

TODAY'S MEDIA TRENDS

TELECONGO

FEBRUARY 23, 2026

THE GDELT PROJECT

CONGO 2026: STATE CONSOLIDATION & INFRASTRUCTURE PLEDGES AHEAD OF PRESIDENTIAL POLL

A Highly Coordinated Apparatus Mobilizing for the March Elections, Centered on Incumbent Denis Sassou Nguesso.

ELECTION FORMALIZATION & MOBILIZATION (MARCH 2026)

7 CANDIDATES CONFIRMED BY CONSTITUTIONAL COURT

STATE-BACKED GROUPS (Club 2002 PUR, FMC)

SATURATION CAMPAIGN ACROSS 15 DEPARTMENTS

SECURITY "FINAL PLANNING" FOR VOTE ANTICIPÉ (MARCH 12)

THE "BUILDER" PERSONA

STRATEGIC PILLARS: INFRASTRUCTURE AS ELECTORAL TOOL

CORRIDOR 13: "ROUTE OF HOPE"

LIKOUALA (ISOLATION ENDED)

BANGUI

N'DJAMENA

ELECTRIFICATION PROJECTS (POOL DEPARTMENT) NEAR COMPLETION

TIMING IS KEY: FEB 25 LAUNCH

MANAGING INSTITUTIONS & PERCEPTION

DEATH OF MINISTER AYESSA: STATE FUNERAL AS DISPLAY OF UNITY & ELITE COHESION

REGIONAL MOURNING (CUVETTE) REFLECTS POWER-BROKING

SECURITY APPARATUS: FOCUS ON "HYBRID THREATS" & "DISINFORMATION"

MILITARY TRANSITIONS & RULES OF ENGAGEMENT (ANTICIPATION PLAN)

CRITICAL GOVERNANCE & CHALLENGES

ECONOMIC HEADWINDS

CEMAC ZONE: LOW FINANCIAL INTERMEDIATION

PORT OF POINTE-NOIRE TRAGEDY: SAFETY STANDARDS INQUIRY

PUBLIC HEALTH & BIO-SURVEILLANCE

CHOLERA RESPONSE: "ZERO DEATH" STATUS (WHO VALIDATED)

TECH POLICY: DATA PROTECTION (GDPR) & DIGITAL SOVEREIGNTY DEBATES

DIGITAL GAP: ADVANCED DEBATES vs. BASIC NEEDS

DEEP DIVE: TRENDS & THEMES

WEAPONIZATION OF INFRASTRUCTURE

STATE-MANAGED SUCCESSION

POST-COVID TECH ACCELERATION

INFRASTRUCTURE FOR SUPPORT, INSTITUTIONAL RESILIENCE, DIGITAL SHIFT & DUALITY

STRATEGIC FORESIGHT

SHORT TERM (1-4 WEEKS)

CAMPAIGN LAUNCH, PRO-DSN RALLIES, ADVANCE VOTE TEST

MEDIUM TERM (1-6 MONTHS)

POST-ELECTION LIQUIDITY CRUNCH, HEALTH GRANTS, CEMAC INTEGRATION

LONG TERM (1-5 YEARS)

SUCCESSION QUESTION INTENSIFIES, REGIONAL LOGISTICS HUB POTENTIAL

RECOMMENDATIONS & IMPLICATIONS

FOR INTERNATIONAL POLICY

- MONITOR ENGAGEMENT RULES (HUMAN RIGHTS)
- DEEPEN HEALTH ENGAGEMENT (BIO-SURVEILLANCE)
- FOCUS ON CEMAC MONETARY HARMONIZATION

FOR PRIVATE SECTOR/INVESTORS

- AUDIT LOGISTICS PARTNERS (SAFETY NORMS)
- LEVERAGE DATA PROTECTION FRAMEWORKS (REGULATORY OPPORTUNITY)
- PRIORITIZE AG-TECH & LOGISTICS (STRATEGIC SECTORS)

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STATE CONSOLIDATION AND
INFRASTRUCTURE PLEDGES
DOMINATE CONGOLESE
GOVERNANCE AHEAD OF 2026
PRESIDENTIAL POLL

DAY-AT-A-GLANCE

The Republic of the Congo is currently characterized by a highly coordinated state apparatus mobilizing for the March 2026 presidential election, centered on the incumbent, Denis Sassou Nguesso. The Constitutional Court has formalized a list of seven candidates, while diverse state-aligned groups, such as "Club 2002 PUR" and "242 Reasons," are saturating the information environment with narratives of stability and "the builder" persona. This political momentum is further underscored by high-profile infrastructure promises, specifically the imminent launch of Corridor 13, intended to end the geographic isolation of the Likouala department. Simultaneously, the state is managing the fallout of the death of Minister of State Firmin Ayessa, utilizing his national funeral to project a message of institutional continuity and loyalty.

