

TODAY'S MEDIA TRENDS

TELECONGO

FEBRUARY 17, 2026

THE GDELT PROJECT



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THE REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO
NAVIGATES PRE-ELECTORAL
TENSIONS AND INSTITUTIONAL
MOURNING WHILE ADVANCING
LARGE-SCALE INFRASTRUCTURE
AND SOCIAL WELFARE REFORMS

DAY-AT-A-GLANCE

The Republic of the Congo's state media narrative on February 17, 2026, is dominated by the strategic convergence of high-stakes political consultations and the sudden death of a senior cabinet member. The "Djambala 2026" political consultation serves as the primary vehicle for the administration to project an image of [national unity and democratic maturity](#) ahead of the presidential elections scheduled for March 12 and 15. By gathering diverse political actors—majority, opposition, and civil society—the government seeks to preempt potential unrest by addressing long-standing grievances regarding electoral transparency, although skepticism remains high among opposition figures regarding the non-implementation of prior recommendations like **biometric voter identification**.

Simultaneously, the sudden passing of **Firmin Ayessa**, Minister of State for Public Service, Labor, and Social Security, creates a significant void in the executive branch. The state's elaborate media coverage of his death in Turkey and the subsequent national mourning functions to [galvanize internal PCT party loyalty](#) and distract from ongoing economic hardships. This is bolstered by a heavy focus on "Mission 300" infrastructure projects, specifically the **Kiteke hydroelectric plant**, which frames the government as a competent developer capable of securing the nation's energy future through international partnerships, primarily with Chinese entities.

The day's broadcasts also emphasize social stability through the aggressive rollout of the **Universal Health Insurance (CAMU)** and youth-centric economic programs. By detailing contribution rates and benefits, the government is attempting to build a social contract that ties citizen well-being directly to the stability of the current regime. However, reports of **violent urban crime** and the visible mobilization of PCT campaign wings suggest a undercurrent of domestic tension as the nation enters a critical electoral cycle.

MAJOR DEVELOPMENTS

- **Djambala Political Consultation 2026:** A four-day summit launched by Prime Minister **Anatole Collinet Makoso** to "balance" the electoral framework. Out of 12 prior recommendations from the 2022 Owando meeting, only [six have been fully executed](#), leaving critical issues like the **biometric system** and campaign finance caps unresolved.

- **Death of Minister Firmin Ayessa:** A pillar of the PCT (Parti Congolais du Travail) and a close ally of President Sassou Nguesso, Ayessa died in Turkey following an illness. His death is being characterized as a ["national disaster"](#) for the party and the state administration.
- **Launch of Kiteke Hydroelectric Project:** Under the "Mission 300" initiative, the government finalized plans for a **510 MW plant** in the Pool department. The project involve [partnerships with China Energy](#) and the Lincoln company, aiming to alleviate chronic power shortages.
- **Universal Health Coverage (CAMU) Implementation:** The state-run insurance fund (CAMU) has moved into a "pilot phase" in Brazzaville, Oyo, and Pointe-Noire. It mandates [contribution rates of 2.27%](#) for employees and pensioners, with a three-month waiting period before benefits begin.
- **Youth and Educational Mobilization:** In line with the 2024-2026 "Years of Youth" declaration, the SNPC (National Petroleum Company) completed [modernization of several school complexes](#), and the first-ever national BTS exams were launched to formalize technical training.

KEY GOVERNANCE TOPICS

Leadership Dynamics & Governance

- The death of **Firmin Ayessa** creates a vacancy in the critical Ministry of Public Service and Labor, potentially delaying administrative reforms. [Official condolences](#) from the Turkish ambassador highlight the international dimension of his passing.

- The PCT is already in **"battle mode"** for the March 2026 elections, mobilizing women's wings in Potopoto and publishing ["242 reasons to support"](#) the incumbent president.

