

Fireworks in Congo  
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Independence Day 2007, June 30<sup>th</sup>, has come and gone in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. You would have thought it would have been a memorable day just like the Independence Day in 1960. I saw no extraordinary preparation for the first Independence Day after their first free election in over 40 years. I had totally misplaced the date until someone mentioned that some businesses may be closed on Friday and Saturday to celebrate the day. So, I rushed around Thursday afternoon shopping for some needed electrical items. At the first stop, the shop owner was hurrying to close as I entered. Panic set in until he explained he had to go to church.

In Kananga, we had a parade that started around noon on Saturday. The parades consisted of organizations and groups marching down street on foot. No floats, cars, trucks, or animals were used. In most cases, each group is dressed alike in the same fabric. The women wear a full dress or matching shirt and top in its organization fabric. The men wear a shirt made of the same fabric. Each group carries a wooden sign or cloth banner which identifies them.

To my surprise, and at first scary, we have fireworks about 11 pm originating at the governor's mansion. I am not sure how many people were still up or came out of their house at that hour of the night. Luckily, I was returning from a friend's private party held in honor of birthday celebrations for two friends and Independence Day. Otherwise, I would have still in my bed and prayed that it was just fireworks.

The national government had provided funds for each province to hold their Independence Day celebration. However, the mood of the day and celebration was summed up by one Congolese when he said; the government should have used the money to pay its civilian servants. Most civilian servants have not been paid in months or (and) their pay is behind by several months.

You can understand why most people did not celebrate the day. They just continued their most important job of trying to survive another day. In a country where most people make less than a dollar a day, it makes you wonder the wisdom of spending thousands of dollars on fireworks.

Thanks you for your continued prayers and support. If you would like to know more about any of our programs in health, education, agriculture, or micro economic development, please contact me. Together, you can help us make a difference.

Blessings,

Woody M. Collins  
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