Beneath the electoral fervor, critical governance and security issues persist. The Force Publique is in the final stages of a strategic "anticipation" plan to secure the March 12-15 voting period, identifying "hybrid threats" and disinformation as primary risks. On the health front, the government is celebrating a successful cholera response while aggressively courting international partnerships for cancer treatment centers. Economically, the arrival of foreign investment in luxury automotive retail and the emergence of data protection (GDPR) as a regulatory topic suggest an attempt to modernize the business climate, even as systemic issues like low financial intermediation in the CEMAC zone and industrial tragedies at the Port of Pointe-Noire highlight ongoing structural vulnerabilities.

MAJOR DEVELOPMENTS

- **Presidential Election Formalization and Mobilization**
 - The Constitutional Court officially confirmed seven candidates for the upcoming presidential election, with the [incumbent Denis Sassou Nguesso](#) positioned as the central figure of stability.
 - State-backed groups like "Club 2002 PUR" and the "FMC" (Force Montante Congolaise) are executing a [saturation campaign strategy](#) across all 15 departments to ensure a first-round victory.
 - Security forces have finalized their "final planning" for [securing the electoral process](#), with a specific focus on the "vote anticipé" (advance voting) for uniformed personnel on March 12.

- **Death of State Minister Firmin Ayessa**

- A national day of mourning was observed for the [Minister of State for Civil Service](#), following his death in Istanbul; the state utilized his funeral at the Palais des Congrès to emphasize elite cohesion.
- Regional mourning in the Cuvette department (Makua) reflects the importance of [ethnic and regional power-broking](#) in the current administration's stability.

- **Strategic Infrastructure and Connectivity**

- The government announced the Feb 25th launch of [Corridor 13 road works](#), a massive project linking Brazzaville to Bangui and N'Djamena via Likouala, framed as the "route of hope."
- The national electricity company (E2C) reported near-completion of electrification projects for rural districts in the [Pool department](#), including Loumo and Boko.

- **Industrial Safety and Port Operations**

- A tragic crane collapse at the Port of Pointe-Noire resulted in [three fatalities](#), prompting an immediate administrative and technical inquiry into port safety standards.

- **Public Health and Bio-Surveillance**

- The Ministry of Health, in coordination with the WHO, declared a "zero death" status in the [cholera response review](#), validating the efficacy of current surveillance systems.
- Congo is renewing its [collaboration with the IAEA](#) to establish radiotherapy and nuclear medicine units for cancer treatment.

KEY GOVERNANCE TOPICS

Elite Politics & Leadership Dynamics The political landscape is dominated by the cult of personality surrounding Sassou Nguesso, framed as the "Builder" and "Man of Peace." The administration is leveraging the support of "Sages" (Elders) from key regions like [Mouyonzi and the Cuvette](#) to consolidate the base ahead of the March 15 poll. High-level military transitions, such as the [change of command](#) at the Military Academy and regional defense zones, suggest a pre-election hardening of the security architecture.

- The Constitutional Court finalized [seven candidates](#) after reviewing constitutional and financial eligibility (including 25 million CFA deposits).
- Regional influence was demonstrated by [Angola's high-level decoration](#) of Sassou Nguesso during its 50th independence anniversary, recognizing his historical role in regional liberation struggles.

Security Architecture & National Security

The state's security apparatus is prioritizing the containment of "threats" during the election. Military leadership has explicitly warned against [disinformation and "hybrid" threats](#) on social media. The "Force Publique" is moving from initial planning to "final planning" phases for election security, which includes the implementation of specific [rules of engagement](#) and logistical support for remote voting booths.

Economic Security & Investment Climate

Despite structural headwinds, the Congo is seeing niche foreign investment. The launch of [Sada Motor Congo](#) (distributing Chinese Jetour luxury vehicles) in Pointe-Noire and the "Sunga" incubator for women entrepreneurs indicate attempts at diversification. However,

financial experts point to [deep systemic weaknesses](#) in the CEMAC financial zone, where savings fail to transform into long-term investment due to conservative monetary policies.

