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TITLE : Cuban Involvement in Angola

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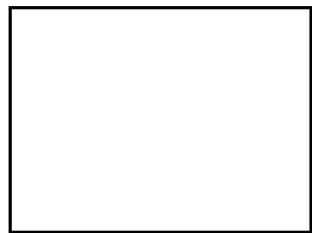
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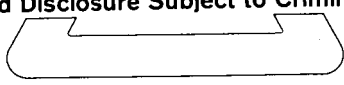


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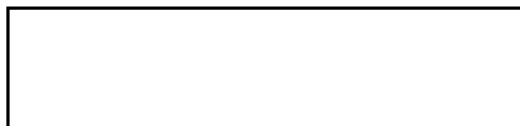


NI-1589-77  
23 June 1977


MEMORANDUM FOR: Director of Central Intelligence  
THROUGH : Deputy to the DCI for National Intelligence  
FROM : Acting NIO for Latin America  
SUBJECT : Cuban Involvement in Angola

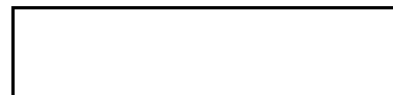
1. Action Requested: DCI signature of transmittal memorandum to Dr. Brzezinski.

2. Background: Attached is a memorandum on Cuban Involvement in Angola requested by Henry Richardson, NSC Staff Officer for Africa. The memorandum, written by ORPA with coordination by the DDO, OER, and OSR, will be one of the documents included in the Africa Review for the PRC scheduled to be held on 30 June.



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Attachment:  w/transmittal letter to Dr. Brzezinski



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NI-1589-77

SUBJECT: Cuban Involvement in Angola

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The Director of Central Intelligence

Washington, D. C. 20505

29 JUN 1977

MEMORANDUM FOR: The Honorable Zbigniew Brzezinski  
Assistant to the President  
for National Security Affairs

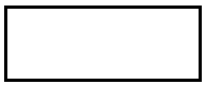
SUBJECT : Cuban Involvement in Angola

Attached is a memorandum on Cuban Involvement in Angola which was requested by Henry Richardson, the NSC Staff Officer for Africa. It will be one of the documents included in the Africa Review by the PRC scheduled for 30 June 1977.

/s/ Stansfield Turner

STANSFIELD TURNER

Attachment: (1) as stated -



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SUBJECT: Cuban Involvement in Angola

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22 June 1977

MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: Cuban Involvement in Angola

SUMMARY

Cuban support for the Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA) began in the early 1960s. Until 1975, however, the number of Cubans serving with the MPLA probably never went beyond a few hundred. The Cuban intervention began on a large scale in September 1975. By March 1976, the Cuban presence had reached an estimated 20,000. With the civil war essentially ended, Havana began a gradual withdrawal of its combat forces. By September, however, the withdrawal was apparently stopped as a result of increased insurgent activity. From September 1976 to May 1977, the total Cuban presence probably remained fairly constant at an estimated level of 10,000 to 14,500.

The Castro regime is clearly worried by the deteriorating situation in Angola. The difficulties are considerable. Angola is experiencing worsening economic and social conditions; political instability was aggravated by the attempted coup on May 27--a coup suppressed by Cuban, not Angolan troops; the Cuban presence is increasingly resented by Angolans; and the defeat of the Katangan invaders has kindled fears of a Zairian military retaliation.

So far the Cuban response has been escalation. During May six Cuban ships sailed to Angola carrying troops and military equipment. The Cuban airlift capacity was also utilized. [redacted] between 3,000 and 4,000 Cubans were sent to Angola in May, increasing the total number to an estimated 13,000 to 18,500.

Even though Cuba's military involvement in Angola has been greater than either Moscow or Havana anticipated, it is unlikely that the limit of Cuba's support has been reached. If necessary, Castro probably would be willing to raise the

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number of combat troops by an additional 5,000 to 7,000 if he was assured of continued Soviet support. If Havana were faced with a need for an expansion significantly beyond this number, the Cuban leadership might be forced to reassess its policy. Continued commitment would be unlikely without strong Soviet support and some signs of military progress against the insurgents. Without these ingredients, the Castro regime would probably begin to encourage a negotiated solution.