Energy & Critical Infrastructure

- The **Kiteke project** on the Congo River is positioned as a strategic necessity to secure national energy sovereignty. Government officials explicitly frame it as a response to the ["energy crisis"](#) and a way to utilize the 4,500 MW of regional reserve.
- Electrification efforts in the **Pool department** (districts of Luingi, Loumo, and Booco) are nearing completion, serving as a visible **pre-election "win"** for the administration in a historically sensitive region.

Global Health & Biosecurity

- The **National Cancer Program** aims to reduce the high mortality rate (1,595 deaths annually out of 2,478 new cases). Officials are pleading for [modern radiotherapy units](#) and improved technical plateaus, admitting that many patients only seek care at terminal stages.
- The **CAMU** is framed as a "social revolution," though the 70% coverage limit for the general population (100% only for students and the vulnerable) suggests a [fiscally conservative approach](#) to universal healthcare.

Diplomacy & Statecraft

- The UN Federation, led by **Nicolas Rodin**, is engaging the Senate to discuss legislation for the **digital economy**. This signals a government push to attract [foreign investment in telecom](#) and "gray market" revenue recovery.

- Ongoing cooperation with **Turkey** (health tourism) and **China** (heavy infrastructure) underscores the Congo's reliance on a multipolar diplomatic strategy to offset domestic funding gaps.

DEEP DIVE: TRENDS AND THEMES

Managed Democracy and the "Consensus" Narrative

The Djambala consultation is a classic example of state-managed political discourse. By reporting on "courteous and constructive" interventions, state media minimizes the **internal polarization** mentioned by opposition figures who feel recommendations from 2015 are being ignored. The narrative is being steered toward a "just middle ground" where the [participation of the opposition](#) is used to legitimize the process, even as the government admits key transparency tools like **electoral biométrie** remain non-operational.

The Corporatization of Social Welfare

There is a visible shift toward involving state-owned enterprises like **SNPC** and private foundations (like **BGFI Bank Foundation**) in core government functions such as education and healthcare infrastructure. The SNPC's modernization of schools is portrayed as a ["gift" to the youth](#), effectively rebranding corporate social responsibility as core state capacity. This suggests the government is increasingly reliant on parastatal funding to meet basic developmental milestones.

Urban Fragility and the Security State

Beneath the high-level political rhetoric, reports of a **student-taxi driver murder** over a trivial sum (1,000 CFA) reveal

significant urban fragility. The Gendarmerie's rapid response and the public display of [seized taxi-motos](#) are intended to reassure the middle class, but they highlight an environment where **economic desperation** leads to lethal violence. The military's involvement in "mental change" programs at youth insertion centers like **Obéville** further indicates a trend toward **militarized social management**.

INTERNAL DYNAMICS & DOMESTIC INSTABILITY

The domestic landscape is characterized by **heightened partisan activity** disguised as national mourning and consultation. The PCT is utilizing the death of Firmin Ayessa to consolidate its base, framing him as a "loyal servant" to the President. This [cult of personality](#) surrounding the party's leadership is a critical stability mechanism as the 2026 elections approach. However, there are signs of **institutional decay** in the rural departments; reports from the new "Dieu-le-Fini" department show that while administrative structures are being created, actual [market and transport infrastructure](#) remains primitive, with local notables begging for basic support like field clearing and trucks.

The **Pool department** remains a focal point for government attention. By prioritizing electrification and health centers there, the state is attempting to "buy" stability in a region that has previously been a source of rebellion. The [modernization of the Ngamakoso route](#) and local markets is explicitly linked to the President's "vision," suggesting that state capacity is being deployed tactically to high-risk political zones.

EXTERNAL DYNAMICS & GLOBAL POSTURE

The Republic of the Congo is positioning itself as a **regional energy hub** and a "land of opportunity" for emerging tech. The outreach to the UN Federation regarding **digital legislation** suggests an attempt to modernize the state's tax collection capabilities, particularly targeting [telecom gray markets](#). Globally, the country is framing itself as a victim of "unjust accusations" regarding its hoarding of water resources, with the Minister of Energy asserting that **Congo and RDC** are ready to power Africa through projects like Kiteke. The choice of **Turkey** for senior official medical care (as seen with Ayessa) indicates a strengthening of **Ankara-Brazzaville ties**, moving away from traditional European medical hubs.

