

Angola Weekly News Summary

November 24, 1975

PHONE: (212) 682-3081

U R G E N T!

The peril of deeper U.S. involvement in Angola becomes graver with each passing day.

The administration is pressing hard for quick passage of legislation which would grant Zaire greatly increased security and military assistance tied in to the war in Angola. Congress takes up this legislation when it returns to Washington on December 1st.

A growing number of members of Congress are disturbed about this dangerous course the U.S. is being pushed to engage upon. Some have offered amendments aimed to prevent the U.S. from giving open or covert aid to any political group in Angola, as explained in the enclosed action sheet prepared by the Washington Office on Africa.

We must act at once to reach our Senators and Congresspeople and to urge them to resist U.S. interference in a people's determination of their own future.

Contact your legislators - in person - while they are in their home districts for the Thanksgiving holiday.

Keep after them consistently when they go back to Washington.

OUR SENATORS, Washington, D.C. 20510

PHONE: (202) 224-3121

OUR REPRESENTATIVES, Washington, D.C. 20515

PHONE: " " "

**Peter Pringle writes
from New York**

THE CIA is using huge US Air Force Starlifter transports to fly weapons and supplies into Zaire, formerly the Belgian Congo, to boost the anti-communist Angolan forces. Equipment worth tens of millions of dollars has been flown in since spring and the airlift is being increased with this weekend's reported arrival of 3,000 Cuban troops and Soviet weapons in Angola's capital, Luanda, held by the MPLA (Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola).

The American arms are destined for the forces of Holden Roberto, whose 15,000-strong army of the FNLA (Front for the Liberation of Angola) has been the guest of President Mobutu of Zaire since it was formed in 1962. Roberto's forces have been advancing on Luanda from the north.

An American source said the airlift was "The biggest CIA operation since the Congo in the sixties." It is thought that the Starlifters, which can carry 154 troops or 70,847lb of equipment, are staging through the US base in the Azores, still owned by the Portuguese. But no troops have been sent to reinforce the 12-man American military advisory unit in Zaire.

The build-up in Luanda of Soviet equipment and Cuban troops since independence on November 11 has led to a hardening, on Washington's official line of "just observing the situation." State Department officials have approached Congressmen about increasing sixfold American aid to Zaire to about \$60 million (£30 million).

This would consist of \$20 million in development aid, \$20 million in export-import bank loans and \$20 million for food. Washington sources say, however, that these loans would then be used to buy US weapons to be passed on to the FNLA and its ally, Unita (Union for the Total Independence of Angola), led by Jonas Savimbi.

The State Department hotly denies this. At hearings before the Senate foreign relations committee this summer, the Assistant Secretary of State for

African Affairs, Nathaniel Davis, argued, in time-honoured fashion, that it was not possible for arms bought by Zaire to be passed on because they are sold under the Foreign Military Assistance Act which forbids such dealings. Cynical senators recalled the use of Turkish arms by Turkish Cypriots in the Cyprus crisis.

Of particular concern to the US at this time are the \$225 million Gulf Oil investments in the Cabinda enclave, which is outside the marxist MPLA control. Gulf is currently producing 120 to 140 million barrels of crude oil a day from the off-shore rigs and it is part of the CIA's intention to protect these interests by channelling aid to Zaire.

**Caryle Murphy writes
from Luanda**

REINFORCEMENTS sent out from Luanda, including Cuban troops and heavy equipment unloaded from a Russian ship only days before, are containing the thrust from the south by FNLA and Unita forces, led by Portuguese and South African commanders. The tide of the Angolan civil war seems to be turning after the first victories by the anti-communist troops, whose advance column is being held 200 miles south-east of the capital.

Last week a Cuban and two Russian ships unloaded large amounts of war material for the MPLA at Luanda. It included 80 and 100mm mortars, 105mm howitzers, recoilless rifles and hand-fired rockets. There were also reports that a shipment included Russian 40-tube rocket launchers and the latest in Sam guided missiles. If this is true it represents an escalation of the war. All unloading work is heavily guarded by Cuban soldiers.

The MPLA's Commandant Juju, asked to comment on the new equipment, would only say: "It is all very good." There are persistent rumours that Russian MiG jet fighters are being assembled at the airport, but Commandant Juju denied this, adding: "We don't need planes to stop this column."

In Luanda people are getting used to the Russian presence. Groups of Russian technicians who arrived last week are living at the airport, where they are assembling electronic equipment. The Russian and Yugoslav ambassadors are active around town.

The intensity of Russian support led one biased Eastern European to remark: "I know what the Russians want here: it is a small 'garden,' about 100 square kilometers, on the coast of Angola. But the MPLA leaders know that Russia can turn cold on them again as it once did. They only need them now to win this war."

In the confusion of this civil war, claims by the rival army to have taken several key MPLA towns, have proved to be false. Unita said that it had taken Malange, thus effectively splitting MPLA territory in two, but Angolans arriving in Luanda from Malange deny this, although Unita forces are approaching the town from the south. Similarly, the Luanda authorities deny that Gabela has fallen 180 miles south-east of the capital. There is now a prospect of stalemate in this mountainous area where MPLA forces are being strongly built up to defeat the threat to the capital.

MPLA leaders believe their enemies will try to press north towards Quibale, which is only

60 miles south of Dondo. Such a move will be strongly resisted as Dondo supplies the capital with electricity.

The opening of the railway which runs for the port of Benguela is certainly a boon for the Unita-FNLA forces, but it will not yet help President Kuanda in land-locked Zambia. MPLA still controls a key town which prevents trains reaching the Angola-Zambia border to pick up Zambian copper.

In Luanda the real fear of an FNLA attack has been dissipated and people are learning to cope with an austere life. The city was last week without water for over 24 hours because of a break in the electrical line outside the city. People sleep on the pavements at night so they can be sure of getting bread the next morning. The market place is practically empty and if MPLA does not regain some territory lost in the south, it will soon be hard-pressed to feed the city. Part of the shipments from the Russian ships this week was reportedly rice.