiting when you have worked continuously for so long. I point out that A.I.D. has a knowledgeable systems person remaining at Brazzaville. State agrees, and I am scheduled to depart tomorrow.

Packing of air freight is going well, and they project it will be completed by the end of the week. The shipping person will likely not leave post, as previously planned, but will begin next week packing out whatever remains for each household.

Tuesday, October 29

I leave Zaire, with my 1990 Toyota Four-Runner not sold and most of my family's possessions remaining in my home. I stand to lose tens of thousands of dollars but there is not a lot I can do. My only consolation is that there are hundreds of other Americans in the same situation. Perhaps the political situation will stabilize, and we will be able to get our possessions out of Zaire.

The real losers are the people of Zaire, most of whom have lost their jobs and haven't any possibilities of employment. Food is scarce; starvation looks imminent. President Mobutu is still in power. Zaire was one of the poorest countries in the world before the demonstrations. What will it be now? And what should the Western world do to help out?

Zanga and Nyonga go with me to the beach. I need them to tote eight large bags containing computer equipment that will eventually be shipped to the States via Brazzaville. I am glad I have them with me: the beach invariably presents a unique set of obstacles. The first surprise is the price I am quoted for the ferry. It has doubled, from 275,000 Zaires to 680,000 in just two hours. The Zairian government, seeing so many Westerners departing, decides to raise the price of the boat. I did not have the money in local currency, and I have Nyonga exchange some dollars for me as I haven't time to return to the embassy.

Next, Zairian custom officials bar us from the beach area. They want us to use Zairian beach workers instead of Zanga and Nyonga to transport our baggage to the

'The trunk falls into the water, and 2 handlers dive in to save it'

ferry. This is unacceptable, as the equipment needs to be handled carefully. And if the handlers know it is valuable, it may not get on the boat. After a hassle and a \$2 bribe, we get to the beach, in line for the boat, which is 50 minutes late.

Once the boat arrives, everyone crowds in; it turns into a free-for-all. Fortunately, Nyonga and Zanga are fairly big for Zairians, and I am no midget myself—we all weigh over 200 pounds. We form a wedge with Zanga and Nyonga and manage to get through with bags and all. Somehow, we end up with three other Zairians helping us, but we put them between us so they cannot escape with our bags.

Once on the boat, I think I am home free. I place the eight bags on my luggage at the front of the boat, where I can easily watch them. Down on the dock I see a tennis friend, Benedict, an agent for Swiss Air, which used to fly out of Kinshasa. I had talked with her while waiting in line, and she said she was going to Brazzaville to handle a Swiss Air flight scheduled to leave the next morning. She was returning to Switzerland, had several fairly large trunks and had hired four locals to carry them aboard for her. She gets up to the dock with one of her trunks, but the boat keeps edging away from the dock. Two of her baggage handlers are on the boat, pulling on the trunk, and two others are on the dock, pushing it. The trunk falls into the water, and two handlers dive in to save it. They swim with it to shore, about 30 yards away, only to be met by another local who had entered the water. The three of them get into a fight and the trunk starts floating down the river again. They finally get it back on shore, too late for her to make the trip to Brazzaville. As this was the last ferry, the Swiss Air

flight was delayed leaving Brazzaville, due to her absence.

The ferry pulls away several more times returning when people on the dock wave more money. It starts to rain. Passengers are getting wet, and begin yelling at the captain to get going. The ferry returns one last time, and I notice a man in a 1940s-style brown suit (the kind you saw in the movie "Casablanca," whom I take to be a missionary, with a young woman and infant, waving frantically. When the boat swings into the dock, I lift them over the boat's three-foot railing and help with their suitcases (we almost lost one in the water). They turn out to be a dentist, his daughter and granddaughter who are leaving Zaire after five years to return to Alexandria, Egypt. They thank me profusely, offering me money and a room at the Egyptian embassy in Brazzaville. I decline both, but thank them for the offer. I regret that they weren't missionaries, but hope God still holds a place in his heart for me.

At Brazzaville, about 20 minutes later, I have another unforgettable experience. Having so much baggage, I am one of the last to depart. While waiting for embassy Foreign Service nationals to arrive to help with the bags, I watch the Congolese police come on board, search for people hiding on the boat and beat any they discover with two-foot rubber hoses. A stowaway hides behind by bags, sprints away from the police and, when they are about to catch him, leaps into the water. They eventually apprehend him and three of his colleagues. I learn later that they were trying to smuggle diamonds and hand-soap into Congo.

Next, I have no doubt what to do. I go to the Brazzaville embassy, look up a friend, communicator Dennis Watson, and buy two T-Shirts with the logo "I survived the Brazzaville-Kinshasa ferry!" I surely had.

It is great to be heading home. ■



In these containers are animals from "Noah's Ark," on arrival at Dulles International Air-

port near Washington. The eyes you see are those of cats. (Photo by Ruth Dumont)