

Coltan and Blood

Jaromil

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Coltan is an abbreviation for **Columbite-Tantalite**. A mineral with the unique ability when refined to reduce corrosion and increase heat resistance.



Figure 1.1

The mineral is valuable for technology industries, its demand exploded in the past 10 years. It is used to produce **cell phones, dvd-players, laptop computers and games¹** as well in **jet engines, ballistic missiles and nuclear reactors**.

80% World's known reserves are in Congo (DRC), mostly in the Eastern provinces of **Kivus and Orientale**, extracted from the ore in a process similar to that of the Californian gold miners of the 1800s.

¹the Play Station 2 production was halted in December 2000 because of coltan shortage



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The war in Eastern Congo is mainly driven by economic factors: an outside consumer market hungry for **laptops and telephones** for which Congo delivers the raw materials.



Figure 2.1

The conflict has resulted in estimated **4 million deaths**, **2 million displaced** and **340.000 refugees** in neighbouring countries.

30% of East Congolese school children are reported to be working in the coltan mines under inhuman conditions.

This crisis is the worst contemporary humanitarian crisis in the World provoked by Western post-colonialist economies.



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In 1998 leaders of Rwanda and Uganda, military trained and equipped by foreign countries, invaded the mineral-rich areas of Congo (DRC).



Figure 3.1

The invaders installed colonial-style governments supported in arms and training by Western allies, together with a \$5 million Citibank loan. Invasion of DRC allowed corporations as **American Mineral Fields** (AMF) to illegally mine. San Francisco based engineering firm **Bechtel Inc.** established ties, drawing up an inventory of mineral resources and providing the industry with refined supplies.²

²Project Censored, 2003 Top 25 stories, "American Companies Exploit the Congo", Philip Beard, Arinze Anoruo, Chris Salvano.

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As of today the mineral exploitation is known to involve U.S. based **Cabot Corp.** and **OM Group**; Germany's **HC Starck** and Chinese corporation **Nigncxia**.³



Figure 4.1

Payback to Congolese militias is mostly in arms, from dealers as **Simax**, **Lockheed Martin**, **Halliburton**, **Northrop Grumman**, **GE**, **Boeing** and **Raytheon**. Their action is covert under the face of “humanitarian” organizations as **CARE** (funded by Lockheed Martin) and **International Rescue Committee**.⁴

³Dollars and Sense, July/August 2001, "The Business of War in the Democratic Republic Of Congo: Who benefits?", by Dena Montague and Frieda Berrigan

⁴CovertAction Quarterly, Summer 2000, "U. S. Military and Corporate Recolonization of the Congo", by Ellen Ray



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Most international media still portrays the war in East Congo as an ethnic conflict, marginalizing efforts made by local communities to find a solution.



Figure 5.1

The indigenous Congolese organization **Yole!Africa** calls everyone to **stop using laptops, phones or I-pods on day July 2** to tell the World that many people, most unknowingly, are responsible for this ongoing catastrophe every time they buy a new laptop, phone or I-pod.

The hacker's network **dyne.org** calls **high-tech industries to free products from DRM, Trusted Computing and any other restriction** so that everyone in the World is able to appropriate the use of these technologies and build local businesses.

Yole!Afrika is co-producing a documentary about mobile phones and blood directed by Frank Polsen, out this year.



Salaam/Shalom/Shanthi/Dorood/Peace

This documentation was made possible thanks to the efforts of [Yole!Africa](#)⁵ (Democratic Republic of Congo), [Baobab Connections](#)⁶ (Amsterdam), [Project Censored](#)⁷ (USA), the [dyne.org hackers](#)⁸ and a spontaneous human alliance against organized crime, military abuse and corporate exploitation.

Pictures taken by photographer [Riccardo Gangale](#)⁹

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The “Coltan and Blood” slides are available on the Internet on [Jaromil’s Journal](#)¹⁰ website, feel free to spread and re-use!

Thanks, a thousand flowers will blossom!

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⁵www.alkebu.org

⁶<http://www.baobabconnections.org>

⁷<http://www.projectcensored.com>

⁸<http://dyne.org>

⁹<http://www.riccardogangale.com>

¹⁰<http://jaromil.dyne.org/journal>

