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Central Intelligence Agency



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DIRECTORATE OF INTELLIGENCE

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Angola-Cuba-South Africa: Negotiations at a Critical Point [Redacted]

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Summary

Recent dramatic changes in the military situation have driven the US-mediated negotiations between Cuba, Angola, and South Africa to the point where there is general agreement on all issues except the timing of the Cuban troop withdrawal. This issue will be addressed in the next round of talks this month, under a deadline of 1 September, and serious concessions will be required from all sides if the process is not to break down. A Soviet observer has been present at each round of the talks and Moscow apparently believes that prospects for a settlement are good. Although the Soviets apparently are willing to assist efforts to reach a compromise, Moscow supported Havana's military buildup and has equities with its Angolan client that it will seek to protect. [Redacted]

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Current Situation

Status of the Peace Talks. There has been substantial progress toward a regional peace settlement. Tripartite meetings, with the US mediating, in London, Cairo, New York, and Geneva have pushed the process along to where there has been agreement on the general principles of a peace settlement incorporating both a total Cuban troop withdrawal from Angola and independence for Namibia

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under UN Resolution 435. The Geneva meeting set the sequence of events and key dates that would lead to a signing of peace accords on 10 September and implementation of the UN plan for Namibia on 1 November. [redacted] 25X1

In addition, the parties agreed to a temporary cessation of hostilities to reduce the risks of an escalation during the coming weeks. South Africa promised to pull its remaining troops out of Angola--primarily those in the southeast around Cuito Cuanavale--while Cuba promised to hold its forces in place and make no further moves to the south or southeast. The military disengagement and cease-fire will be monitored by a joint military committee. UNITA, not a party to the talks, has refused to abide by a cease-fire. [redacted] 25X1

Nevertheless, the sticky issue of the timing for a Cuban troop withdrawal remains unresolved and the two sides are far apart. Both sides tabled proposals at the four-day Geneva meeting. South Africa publicly called for all the Cuban troops to withdraw in under a year, or roughly simultaneous with the mandated withdrawal of South African troops from Namibia. Cuba and Angola are on record with a joint proposal for a four-year withdrawal, although during the first year the Cubans would deploy northward away from the Namibian border. Cuba and Angola have, however, hinted at a willingness to be flexible and may be satisfied with a more accelerated withdrawal. [redacted] 25X1

The next round of negotiations during the week of 22 August will focus on the timing of Cuban troop withdrawal, and compromises will be necessary from both sides. With 1 September set as a deadline for an agreement, the parties have little room to stall and are under the gun to make decisions. [redacted] 25X1

Motivations of the Participants. The recent acceleration in the talks and the apparent willingness of both sides to discuss the issues seriously is a direct result of unprecedented changes in the military situation over the past ten months. Cuban augmentation since late 1987 and force deployments into southwestern Angola since March have fundamentally changed the balance of forces in the region and challenged South African regional military hegemony. [redacted] 25X1

Cuba's decision to send reinforcements to Angola last fall--and abandon its largely defensive role by moving south toward the Namibian border--probably was motivated by Castro's desire to end longstanding South African intervention in support of UNITA. Since November, Castro has sent approximately 10,000 regular troops to Angola, raising his military strength there to an estimated 45,000 to 50,000 men. Since March, Castro has concentrated a 15,000-man, five tank brigade strike force in southwestern Angola, protected by an extensive air defense umbrella, and served by a newly constructed major airbase. [redacted] 25X1

Cuba's strong military position has given Havana the upper hand on the diplomatic front and, from Castro's perspective, the current negotiations offer him the best chance of withdrawing Cuban forces from Angola under "honorable" conditions after 13 years of involvement. In Havana's view, Namibian independence would effectively end direct South African military intervention on UNITA's behalf and cut material support to the insurgents by isolating them from their primary backer. Implicit also is the recognition that Luanda is unlikely to defeat UNITA as long as Pretoria's support continues. [redacted] 25X1

