

TODAY'S MEDIA TRENDS

TELECONGO

FEBRUARY 19, 2026

THE GDELT PROJECT

REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO: ELITE SUCCESSION & ELECTORAL TENSIONS AMIDST AN AMBITIOUS ENERGY PUSH (2026 OUTLOOK)

SHOCKWAVES & THE 2026 ELECTION COUNTDOWN (CRITICAL JUNCTION)

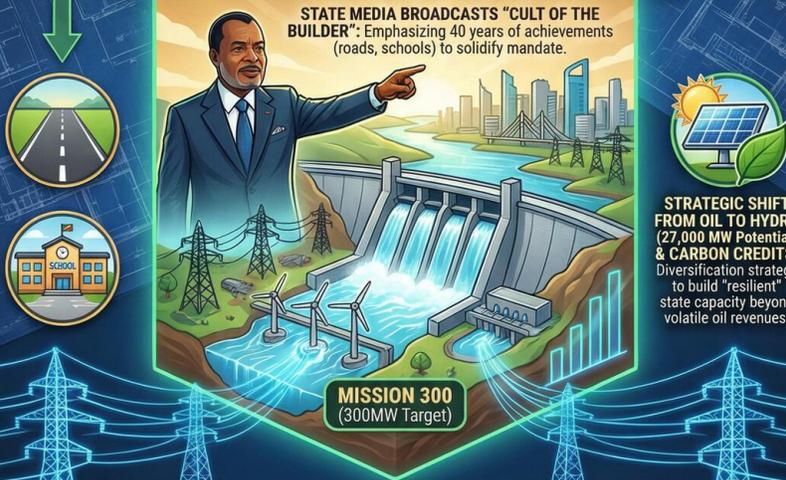
ELITE LOSS: THE "BUILDER'S" BRIDGE BROKEN



ELECTORAL SECURITIZATION & REFORM SKEPTICISM



THE "GREAT BUILDER" NARRATIVE & GREEN ENERGY PIVOT (DOMESTIC FOCUS)



ECONOMIC STATECRAFT & FUTURE IMPLICATIONS (AGGRESSIVE SHIFT)

FISCAL MODERNIZATION & TAX REFORM



2026 BUDGET FOCUSES ON DIGITALIZATION: Introducing Global Income Tax & Electronic Invoicing (Certified). Operationalizing Single Treasury Account to secure state funds.

INTERNATIONAL RE-ENGAGEMENT & STRATEGIC FORESIGHT



DIPLOMATIC PUSH FOR MINING (US), JUDICIAL COOPERATION (FRANCE) & INVESTMENT.

SHORT TERM: Heightened security & funeral mobilization.

LONG TERM: "Mission 300" success crucial for regional energy hub status & stability.



UNCERTAIN FUTURE: Will infrastructure ambition & security control overcome succession risks & electoral tension?

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PUSH

DAY-AT-A-GLANCE

The Republic of the Congo is currently at a critical junction defined by the convergence of a major elite political loss and the final countdown to the March 2026 presidential election. The death of Minister of State Firmin Ayessa, a long-time confidant of President Denis Sassou Nguesso, has sent shockwaves through the ruling Congolese Party of Labour (PCT), necessitating urgent cabinet-level reorganizations just weeks before the vote. Concurrently, the government is leveraging state media to broadcast a robust narrative of the "Great Builder," emphasizing forty years of infrastructure achievements to solidify the incumbent's mandate. This domestic focus is being balanced by aggressive economic statecraft, including the launch of massive hydroelectric projects under the "Mission 300" initiative and high-level diplomatic engagements with

France, China, and the United States to secure mining and judicial cooperation.

Strategic planning for the 2026 elections has moved into its final phase, with the "Public Force" (military, gendarmerie, and police) finalizing security protocols to counter what leadership calls "protean and hybrid threats." While political consultations in Djambala have yielded recommendations for increased transparency, such as the introduction of biometrics and campaign finance caps, skepticism remains among opposition factions regarding the government's willingness to implement these reforms before the March 15th polling date. The convergence of these events suggests an administration attempting to project stability and forward-looking developmental ambition while simultaneously tightening its grip on the electoral process to mitigate the risks of civil unrest or administrative paralysis following the loss of key power brokers like Ayessa.

MAJOR DEVELOPMENTS

- **Death of Minister of State Firmin Ayessa:** The passing of the Minister of the Civil Service and key PCT strategist in Istanbul has triggered a national mourning period and forced the government into emergency planning for both his funeral and the administrative vacuum he leaves behind. Ayessa was described as a "loyal collaborator" and a "finely-tuned negotiator" essential to the President's inner circle ([Source](#), [Source](#), [Source](#)).

