

TODAY'S MEDIA TRENDS

TELECONGO

FEBRUARY 16, 2026

THE GDELT PROJECT

THE REPUBLIC OF CONGO CONSOLIDATES REGIME NARRATIVE & SECURITY APPARATUS AHEAD OF MARCH 2026 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS

DAY-AT-A-GLANCE: COORDINATED STATE MOBILIZATION



ROAD TO MARCH 2026 ELECTION

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DAY-AT-A-GLANCE

The broadcasting day of February 16, 2026, is dominated by a highly coordinated state messaging campaign aimed at securing the re-election of President Denis Sassou Nguesso in the upcoming March 2026 presidential polls. The administration is aggressively leveraging domestic achievements—specifically the conclusion of the first Great Agricultural Fair of Congo (GFAC) and the progress of critical infrastructure projects—to present a narrative of emerging "food and digital sovereignty." This domestic focus is balanced by a surge in high-level diplomatic activity, including the Summit Italy-Africa and intensified military cooperation with the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), likely intended to project regional leadership and stabilize the sensitive border environment before the vote.

Simultaneously, the state is reinforcing its internal security and administrative capacity. This is evidenced by final military planning for

election security, the launch of a digitized tax recovery platform for local authorities, and an ongoing crackdown on urban gang violence ("Bébé Noirs"). However, beneath the triumphalist rhetoric of the "Bâtitseur Infatigable" (Infatigable Builder), signs of social distress emerge, including a disturbing trend of insecticide-related suicides among youth and unresolved tensions in the Pool department. The convergence of these events suggests an administration in full mobilization mode, attempting to harmonize elite politics, military readiness, and public sentiment to ensure a decisive first-round victory while navigating a constrained fiscal environment.

MAJOR DEVELOPMENTS

- **Presidential Campaign Launch and the "242 Reasons" Narrative:** State media has saturated the airwaves with a structured campaign promoting President Sassou Nguesso's candidacy for the March 2026 election. Central to this is the promotion of a brochure titled "242 Reasons to Support Denis Sassou Nguesso," scheduled for a major public presentation on February 21. The narrative emphasizes long-term stability and physical unification of the country through infrastructure ([Source](#), [Source](#), [Source](#)).
- **Conclusion of the 1st Great Agricultural Fair (GFAC):** The fair in Bombou Mingali closed with claims of major success in promoting local production and food sovereignty. Prime Minister Anatole Collinet Makoso announced a second edition for August 2026, framing agriculture as the "priority of priorities" to reduce the 600 billion CFA franc annual food import bill ([Source](#), [Source](#), [Source](#), [Source](#)).

- **Deepening Brazzaville-Kinshasa Military Cooperation:** DRC Vice-Prime Minister Guy Kabombo Muadiamvita conducted a three-day working visit to Brazzaville to institutionalize military consultations and intelligence sharing. Key focus areas include securing the 1,200 km fluvial border and naval cooperation on the Congo River ([Source](#), [Source](#)).
- **Final Election Planning for Public Forces:** The General Staff of the Congolese Armed Forces (FAC) concluded a final planning conference for the security of the March 12 (early military vote) and March 15 (general vote) elections. The military is being prepared to counter "protean and hybrid threats" and disinformation on social networks ([Source](#), [Source](#), [Source](#)).
- **Infrastructure and Digital Sovereignty Milestones:** The government reported that the National Data Center is 85% complete, with an inauguration expected before the March elections. Additionally, work on the "Corridor 13" road connecting Pokola to the Central African Republic and Chad is advancing, alongside Chinese-backed railway rehabilitation ([Source](#), [Source](#)).

KEY GOVERNANCE TOPICS

Geopolitics and International Relations

- The Congo is positioning itself as a strategic partner for Europe via the "Mattei Plan" for Africa, discussed during the Italy-Africa Summit in Addis Ababa ([Source](#), [Source](#)).
- As part of the C10 group, the administration is actively lobbying for two permanent African seats on the UN Security Council, framing it as a matter of "historic justice" ([Source](#), [Source](#)).

- Relations with the U.S. remain strained over visa restrictions, which Congolese officials characterize as based on "misunderstandings" regarding overstay statistics ([Source](#)).

Domestic Stability and Succession

- Political "concertation" in Djambala brought together over 300 delegates from the majority, opposition, and civil society to discuss electoral governance, though some opposition members dismissed the event as redundant ([Source](#), [Source](#)).
- The administration continues to manage the fragile peace in the Pool department following a "malicious" incident in Mindouli involving youth and security forces ([Source](#)).
- Heavy emphasis is placed on "youth" as a demographic to be mobilized, either through technical training (Aubeville center) or political inclusion ([Source](#), [Source](#)).