THE ECONOMIC ENVIRONMENT

The economic climate is bifurcated between large-scale state investments and a struggling informal sector. The government is attempting to bridge this gap through the **FIGA (Guarantee and Support Fund)**, which distributed [200 million CFA in microcredits](#) to 900 artisans. However, the reliance on external partners for the \$14 billion in global investments mentioned by China Energy indicates a **heavy debt dependency**.

- **Key Economic Vectors**

- **Hydroelectric Financing:** The Kiteke project is tied to "Mission 300," a World Bank and African Development Bank initiative, requiring the Congo to maintain ["energy pacts"](#) with international lenders.

- **Universal Health Insurance (CAMU) Costs:** Contributions are set at **2.27% of gross salary** for employees and **4.55% for employers**, with self-employed workers (e.g., taxi drivers) paying fixed rates between 7,000 and 9,000 CFA per month. These figures suggest a significant new [tax burden](#) on the formal workforce.
- **Agricultural Inflation:** Reports from markets indicate manioc prices remain high (1,000 CFA per unit), though the government is promoting the "village price" (250-400 CFA) through [state-supported transport](#) for producers.

LEADERSHIP CHANGES

The death of a high-ranking official is the primary catalyst for impending leadership shifts. The resulting vacancies will likely be filled by PCT loyalists to ensure continuity through the election.

- **Firmin Ayessa (Deceased):** His death leaves a massive hole in the **PCT Bureau Politique** and the Ministry of State for Labor. As a "faithful among the faithful" to the President, his successor will be a key indicator of [internal succession planning](#).
- **Anatole Collinet Makoso (PM):** Makoso is being positioned as the **"enforcer" of the presidential vision**, taking the lead on everything from election consultations to closing agricultural fairs. His visibility suggests he remains the [dominant administrative figure](#) under Sassou Nguesso.
- **Jean-Jacques Moanda:** As the Prefect of Plateaux, his role in hosting the Djambala summit elevates his stature as a [key regional power broker](#) for the central government.

EDITORIAL POSTURE & STORY HIERARCHY

Telecongo's editorial hierarchy is strictly aligned with **state-building and regime stability**. The "Lead Stories" are invariably the Presidential agenda, senior cabinet deaths, and political consultations. The network maintains a **nationalistic and reassuring** tone, framing administrative hurdles as "challenges being met" through the "vision" of the President. Critical global news is **buried or omitted**; while local floods and infrastructure issues are mentioned, they are always followed by a report on a government official visiting the site to provide solutions. There is a conspicuous **absence of dissenting voices** regarding the CAMU contribution rates or the high cost of living, which are only addressed through reports on the government "distributing" aid.

GEOPOLITICAL FRAMING

The broadcasts frame the world through a lens of **pragmatic multipolarity**, where international organizations are partners in the President's vision and external nations are providers of specialized services.

• COUNTRIES

- **China:** Portrayed as a **technically superior and stable partner**. China Energy is described as a Fortune 500 company bringing \$14 billion in international investment to secure the Congo's energy future [via a Solid Financial base](#).

- **Turkey:** Framed as a **high-end medical and diplomatic ally**. The presence of the Turkish ambassador expressing condolences and the fact that senior ministers travel there for care implies a level of [trust in Turkish institutions](#) over domestic or western alternatives.
- **France:** Mentioned primarily in the context of **Macron's diplomatic documents** and cultural exchanges, suggesting a relationship focused on [tradition rather than core infrastructure](#).

• NON-STATE & CORPORATE ACTORS

- **UN Federation / UNESCO / UNICEF:** These entities are portrayed as **moral and technical evaluators** whose role is to "salute" and "congratulate" the Congo on its progress in [educational and digital reform](#).
- **SNPC (National Petroleum Company):** Framed as a **quasi-charitable arm of the state**, responsible for school modernization rather than just resource extraction, thus [legitimizing its role](#) in the national economy.

