

Angola Weekly News Summary

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December 11, 1975

U.S. Involvement in Angola

The propaganda blitz to mold popular opinion in this country to view Angola as an important battle ground between the forces of "Communism" and the West continues to escalate. Government statements have attempted to portray the U.S. role as one of protecting Africa from Soviet domination. There are some apparent contradictions emerging from this U.S. government position. A senior official to Kissinger told newsmen aboard the Secretary of State's plane in Tokyo on Sunday, December 7, that U.S. assistance prevented the "Soviet backed" group's (the MPLA) takeover of Angola in July. (New York Times, Dec. 8) A Los Angeles Times article of the same day (enclosed in this mailing) reports that a U.S. policy decision was made last June to prevent the MPLA from taking power by clandestinely supplying opposition groups with money and weapons.

The actual extent of U.S. involvement in the Angolan war is not known, although it is wise to assume the level of commitment is substantially higher than what is publically known. Otis Pike, Congressman from New York, who was one of the few Congressmen who had been privately briefed on CIA involvement in Angola (Government regulations require that a few members of Congress be informed of CIA operations), called CIA director Colby's refusal to testify at a House hearing on Wednesday, December 10, a "travesty". He exclaimed that Americans know more about Russian assistance to Angola than about the U.S. role there.

U.N. representative Patrick Moynihan continued the anti-Soviet attack this week. In a statement before the General Assembly on Monday, December

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8, he again called Russian involvement in Angola an "effort to recolonize Africa.... A European colonial power is back ... more mighty than any that ever preceded it...." His statement came during a debate on foreign intervention in Angola. A New York Times editorial the following morning entitled "'Big Lie' in Angola" labelled Soviet and Cuban involvement in Angola "blatant military intervention by white powers from distant continents in the internal affairs of a black African country."

On the Angolan Front

Since independence the Armed Forces of the People's Republic of Angola (FAPLA) has moved from defense to offense and made military advances on three fronts.

A few weeks ago a coalition of National Front (FNLA) and UNITA troops claimed to control close to 80 per cent of Angola's mainland, with the Popular Movement's forces being squeezed from the north and south into a narrow corridor stretching east from Luanda, the capital. The two-pronged attack has been checked by the MPLA.

In the northeast zone, artillery-backed units of the MPLA have routed FNLA from their key positions in Caxito, 35 miles from Luanda. The FNLA forces were attempting to take over the Quifangondo water works -- Luanda's main supply.

The MPLA is now preparing to take Ambriz, a coastal town 70 miles north of Luanda, which has served as the main military and political headquarters for the FNLA since they were driven out of Luanda in July. The liberation of Ambriz would represent a major psychological and military victory for the MPLA. Reports indicate that the FNLA has already begun to evacuate civilians, heavy artillery, and the political office.

On the eastern front the MPLA has captured Luso and Cangumbe, both important rail towns for Zambian and Zaire copper export. This is another serious blow to the FNLA-UNITA coalition, who were planning to reopen the railway for the transportation fees.

A major attempt by South Africa to push north has been halted by MPLA forces 125 miles south of the capital, beyond the Cambambe Hydro-electric Dam. In this counterattack, MPLA forced the motorized column back 100 miles, retaking Gabela and Quibala.

The towns of Cangambe and Quifangando, being a vital source of power and water for Luanda, were seen by the enemy as important staging points to isolate and assault the capital. It is becoming clear now, with these recent reports, that the capital is no longer under the threat it was a month ago.

Caryle Murphy, writing from Luanda for the London Sunday Times, on December 7 reported that the taking of Ambriz "is the first of the MPLA's three immediate objectives. The second is the town of Huambo, formerly Nova Lisboa, which is the seat of the rival provisional government formed last week by the FNLA-UNITA.... The third is the key port of Lobito."

BUTTONS*****BUTTONS*****BUTTONS*****BUTTONS*****BUTTONS*****BUTTONS

The MPLA Solidarity Committee has produced a solidarity button for sale at 50¢ each or 35¢ each for orders of 10 or more. The button is done in the red, black, and yellow-starred design of MPLA's flag, with the words "MPLA" and "Solidarity with the Angolan People" superimposed. Please enclose payment with your order.

I wish to order _____ MPLA solidarity buttons.

