

EXTERNAL

AI Index: AFR 22/03/97

20 February 1997

Further information (2) on UA 152/96 (AFR 22/02/96, 25 June 1996) and follow-up (AFR 22/03/96, 19 September 1996) - Medical concern / possible prisoner of conscience

CONGO            Colonel Buissa Matoko

~~new name: Gabriel Longombe~~

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Colonel Buissa Matoko was released on 21 January 1997 after a Brazzaville court of appeal reduced his sentence from two years' imprisonment (with one year suspended) to a 12-month suspended sentence, citing extenuating circumstances. Gabriel Longombe, who was convicted along with Colonel Matoko was also released from detention on 21 January.

Colonel Matoko, a close associate of former president Denis Sassou Nguesso, was arrested at Brazzaville airport on 9 May 1996 and accused of possessing seditious documents. On 5 September 1996 he and Gabriel Longombe were convicted by a Brazzaville court on the charge of endangering the security of the state (*atteinte à la sûreté de l'état*). Neither man had been charged with this offence and the charge had not been raised during the trial. Colonel Matoko was also convicted of illegal possession of arms.

The exact date of arrest of Gabriel Longombe is not known to Amnesty International although he is believed to have been charged in August with distributing seditious material. On 5 September, following his conviction of endangering the security of the state, he had not been given a prison sentence but had been stripped of his civil rights and prohibited from living in Brazzaville for two years. It is not clear why he had remained in detention.

No further action is required of the UA Network. Many thanks to all those who sent appeals.