INFORMATION WARFARE ENVIRONMENT

- **Narrative Seeding:** The government is aggressively seeding the term "**Consommer Congolais**" to promote self-reliance in agriculture, likely to offset the [political risk of food inflation](#).
- **Psychological Operations:** The use of military instructors in youth centers like **Obéville** to achieve a "**change of mentality**" suggests a state-directed effort to [re-socialize disenfranchised youth](#) who might otherwise participate in electoral unrest.

- **Media Spin vs. Ground Truth:** While state media reports that "six of twelve" Owando recommendations were met, they **omit the strategic significance** of the six that were not met—namely the biometric roll and campaign caps—which are the primary tools for preventing fraud. The state focuses on the ["courtesy" of the debate](#) rather than its substance.

HYPOTHESES AND FUTURE OUTLOOK

- The death of Firmin Ayessa will lead to a **cabinet reshuffle** in the next 14 days, likely promoting a younger technocrat to appease the "Years of Youth" narrative while maintaining PCT ideological control.
- As the March election nears, the government will announce **further micro-grant distributions** via FIGA and FONEA to maintain order in urban slums where **urban crime** is rising.
- Resistance to the **CAMU contribution rates** will likely surface from the informal sector as the pilot phase expands, potentially leading to [regulatory adjustments](#) or exemptions for certain demographics to avoid social unrest.

STRATEGIC FORESIGHT

- **Short Term (1-4 Weeks):** Official state funeral for Firmin Ayessa will be used as a **political rally for the PCT**. Final lists for the March election will be published, triggering potential legal challenges from the opposition [regarding voter rolls](#).

- **Medium Term (1-6 Months):** The March 2026 elections will likely result in an incumbent victory, followed by a **rapid rollout of the Kiteke energy contracts** to demonstrate developmental continuity. The CAMU's 3-month "period of carence" (waiting period) will end for the first wave of enrollees, presenting the first real test of [systemic healthcare capacity](#).
- **Long Term (1-5 Years):** Heavy reliance on **Chinese debt for Mission 300** may lead to a liquidity crunch or sovereignty issues if energy revenue does not materialize. The "militarized youth insertion" model will either successfully neutralize urban gangs or [create a trained, disgruntled cohort](#) if jobs are not found.

RISK ASSESSMENT

The Republic of the Congo faces a delicate balancing act as it enters a period of overlapping institutional transitions and infrastructure ambitions.

- **Electoral Unrest in Urban Centers:** Triggered by continued refusal to implement biometric voting or perceived fraud in the March 12/15 polls. Likelihood: **High**. Impact: **Severe** (Disruption of commerce, localized violence). Mitigations: Continued use of [political consultations](#) and pre-emptive youth employment grants.
- **Healthcare System Shock:** Triggered by enrollees overwhelming CAMU-partnered clinics after the 3-month waiting period ends. Likelihood: **Moderate**. Impact: **High** (Public loss of faith in a flagship government program). Mitigations: Expanding the "pilot phase" [gradually to other departments](#).

- **Administrative Paralysis Following Ayessa's Death:** Triggered by a failure to appoint a competent successor to manage the complex Public Service portfolio. Likelihood: **Low**. Impact: **Moderate** (Delays in payroll and labor negotiations). Mitigations: [Rapid interim appointments](#) by the Prime Minister.
- **Energy Project Delay/Failure:** Triggered by financing hurdles or environmental impact protests at the Kiteke site. Likelihood: **Moderate**. Impact: **High** (Continued industrial power shortages and investor flight). Mitigations: Strengthening [transparency in feasibility studies](#) as demanded by international standards.
- **Informal Sector Economic Revolt:** Triggered by the mandatory 3.79% tax for self-employed workers under CAMU. Likelihood: **Moderate**. Impact: **Moderate** (Strikes by taxi-moto drivers and market vendors). Mitigations: [Targeted subsidies](#) or reduction of initial enrollment fees.