NAME _____

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SOUTH AFRICA IN ANGOLA

Press correspondents reporting from both Angola and South Africa have exposed the escalation of South Africa's military and logistical involvement. The South African government and media are at the same time generating an atmosphere of undeclared war on the People's Republic of Angola led by the MPLA.

Dial Torgeson of the Los Angeles Times has reported from Johannesburg that (white) reservists are being told to stand by for active duty and that announcements of Angola combat deaths have begun to appear in the local newspapers.

Other correspondents have reported visits to South African bases inside Angola at Caleque and Chitado. Paul Smithwaite of Reuters vividly described a flight by South African (French built) Super Freon military helicopters to Chitado in southern Angola. The helicopters, with their South African identification obliterated, were part of an airlift of supplies, described as destined for beleaguered FNLA elements under white Portuguese commanders.

A report by Reuter's correspondent John Edlin in London quotes a UNITA spokesperson as openly admitting receiving South African assistance, and conceding that the South Africans control the "sophisticated equipment that untrained UNITA personnel cannot operate. South Africans are also the core force of a mobile armored column which initially made a deep thrust into Angola from Namibia but was brought to a halt by MPLA forces. Other reports state that 130 mm howitzer artillery guns supplied by South Africa were recently withdrawn from Ambriz to avoid capture by advancing MPLA forces.

David Ottaway, the Washington Post reporter who is presently in Johannesburg has called Angola "South Africa's own Vietnam." He empha-

sizes that South Africa's own intervention in Angola is undermining its detente strategy. He predicts that South Africa may attempt a "solution" which is aimed at "securing a de facto partition of the southern third of Angola for UNITA, its main Angola ally."

THE O.A.U. AND ANGOLA

The People's Republic of Benin (Dahomey) and Nigeria have recognized the People's Republic of Angola since our last report on countries recognizing the MPLA government.

BBC reported that on Dec. 1, 1975, the President of the MPLA and the People's Republic of Angola, Agostinho Neto, made the following statement in a broadcast: "Our Africa has not yet come face-to-face with the reality of Angola. Some of our African countries are still applying the idealistic theory of unity - unity for the sake of unity, unity of fascists and progressives, a unity which is useless as an instrument of development, progress or liberation. Such an unrealistic concept of unity often conceals the anti-communist stand of some countries that are in fact controlled by imperialism."

The Secretary of State for Commerce, Bemvindo Pitra, participated as an observer in the fourth meeting of the Trade Ministers of OAU member countries in Algiers. Speaking to an Angolan state radio reporter on his arrival at the international airport in Luanda on Dec. 3, 1975, Comrade Bemvindo Pitra said: "Although this meeting discussed only commercial and not political matters, it was nonetheless another political victory, because our first and foremost objective was to attend this international conference, organized by the OAU, and be accepted as an official delegation from the People Republic of Angola. We also wanted to show that we are the sole legitimate government of Angola. We think we have succeeded in accomplishing our objective..."

DID US TRIGGER ANGOLA ARMS RACE?

The following article by Oswald Johnston is a reprint from the Los Angeles Times, datelined Washington, December 7, 1975

Last month's massive Soviet military airlift to the dominant faction in the Angolan civil war was in part a response to a covert arms supply from the United States that began last summer, intelligence sources here believe.

Despite public denunciation of the Soviet intervention by Secretary of State Henry A. Kissinger and other US officials, the initial super power decision to intervene in Angola with money and weapons may have been made in Washington not Moscow, according to these sources.

The precise motivation for the Soviet decision probably taken late in the summer, cannot be measured exactly. But sources close to policy-making levels in the administration believe that a decision by President Ford and Kissinger last June set the stage for the growing superpower rivalry in the former Portuguese colony. "It is a standard action-reaction cycle," one source said. "Now the Soviets have reacted, and the Administration will have to make a basic decision whether to up the ante and call them, or fold."

The Chinese, who supplied arms and advisors to anti-Soviet factions in Angola through the summer, virtually closed down their Angola operation last month, apparently fearing a "super power" image in black Africa.

It is widely believed in the intelligence community that the level of Soviet support since late October has so decisively tilted the balance in favor of the Popular Movement (MPLA), the Soviet supported faction, that only a major overt intervention of a like magnitude by the United States would be able to turn the tide.

The United States up to now has sent weapons to the two anti-Soviet factions in Angola by means of a clandestine airlift to Kinshasa, Zaire. The airlift has drawn on arms depots in the continental United States and NATO arsenals in West Germany. But analysts now feel that the maximum that could be supplied through covert channels would have little effect other than to convert the war into a prolonged bloody stalemate. Thanks to the recent Soviet efforts, the MPLA would always be in the ascendancy and in control of Angola's mineral wealth, but in no serious danger of ever being dislodged.