Technology Policy & Digital Sovereignty Regulatory focus is shifting toward data protection, with legal experts discussing the [implementation of GDPR-style](#) norms (General Data Protection Regulation) and the "dangerous" but necessary evolution of AI tools like ChatGPT. The state is grappling with the [costs of regulatory compliance](#) for SMEs while trying to protect "digital sovereignty."

LEGISLATIVE ROUNDUP

Legislative activity centered on municipal budget reviews and the formalization of electoral candidacy. State policy is heavily focused on infrastructure project launches (Corridor 13) and health surveillance regulation.

BILLS DISCUSSED/DEBATED:

- **Pokola Municipal Budget 2026:** A 10-day session [reviewed administrative and management accounts](#), focusing on "Pokola Commune Connectée" and the regulation of moto-taxis.
- **Presidential Candidate Formalization:** The Constitutional Court issued its final [decree validating candidates](#) for the March 15 election.

HEARINGS & PRESS EVENTS:

- **Conference on Force Publique Engagements:** A high-level military meeting led by [General Guy Blanchard Okoi](#) to finalize the security strategy for the 2026 election.

- **National Cholera Response Review:** A 3-day workshop [analyzed the performance](#) of the surveillance system and coordination with international partners.
- **Superior Council for Freedom of Communication (CSLC):** A summons for all [media directors and candidate communicators](#) to a mandatory meeting on election coverage guidelines.

DEEP DIVE: TRENDS AND THEMES

The Weaponization of Infrastructure for Electoral Gain The timing of the "Corridor 13" project is a transparent use of [large-scale infrastructure](#) to secure regional support. By promising to "end the isolation" of the Likouala department just weeks before the poll, the administration is reinforcing the "Papa Ochombé" (The Builder) narrative. This trend is mirrored in the [electrification projects in Pool](#), a region historically prone to unrest, suggesting an attempt to use energy security as a tool for political pacification.

State-Managed Succession and Institutional Resilience The death of Minister Firmin Ayessa could have signaled a moment of vulnerability; instead, the state has turned the [mourning process](#) into a display of unity. The frequent rotation of military commanders in [strategic zones](#) (Zones 2, 6, and 9) during this period suggests a proactive effort to prevent any fragmentation of the military's loyalty as the election approaches.

Post-COVID Tech Acceleration and the Digital Gap Retrospective analyses of African tech startups (Uganda, Nigeria, Ghana mentioned) show a pivot from pure transport to [logistics and health-tech](#) as a survival mechanism. In Congo, this is manifesting in discussions about [digital services regulation](#)

and data protection. However, the contrast between the advanced data protection debates and the basic infrastructure needs (bamboo housing and sanitation) highlights a profound [socio-economic duality](#).

STRATEGIC FORESIGHT

Short Term (1-4 Weeks): Campaigning will officially [launch on February 28](#). Expect a surge in pro-DSN rallies and state-media dominance. The advanced vote for the Force Publique on [March 12](#) will be a critical indicator of military readiness and logistical friction. Public focus will remain on the launch of Corridor 13 as a primary electoral promise.

Medium Term (1-6 Months): Post-election, the government will likely face a liquidity crunch if promised infrastructure projects stall. The [zero-death status of cholera](#) will embolden the Ministry of Health to seek larger international grants for pandemic preparedness. Integration into CEMAC-wide [financial reforms](#) will be necessary to resolve intermediation issues highlighted by economists.

Long Term (1-5 Years): The succession question will intensify regardless of the election outcome. Structural changes to the [healthcare architecture](#) (specialized cancer centers) and the [completion of the trans-African corridors](#) could redefine Congo as a regional logistics hub, provided political stability holds through the next administration.

RECOMMENDATIONS & IMPLICATIONS

For International Policy:

- Partners should monitor the [security rules of engagement](#) for the March 12-15 period to ensure human rights compliance during election policing.
- Deepen engagement with the [health sector](#) as Congo demonstrates improved capacity in bio-surveillance and interest in specialized medicine.
- Diplomatic efforts should focus on CEMAC-wide [monetary policy harmonization](#) to unlock local investment potential.

For Private Sector/Investors:

- **Supply Chain Risk:** The tragedy at the [Port of Pointe-Noire](#) highlights potential safety and operational risks; investors should audit local logistics partners for compliance with international safety norms.
- **Regulatory Opportunity:** Emergent [data protection \(GDPR\) frameworks](#) offer a competitive advantage to firms that can assist Congolese businesses in regulatory alignment.
- **Strategic Sector:** Ag-tech and logistics (transport infrastructure) remain the most [resilient and prioritized sectors](#) for state-backed development and foreign capital.

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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