Economic Statecraft and Investment Climate

- The Fund for Impulse, Guarantee, and Support (FIGA) is distributing 200 million CFA francs in microcredits to artisans in the Bouenza department, part of a broader "inclusion" strategy ([Source](#)).
- Digitalization of local government revenue collection is being launched in Brazzaville and Pointe-Noire to prevent the "erosion of public resources" ([Source](#), [Source](#)).
- The government is pressuring international companies (e.g., TotalEP) to lodge 60% of their resources in Congolese banks to stabilize the domestic currency and facilitate international transactions ([Source](#)).

Public Safety and Social Order

- State media highlighted a "public health crisis" involving the use of the insecticide "Sniper" for suicides among youth suffering from "romantic depression" or social pressure ([Source](#), [Source](#)).
- Ongoing crackdown on the "Bébé Noirs" gangs and unregulated taxi-motos following the murder of a student driver ([Source](#), [Source](#)).

Legislation

- **National Strategic Plan for the Fight Against Cancer (2022-2026):** A 5-year plan aimed at reducing mortality and establishing domestic radiotherapy centers ([Source](#)).
- **Finance Law 2026:** Recent awareness campaigns focus on tax compliance and the digitized recovery of local taxes ([Source](#), [Source](#)).
- **Law Mbara:** Legislation mentioned as a key achievement in protecting the legal and social rights of women and girls ([Source](#)).
- **Draft Law on the Repression of Illicit Acts at Sea:** Currently under discussion to provide a legal framework for prosecuting maritime piracy ([Source](#)).

LEGISLATION/POLICY

The current policy landscape is dominated by the implementation of the 2022-2026 National Development Plan (PND) and the 2026 Finance Law. Specific focus is on formalizing the healthcare sector through the National Strategic Plan against Cancer and tightening the regulatory framework for maritime security and resource management.

BILLS DISCUSSED/DEBATED:

- **Draft Law on Maritime Repression:** Aims to align Congolese law with international standards to allow for the domestic prosecution of pirates captured in Congolese waters ([Source](#)).
- **Internal Navigation Code (CEMAC RDC):** Officials called for the "careening" (overhaul) of the 1999 code to reflect the evolving maritime and fluvial environment ([Source](#)).
- **Local Revenue Digitization Software Validation:** Experts validated a platform to dematerialize local government receipts, aimed at increasing transparency and performance ([Source](#), [Source](#)).

HEARINGS & PRESS EVENTS:

- **FAC Planning Conference:** General Staff finalizing security protocols for the upcoming presidential vote ([Source](#), [Source](#)).
- **FIGA Microcredit Tour:** Minister Jacqueline Lydia Mikolo presiding over the disbursement of funds to SMEs in Madingou ([Source](#)).
- **Syndicate of Traders Meeting:** Sensitization on the fiscal provisions of the 2026 Finance Law ([Source](#)).

DEEP DIVE: TRENDS AND THEMES

The Architecture of "Sovereignty" as an Election Platform

A prominent theme is the pivot from general development talk to specific "sovereignty" targets. The closure of the GFAC fair ([Source](#)) and the progress report on the National Data Center ([Source](#)) are not treated as mere infra-

structure wins, but as existential requirements for a "free state." By framing the 600 billion CFA franc food import bill as a loss of national wealth, the administration justifies its focus on "Protected Agricultural Zones" (ZAP). Similarly, the Data Center is described as essential for "sovereignty over data," implying that an independent state cannot exist without hosting its own electronic communications. This nationalist framing serves to neutralize criticisms of the President's long tenure by presenting him as the only architect capable of finalizing this "total independence." ([Source](#), [Source](#), [Source](#)).

Cross-Border Military Normalization with Kinshasa

The visit of the DRC's Defense Minister to Brazzaville ([Source](#)) signals a tactical shift in regional security. Historically, relations between the two capitals have been marked by suspicion. However, the transcripts reveal a push for "institutionalized consultations" and intelligence sharing. This is likely driven by Brazzaville's need to ensure the Congo River border does not become a conduit for instability during its own election period, and Kinshasa's need for a supportive "hinterland" as it struggles with conflict in its eastern provinces. The focus on naval cooperation suggests a joint effort to police the 1,200 km of shared water, which is often used by gang elements or political dissidents ([Source](#), [Source](#)).