"The only thing intervention on that scale could accomplish would be to muck up the Angolans" is a prevailing intelligence estimate of a continued US covert arms supply.

But an Administration decision to go public with its military support of the rival factions, the National Front (FNLA) and the National Union (UNITA) raises serious political problems, domestic and international.

A post-Vietnam congress is not likely to stand still for an American involvement in a distant civil war, however much the Soviet side seems to be winning.

Only last week, the Senate Foreign Relations Committee's Dick Clark (D-Iowa), Chairman of the Africa subcommittee, proposed legislation to prohibit any US involvement in Angola without specific Congressional authorization. In short, Clark was putting the Administration on notice either to stop its covert efforts or else go public.

In doing so, Clark made it plain that he, for one, would oppose an escalation of the US involvement. Only last October, the committee and other congressional forces looked dubiously on a Kissinger attempt to pump some \$60 million in emergency aid into Zaire, which remains the main outside supporters of the FNLA faction.

Primarily, Clark and other Africa specialists in Washington fear that

any open move by the Administration to move into the Angolan war would irrevocably ally the United States with South Africa - a development sure to undermine all remaining US influence in sub-Saharan Africa.

During the past week, the government in Nigeria, normally suspicious of Soviet motives on the continent, declared its recognition of the MPLA as the legitimate government of Angola. Its announced reason for doing so was the intervention by South African groups on the side of UNITA forces in Southern Angola.

The Soviets, rhetorical and ideological supporters of the MPLA for years, were under no similar political constraints when they acted in mid-November to move their aid efforts, by then sizeable out in the open with direct supply flights to Luanda.

On November 11 the independence of Angola was declared, and the Soviets merely announced their recognition of MPLA, then in control of the new nation's capital, as the Angolan government. "It was a perfect cover for them", one source said. "There was no need for further covert action, and for once they had an opportunity to intervene in black Africa without fearing a political backlash." The South African intervention on the other side had taken care of that.

Analysts feel the basic Soviet objectives in Angola are political more than military, although they do not underestimate the ports of Luanda and Lobito as potential South Atlantic Soviet naval bases.

In part, the Soviets may have wanted to counter Chinese influence, which is still a powerful force in Zambia and, more recently, Mozambique. In part, analysts also believe, they may have wanted a foothold in Southwest Africa to be established in the region as black African pressures mount on the white minority regime in South Africa.

But analysts place great emphasis on the theory that the Soviets were reacting to reverses suffered last summer by leftist forces in metropolitan Portugal even while the MPLA appeared in danger of being defeated in Angola.

Both arenas are stated areas of US interest. And both, since last June, have been arenas of covert US intervention.

CIA aid to Portugal have mostly been measured in money funneled to the dominant democratic Socialist Party groups. But in Angola, almost from the start, it took the form of arms supplies to FNLA and UNITA via Zaire.

At first, sources say, this aid was almost exclusively in the form of money to the Zaire regime of Joseph Mobutu for the express purpose of financing weapons transfers.

But in August, sources say, there was a sharp escalation in weapons going across the border from Zaire. NATO weapons and American weapons beyond those stockpiled in Zaire's Western supplied armory turn up in the field and at the time appeared to have turned the battle decisively against the MPLA. Many of these weapons, it is claimed, were flown into Kinshasha on US C-141 transports on covert missions.

It was at this point that the Soviets reacted on a scale that was evidently unexpected by Kissinger and other architects of the US policy.

Early in September, the first Cubans began to land in the port of Luanda, and the influx continued steadily for the next two months. By the end November, at least 4,000 Cubans were committed to the war. Officials here estimate some 200 armored cars are now in MPLA hands, under Cuban control, and at least a dozen mobile multi-tube launchers for 122-m.m. rockets. The rockets, a favorite weapon of guerrillas in the Middle East and South East Asia are a deadly and sophisticated weapon in the context of Angola and the presence of the rockets, with Cubans to fire them, seems to have given MPLA a decisive edge. More important, however is the fact that the latest Soviet move in the action-reaction cycle of the Angolan civil war has faced Ford and Kissinger with a decision with wideranging consequence for US policy in sub-saharan Africa.