GAPS & BLIND SPOTS

- The transcripts mention "[six of twelve](#)" [Owando recommendations](#) were met, but do not specify which ones remain unfulfilled beyond a brief mention of biométrie. This obscures the **true status of electoral integrity**.
- While CAMU contribution rates are clear, the **actual readiness of rural clinics** to provide these services is ignored, suggesting a Brazzaville-centric bias in health reform.
- There is no mention of the **current national debt level** or how "Mission 300" projects are being collateralized, hiding potential long-term **sovereign risk**.

- The report on **urban crime** avoids discussing the **economic drivers** (e.g., inflation, unemployment) behind the murder of the taxi driver, focusing instead on the [efficacy of the police](#).

CONTRARIAN NARRATIVE SCENARIOS

- **The Consultations as Stalling Tactic:** The Djambala political summit may not be a genuine attempt at democratic opening, but a **strategic delay** to prevent the opposition from organizing protests while the government uses state resources for a [pre-campaign blitz](#). If no biometric roll is released by March, the "consensus" will likely shatter.
- **Parastatal Capture of Governance:** The heavy reliance on **SNPC and BGFIBank** for social infrastructure could indicate that the **actual state treasury is empty**, and core services are being farmed out to entities that can borrow on international markets more easily than the sovereign government.
- **Black Swan - Regional Energy Conflict:** If the **Kiteke hydro project** significantly impacts water flow downstream, it could trigger a diplomatic crisis with [the Democratic Republic of the Congo](#), despite current rhetoric of cooperation, potentially halting construction via international environmental sanctions.

RECOMMENDATIONS & IMPLICATIONS

For Statecraft/Public Sector:

- **Diplomatic Engagement:** Congo should leverage its "Mission 300" as a regional energy anchor to secure more favorable trade terms with [neighbors and the African Union](#).
- **Security Reform:** Transition the "mental change" youth programs from military control to [civilian-led vocational training](#) to reduce the risk of creating a militarized urban underclass.
- **Regulatory Transparency:** Fully disclose the remaining six electoral recommendations to the public to prevent an [opposition boycott](#) of the March polls.

For Private Sector/Investors:

- **Opportunity in Fintech:** The government's move to capture gray market telecom revenue through new [UN-advised legislation](#) signals a massive opening for compliant digital payment processors.
- **Supply Chain Risk:** Ongoing infrastructure gaps in new departments like "Dieu-le-Fini" mean that [logistics costs for agricultural commodities will remain volatile for the foreseeable future](#).
- **Compliance in Healthcare:** [Companies with more than 10 employees must prepare for CAMU payroll deductions and ensure they are immatriculated to avoid stiff regulatory penalties as the pilot phase ends](#).

LEGISLATIVE ROUNDUP

[Legislative activity on February 17 focused on the formalization of the digital economy and the continuing struggle to implement prior](#)

[political accords. Hearings with international delegations underscored a drive for modernizing fiscal law to include digital assets and telecommunications.](#)

BILLS DISCUSSED/DEBATED:

- **Digital Economy Legislation:** [Framework to allow the state to capture international SMS/Telecom revenue](#) through a mandatory "gateway" system.
- **School Orientation Law:** A new bill aimed at aligning [technical training \(BTS\)](#) with labor market needs, currently passing through Parliament.
- **Electoral Law Review:** Ongoing debate in Djambala over the [implementation of biometric identification](#) and campaign finance limits for the March 2026 election.

HEARINGS & PRESS EVENTS:

- **PM Anatole Makoso Press Event:** Formally launched the [Djambala consultations](#), emphasizing "Peace and Unity."
- **UN Federation Senate Hearing:** Discussion on [attracting digital investment](#) and legislative encadrement of the sector.
- **CAMU Public Briefing:** Detailed breakdown of [contribution rates](#) and the pilot rollout schedule.