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Havana's bottom line conditions for a settlement require the survival of the MPLA regime, Namibian independence, and the withdrawal of South African forces from Angola and eventually Namibia. Castro apparently is under little pressure--domestic or foreign--to accept an agreement not fully to his liking, although he probably is prepared to compromise on some issues, such as a timetable for Cuban withdrawal. [REDACTED]

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Angola shares Havana's basic assumptions about the military situation and the negotiations. Luanda actively sought Cuban augmentation last year and urged the Cubans to take a more direct combat role to drive the South Africans out of Angola. Various sources indicate, moreover, that the MPLA regime--with its own survival at stake--is wary of a rapid Cuban troop withdrawal that might threaten its own security. Some in the Angolan hierarchy argue against hasty concessions in the belief that the US will be more supportive after the November elections. [REDACTED]

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On the other hand, Luanda is frustrated by its inability to fight both South Africa and UNITA, and sees a regional settlement as the best way to remove South Africa from the scene even if it loses its Cuban benefactors. Several sources also report that Angolan leaders have grown weary of the prolonged and expensive Cuban presence and that they have had little say in Cuban military decision-making. Despite reports of major differences between Luanda and Havana over Cuban troop withdrawal, however, the Angolans probably have little choice but to follow Cuba's lead. [REDACTED]

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South Africa probably is more concerned by what it could lose in the negotiations than by what it could gain. Pretoria apparently was surprised by the speed of the Cuban military moves and the change in the military balance. For Pretoria, the stakes in the negotiations are higher than ever, and its primary objective is to secure withdrawal of Cuban troops from Angola. Pretoria calculates that failure to agree on Cuban troop withdrawal would negate its promises on Namibian independence. Unlike past negotiations, however, Pretoria probably believes that it might have to pay a stiff price if the talks break down. In effect, Pretoria is being forced to choose between independence for Namibia or a costly military escalation. [REDACTED]

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Some officials apparently believe that the time has come to end South Africa's 73-year rule in Namibia. In addition to the increased military risks, high financial costs of Namibian occupation and rising domestic pressure against Angolan adventures have pushed South Africa into the negotiations. In the past, President Botha and the military have opposed implementation of the UN plan largely because of the security implications of having a hostile SWAPO-led government in Namibia. Botha may have reconsidered his opposition to the UN plan in return for consideration of an accelerated Cuban troop withdrawal from Angola. [REDACTED]

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Security questions and the specter of a domestic right-wing backlash, however, probably will continue to drive Pretoria's negotiating position. Demands for concessions to accommodate these concerns could intrude on the negotiations. Pretoria has stipulated that approval of the settlement plan is conditioned on assurances regarding funding for the settlement process and

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guarantees of financial support for Namibia to replace South Africa's annual contribution of some \$400-600 million--more than one-third of the Namibian budget. Pretoria has also brought up the removal of African National Congress training camps in Angola as a possible condition for a settlement. [redacted]

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Reconciliation and an End to the Civil War. Reconciliation between the MPLA government and UNITA to end the civil war has been pushed off on a separate track and is not part of the current negotiations. Although all the parties assert, in one form or another, that the civil war can only be ended by a political settlement, substantial disagreement exists on how this is to be accomplished. Luanda and Havana have refused to negotiate a reconciliation with UNITA, and Pretoria has backed off from its early demands that UNITA be included in the talks. [redacted]

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UNITA has formulated several proposals over the years that call for direct MPLA-UNITA talks leading to an interim government or a power-sharing arrangement and popular elections. Savimbi recently tried to enlist support from several friendly African countries to mediate a reconciliation agreement, and he has obtained promises from Ivory Coast, Morocco, and Zaire, among others, to intercede with Luanda. [redacted]

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Luanda firmly rejects reconciliation or any form of power sharing with Savimbi or UNITA. Instead, Luanda offers a so called "harmonization" program that is in effect clemency for UNITA rank and file, but not for Savimbi. On occasion, MPLA members have met with UNITA representatives abroad, but the meetings have not developed into more productive contacts and primarily are intended to sow dissension within the insurgent leadership by suggesting that a solution is possible if Savimbi steps down. [redacted]