- **Finalization of 2026 Election Security Protocols:** The General Staff of the Congolese Armed Forces (FAC) and the Gendarmerie have concluded planning for the "secure environment" of the March 12 (force) and March 15 (general) polls, specifically targeting "disinformation" on social media and potential hybrid threats ([Source](#), [Source](#)).
- **Launch of "Mission 300" Hydroelectric Initiatives:** Minister of Energy Émile Ouosso officially launched feasibility studies for the Kiteke hydroelectric plant (510 MW) near Linzolo. This is part of a broader strategy to develop six plants by 2035 to leverage the country's 27,000 MW potential and solve Brazzaville's chronic power deficits ([Source](#), [Source](#)).
- **Electoral Reform Recommendations from Djambala:** Delegates from the government, opposition, and civil service reached a consensus on several recommendations, including electoral biometrics, single ballots, and reducing election deposits, though implementation timelines remain unclear ([Source](#), [Source](#)).
- **US and French Diplomatic Re-engagement:** The US signaled intent for the Gerald Group to resume mining operations, while Congo and France entered advanced negotiations to modernize a 50-year-old judicial cooperation convention ([Source](#), [Source](#), [Source](#)).
- **2026 Budget Implementation and Tax Reforms:** Analysis of the 2550 billion CFA budget revealed a reduction in corporate tax (from 30% to 28%) and the introduction of a global income tax system, aiming to diversify revenue beyond oil ([Source](#), [Source](#)).

KEY GOVERNANCE TOPICS

- **Succession & Elite Politics:** The death of Firmin Ayessa represents a significant disruption to the PCT's internal management. As a "coach" and "loyal compagnon," his absence during the final election push creates a need for new mediators between the presidency and the civil service ([Source](#), [Source](#)).
- **Domestic Stability & Social Order:** The Public Force is being put on "war footing" for the elections. Authorities are emphasizing "national consciousness" over "individualism" to prevent pre-electoral tensions from escalating into violence ([Source](#), [Source](#)).
- **Energy Security:** The government is pivoting toward a "green" narrative, focusing on hydroelectric potential (27,000 MW proven) and carbon credits to diversify the economy away from the "volatile" oil sector, which has seen a downward revenue trend ([Source](#), [Source](#)).
- **Investment Climate:** The US Charge d'Affaires Amanda Jacobsen highlighted priority interest in solving disputes regarding the Gerald Group mining property, suggesting a push for more American investment in Congolese minerals ([Source](#)).
- **Trade & Economic Statecraft:** The 2026 Budget aims for a 17% increase in fiscal revenue. This involves aggressive digitalization of tax collection and the operationalization of a Single Treasury Account (CUT) to secure state funds ([Source](#), [Source](#)).

- **Critical Infrastructure:** The ruling party is highlighting the renovation of the national road network (RN1, RN2) and the construction of "modern" schools by the SNPC Foundation as tangible proof of governance success ([Source](#), [Source](#)).
- **Legislation:**
 - Finance Law for Fiscal Year 2026: Sets the budget at 2550.5 billion CFA in revenue and 2320.6 billion CFA in expenditures ([Source](#), [Source](#)).
 - CEMAC Directive Transposition: Replaces personal income tax (IRPP) with four distinct tax types (Business profits, salaries, land income, and capital income) ([Source](#)).
 - Revision of the Investment Charter: Planned renegotiation of "establishment conventions" to eliminate abusive tax exemptions ([Source](#), [Source](#)).
 - Electronic Invoicing System (Facturation Électronique Certifiée): Aimed at securing fiscal revenue ([Source](#)).

LEGISLATION/POLICY

The primary legislative focus is the 2026 Finance Law, which introduces significant structural changes to the tax code to align with CEMAC directives and modernize the fiscal system. Key hearings have occurred between the Senate and the IMF regarding the "Single

Treasury Account" to improve the transparency of public fund management.

- **BILLS DISCUSSED/DEBATED:**

- 2026 Finance Law: Fixes state spending and revenue; lowers corporate tax to 28% and top-tier income tax to 30% ([Source](#), [Source](#)).
- Taxation of Global Income: A new policy taxing Congolese residents on income earned worldwide to expand the tax base ([Source](#)).
- Renegotiation of Mining and Forestry Conventions: A policy initiative to bring older industry agreements in line with the new Investment Charter ([Source](#), [Source](#)).
- Carbon Credit Fee (Redevance sur le Crédit Carbone): Creation of a new tax on environmental assets ([Source](#)).