Technocratic Professionalization vs. Gang Culture

There is a visible effort to professionalize the youth through technical education (mines, logistics, maritime sciences) and the "Colissa" microcredit scheme ([Source](#), [Source](#)). This is the "carrot" meant to offset the "stick" of the "Zero Béb  Noir" operation ([Source](#)). The state is attempting to replace gang culture

with an "entrepreneurial" identity. However, the report on "Sniper" insecticide suicides ([Source](#)) highlights a profound psychological strain on the youth that technical training alone may not solve. The transition of "Sniper" from a household disinfectant to a "silent killer" of youth indicates a dangerous intersection of poverty, social media pressure, and mental health neglect ([Source](#)).

STRATEGIC FORESIGHT

Short Term (1-4 Weeks)

- **Campaign Intensification:** Expect a surge in "spontaneous" support meetings following the February 21 brochure launch. Political rhetoric will likely become more aggressive toward "apprentices" (untested challengers) ([Source](#)).
- **Security Lockdown:** Increased gendarmerie presence in urban centers and along the Kinshasa border as the military vote on March 12 approaches ([Source](#), [Source](#)).

Medium Term (1-6 Months)

- **Post-Election Consolidation:** If President Sassou Nguesso is re-elected as anticipated, expect an immediate push to inaugurate the National Data Center and launch Corridor 13 works to validate "sovereignty" promises ([Source](#), [Source](#)).
- **Fiscal Tightening:** Pressure on foreign firms to repatriate capital will likely intensify as the government attempts to fill the post-2014 budget gap ([Source](#)).

Long Term (1-5 Years)

- **Structural Shift to Agriculture:** The "Agricultural Revolution" will face its true test as the administration attempts to turn the GFAC fair's momentum into actual export chains and reduced import dependency ([Source](#), [Source](#)).
- **Regional Integration:** The completion of Corridor 13 and the bridge-road-rail projects could permanently cement Brazzaville as the primary logistical hub for the CAR and Chad, reducing reliance on Cameroonian ports ([Source](#)).

RECOMMENDATIONS & IMPLICATIONS

For International Policy

- **Security:** Diplomatic missions should note the institutionalization of military ties with the DRC; this may lead to more effective policing of the Congo River but also coordinated crackdowns on cross-border political activists ([Source](#)).
- **Environmental Diplomacy:** Congo will remain a central player in climate finance negotiations; however, the administration is increasingly frustrated by the lack of direct "rewards" for its preservation efforts ([Source](#)).
- **China Influence:** The 2026-2028 infrastructure cycle is heavily tethered to Chinese cooperation (Corridor 13, Railways), which may limit Western influence in the construction and digital sectors ([Source](#)).

For Private Sector/Investors

- **Regulatory Risk:** The validation of local tax digitization and the push for 60% domestic liquidity hosting for foreign firms suggest a more assertive fiscal environment for multinationals ([Source](#), [Source](#)).
- **Digital Hosting:** The National Data Center inauguration may lead to new regulations requiring sensitive or government-linked data to be hosted locally, presenting both risks and opportunities for IT service providers ([Source](#)).
- **Agricultural Growth:** Significant opportunities exist in cold-chain logistics, specialized transport, and seed multiplication as the government attempts to professionalize the 86 agricultural districts ([Source](#), [Source](#)).

ABOUT THIS REPORT

Today's Media Trends is a public interest experiment in applying deep thematic trend analysis to television news coverage from around the world to explore how responsibly applied advanced AI can help journalists and scholars better understand the overarching trends, themes and patterns of our global world.

No data is used to train or tune any AI model.

Each morning, in collaboration with the Internet Archive's TV News Archive, we apply Google's Gemini 3 to deeply examine yesterday's coverage from each television news channel to tease out the overarching themes and trends of its news coverage into a richly annotated thematic analysis. Each high-level insight is connected back to the original broadcast, allowing journalists and scholars to understand the dominate themes and trends

and instantly click out to the underlying sources for details.

By helping journalists and scholars see the broader trends and patterns of global news coverage, this analysis helps them identify relevant stories and coverage they might not otherwise have encountered and uncover connections, emphases and narrative shifts that enable more comprehensive reporting and deeper, evidence-based research.

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For questions or suggestions, please contact kalev.leetaru5@gmail.com. You can also learn more about the GDEL T Project at <https://blog.gdel tproject.org/> and the Internet Archive's TV News Archive at <https://archive.org/details/tv>.