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Luanda reacted sharply to the recent offers of African mediation and was quick to reject initiatives from Zaire, Morocco, and Ivory Coast. The government pressed the point that relations with UNITA are purely an internal matter and that mediation offers represented unfriendly behavior. Luanda also has argued that internal political discussions should be delayed until after a regional political settlement, probably in the belief that it would be dealing with a weakened UNITA. [redacted]

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Soviet Position

The Soviets apparently believe that prospects for a settlement are good and have commented favorably on recent progress made at the negotiations. The Soviets viewed South African acceptance in principle of UN Resolution 435 at the New York talks as a positive step in the negotiations, but they appear to remain skeptical of South Africa's intentions to implement the plan. Although the Soviets are not a direct participant in the negotiations, they have had an observer at all rounds of the talks to monitor the situation. Deputy Foreign Minister Adamishin publicly asserted before the Geneva round that the USSR would use "all the authority of its policy to help increase positive relations among the sides participating in the talks" and that Moscow is seeking to ensure a settlement is reached "as quickly as possible." [redacted]

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Moscow and Havana appear to be generally in agreement on the advantages of pursuing a negotiated solution backed by military force. In Moscow's view, the Cuban augmentation served Soviet interests by forcing Pretoria to rethink its military commitment. The augmentation almost certainly was made with Moscow's full knowledge and approval. The Soviets have commented favorably on the increased Cuban troop presence, facilitated some troop movements, and provided additional military equipment to the Cubans. [redacted]

While it does not appear that the Soviets have had substantial problems with the Cuban-Angolan negotiating positions, differences could emerge over the timing of a Cuban troop withdrawal. In the event that the Cubans--in order to avoid appearing to capitulate to South African pressure--hold out for a longer withdrawal timetable than Moscow thinks would be necessary to preserve Angolan security, the Soviets might press Havana to be more flexible to prevent a breakdown of the talks. [redacted]

The Soviets continue to contend that national reconciliation can only be addressed after the current negotiations yield an agreement on Cuban troop withdrawal and implementation of UN 435, according to the US Embassy in Moscow. Soviet Africa Institute specialists also commented in late July that the current negotiations have stretched Luanda's manpower and that a parallel set of discussions on national reconciliation is beyond Luanda's diplomatic capabilities. [redacted]

The Soviets have stated publicly that they will continue to provide military aid to the MPLA and that their aid is not an issue to be negotiated. Soviet military deliveries to Angola probably will reach approximately \$1.5 billion this year, about the same level of assistance as last year. Since November, Soviet deliveries have included additional Mi-17 and Mi-35 helicopters, air defense equipment, tanks and other armored vehicles, military trucks, and nearly all of Angola's munitions. The Soviets also maintain a military advisory contingent of roughly 1,200 men in Angola which provides vital staff and technical support to the Angolan Army. [redacted]

Vorontsov's Likely Stance

Vorontsov probably will reiterate the Soviet belief that Angola should not be an issue for US-Soviet confrontation and that Washington and Moscow should cooperate in seeking a regional settlement. He may urge the US to press South Africa and UNITA to adhere to a cease-fire and encourage South Africa to be more flexible on the issue of the Cuban troop withdrawal timetable. [redacted]


Vorontsov probably will state that Moscow believes Luanda will seek an internal political solution once all the "external" elements of the Angolan problem are resolved. He likely will say, however, that the MPLA at present is so edgy on the question of national reconciliation that it is not in the US or Soviet interest to push it on the issue. [redacted]

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Vorontsov may criticize continued US aid to UNITA--citing its inappropriateness in light of the US role as a mediator--and US use of Zaire as a conduit. Adamishin has done so in his talks with Assistant Secretary Crocker. Vorontsov may argue that US aid to UNITA must be cut off before national reconciliation can be addressed. While maintaining that Soviet aid to its ally is a bilateral issue and therefore not negotiable, Vorontsov may suggest that after a regional settlement is implemented, and if the US agrees to reduce aid to UNITA, the USSR would be able to reduce its aid to Luanda. 

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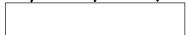
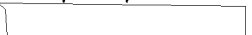


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