- **HEARINGS & PRESS EVENTS:**

- Senate-IMF Working Session: Experts and the Senate Finance Commission discussed the modernization of treasury management through the Single Treasury Account (CUT) ([Source](#), [Source](#)).
- Djambala Political Concertation: Closing ceremony where Minister Mabilia summarized the electoral reform consensus ([Source](#), [Source](#)).
- CNTR 7th Ordinary Session: The National Commission for Transparency discussed audits into passport revenue and the electricity sector ([Source](#), [Source](#)).

DEEP DIVE: TRENDS AND THEMES

The Narrative of Continuity vs. The Reality of Loss

The administration is heavily invested in a

"cult of the builder" narrative, framing President Sassou Nguesso as the architect of modern Congo ([Source](#), [Source](#)). However, the sudden death of Firmin Ayessa exposes the fragility of the regime's old guard. Ayessa was a bridge between the PCT's ideological roots and the modern administrative state. His loss during the pre-election phase complicates the PCT's ability to manage the "social dialogue" and union pressures that often surge during election years ([Source](#), [Source](#)).

Securitization of the Democratic Process

Governance reports emphasize "peace" and "unity" but frame these through the lens of military readiness. The focus on "hybrid threats" and "social media disinformation" suggests the state anticipates digital dissent and is preparing to categorize online opposition as a national security threat ([Source](#), [Source](#)). This securitized approach to elections is a trend designed to ensure a "calm" result by deterring mobilization before it begins.

Diversification Through Green Energy and Digitalization

A major strategic shift is underway to transition the economy from oil-dependency to energy and digital services. The aggressive push for hydroelectric projects (Mission 300) and the digitalization of civil status (SIFEC) and tax systems (electronic invoicing) are not merely administrative upgrades; they are survival strategies for a state facing declining oil revenues ([Source](#), [Source](#)). The goal is to build a "resilient" state capacity that can function even when commodity prices drop.

STRATEGIC FORESIGHT

- **Short Term (1-4 Weeks):** Expect heightened security presence across Brazzaville and Pointe-Noire as the March 12th vote for the Public Force approaches. Funeral proceedings for Firmin Ayessa will likely be used as a PCT mobilization event to project party unity ([Source](#), [Source](#)).
- **Medium Term (1-6 Months):** Following the March 15th election, a major government reshuffle is almost certain. A "budgetary collective" (amendment) will likely be passed by the new administration to reallocate funds for post-election priorities and legacy infrastructure projects ([Source](#)).
- **Long Term (1-5 Years):** The success of "Mission 300" will determine if Congo can become a regional energy hub. Failure to deliver on these hydroelectric projects could exacerbate domestic instability, while success would significantly improve the investment climate for industrial zones ([Source](#)).

RECOMMENDATIONS & IMPLICATIONS

• For International Policy:

- Judicial & Security Monitoring: Closely watch the renegotiation of the judicial convention with France; it may include new extradition and mutual assistance protocols relevant to international anti-corruption cases ([Source](#)).
- Electoral Barometer: International observers should press for the implementation of the Djambala biometrics recommendation, as it is the primary benchmark for assessing electoral sincerity ([Source](#)).
- Regional Stability: African Union partners should monitor the potential for post-election "dead city" strikes, particularly in the Pool and Niari regions where political tensions remain high ([Source](#), [Source](#)).

• For Private Sector/Investors:

- Tax Compliance Risk: Companies must prepare for the new 2026 global income tax rules and the rollout of certified electronic invoicing, which will increase administrative scrutiny ([Source](#), [Source](#)).
- Contract Renegotiation Risk: Mining and forestry companies operating under old "establishment conventions" should anticipate a push for renegotiation as the state seeks to claw back revenue from exemptions ([Source](#), [Source](#)).
- Energy Sector Opportunities: Substantial opportunities exist for engineering and finance firms in the hydroelectric sector as feasibility studies for five more "Mission 300" plants begin ([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.

This report is entirely machine generated using Gemini 3 and may include errors and omissions. Please verify all findings. No data is used to train or tune any AI model.

For questions or suggestions, please contact kalev.leetaru5@gmail.com. You can also learn more about the GDELT Project at <https://blog.gdeltproject.org/> and the Internet Ar-

chive's TV News Archive at <https://archive.org/details/tv>.