KEY STORIES

- **Death of Firmin Ayessa:** Official announcement of the passing of the Minister of State for Public Service, Labor, and Social Security in Istanbul, Turkey. The government expressed "immense sadness" and declared national mourning for a man described as a "loyal servant" of the Republic. Condolences were received from international diplomats, including the Turkish ambassador. [Story details here.](#)
- **Djambala Political Consultation:** Prime Minister Anatole Collinet Makoso opened a summit in Djambala (Plateaux Department) to discuss the 2026 presidential elections. The meeting includes the political majority, opposition, and civil society. Discussion focused on the 12 recommendations from the 2022 Owando meeting, with an admission that 50% remain unexecuted, specifically biometric voter registration. [Full report on Djambala.](#)
- **Kiteke Hydroelectric Plant Launch:** Minister of Energy Émile Wosso launched feasibility studies for a 510 MW plant in the Pool department. The project is part of "Mission 300" and involves China Energy and the Lincoln group. The plant will use a 3.9 km diversion canal on the Congo River. [Hydro project launch.](#)
- **Universal Health Insurance (CAMU) Pilot:** The state insurance fund (CAMU) began its pilot phase in Brazzaville, Oyo, and Pointe-Noire. Contributions are set at 2.27% for workers, with a 3-month waiting period. Coverage is 100% for the vulnerable/students and 70% for others. [CAMU breakdown.](#)
- **Urban Crime Crackdown:** The Gendarmerie in Brazzaville interpellated a 21-year-old student, Junior Marcuisa, for the murder of a motorcycle taxi driver over a 1,000 CFA dispute. The victim was an architecture student working to fund his studies. Police displayed dozens of seized motorcycles to warn against further violence. [Crime story details.](#)
- **SNPC School Modernization:** The National Petroleum Company (SNPC) completed the modernization of school complexes in Brazzaville (Angola Libre and Amitié). The projects, completed 2 months ahead of schedule, were inaugurated by the President. [SNPC education report.](#)
- **National Cancer Program Strategy:** Public health officials detailed a new strategy to combat rising cancer deaths, focusing on early screening and technical plateau improvement. Breast, cervical, and prostate cancers were cited as the primary killers. [Cancer strategy brief.](#)
- **Agricultural Fair Closure:** The Prime Minister closed the national agricultural fair at Bombo Mingali. The event promoted "Consommer Congolais" and highlighted self-sufficiency in crops like manioc and beans. [Agri fair summary.](#)
- **Digital Economy Investment:** A UN Federation delegation visited the Senate to discuss digital legislation and the "gray market" in telecommunications. The focus is on recuperating lost tax revenue from international hubs in Dubai and Mumbai. [Digital economy news.](#)
- **FIGA Microcredit Distribution:** The Guarantee and Support Fund distributed 200 million CFA in checks to 900 artisans and entrepreneurs in the Bouenza department to combat youth unemployment. [FIGA credit report.](#)

- **Obéville Youth Insertion Center:** Report on the 13-hectare Obéville center, ready to house 400 youth "in conflict with the law." Military encadreurs will lead "mental change" and vocational training. [Youth center update](#).
- **Creation of "Dieu-le-Fini" Department:** Administrative details on the new department created to "bring governance closer to the people." Residents and notables requested basic agricultural tools and transport to link their markets. [New department report](#).
- **National BTS Exam Launch:** Launch of the first session of the national Brevet de Technicien Supérieur (BTS) exams. The diplomas will now be state-certified for the first time, covering sectors like public works and electricity. [BTS exam news](#).
- **POTOPOTO Campaign Mobilization:** Women's wings of the PCT in Potopoto met to organize for the March 15 presidential vote, citing "242 reasons" to re-elect Sassou Nguesso. [Campaign mobilization](#).
- **BPC Factoring Financial Service:** The Banque Postale du Congo (BPC) launched a new factoring service to help SMEs manage liquidity by paying out invoices immediately. [BPC Factoring launch](#).

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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