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DISCUSSION

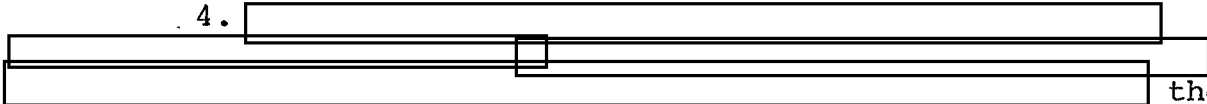
1. Cuban support for the MPLA began in the early 1960s as an extension to Africa of the Castro regime's policy of supporting revolutionary movements in Latin America. Havana's connection with the MPLA was never broken. For more than a decade, the Cubans have been sending arms, supplies, and advisers to MPLA bases in Africa, training MPLA representatives in Cuba, and giving the MPLA strong propaganda support. Until September 1975, however, the level of Cuban support had been low. The number of Cubans serving with the MPLA probably never exceeded a few hundred during this entire period and for most of the time probably was between 20 and 40 men.

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3. The first Cuban troops left for Angola--by ship-- during the first week of September 1975. Five Cuban ships with men and/or military equipment sailed to Angola in September and October. On September 30 the Cuban airlift to Angola began, with five Cuban planes carrying men and arms for Angola. By the end of October there were probably at least 2,000 Cuban troops in Angola.

4.



the Cubans suffered heavy losses in the early stage of the war. In mid-October, when the Cuban forces found themselves in danger of being overwhelmed by a drive by the National Front

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for the Liberation of Angola (FNLA) from the north and a South African invasion from the south, Castro was faced with the choice of withdrawing or augmenting the force already committed. He chose the latter course.

5. In November the Cuban airlift stepped up markedly and averaged five flights per week. During December, the sealift also increased, with 10 Cuban vessels sailing for Angola in that month alone. Both the airlift and sealift continued until the Cuban presence had reached a level estimated by the Intelligence Community in mid-1976 to be between 13,500 and 17,000 men. Subsequently, additional information became available causing the estimate of the maximum Cuban presence to be raised to approximately 20,000 men.

6. With the civil war essentially ended in early 1976, Cuban leaders began to make a number of public and private statements in April and May indicating that a gradual withdrawal of Cuban forces had started or would begin soon. Havana suppressed all details of the withdrawal, however, to keep its options open and avoid the restraint of a set schedule. Between mid-March and mid-August 1975, ship convoys began to return combat troops from Angola to Cuba. Some military personnel also were returned to Cuba by air.

7. By September, however, the withdrawal hit a snag following the MPLA's inability to consolidate its gains in the face of a persistent insurgency in northern and southern Angola. From mid-1976 to early May 1977, the Cuban presence remained fairly static at a level estimated to be between 10,000 and 14,500 personnel. Although some military personnel were probably withdrawn during the latter half of 1976, most were apparently replaced by civilian technicians. There are probably 4,000 to 5,000 Cuban civilian technicians in Angola. Most of them, however, are believed to be reservists who have had military training and could be mobilized in place should circumstances require it.

8. In addition to combat troops, the Cuban government provided the Neto regime with a large number of military advisers tasked with organizing and training an air force, navy, militia, national police force, and a secret police force.

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9. Civilian advisers were sent to fill at least part of the vacuum created by the departure of the managerial, supervisory, and technical personnel of the colonial era. These advisers include agricultural and livestock technicians, medical personnel, advisers to help restore sugar and coffee production, merchant marine and ports advisers, and teams of construction personnel to assist in the construction of public buildings, roads, airfields, and in the creation of a construction industry. Havana also sent three fleets of fishing boats to operate out of Angolan ports.

10. To help the MPLA broaden its political base, the Cubans sent experts in the formation of mass organizations and a vanguard party of political cadre. To complement the development of a political structure, advisers were also sent to develop a national education system. Some Angolans have apparently also been sent to Cuba for training.

11. This extensive presence became increasingly evident throughout the country and the image of Cubans as a new breed of colonialists has spread. The Cubans are frequently criticized for being arrogant and for ignoring African sensibilities. They are also faulted for their tendency to take command of a given situation instead of acting as advisers. Angolan resentment also stems from the Cuban and Soviet monopolization of the few remaining luxuries in the country and the fact that their presence has not brought any economic progress or resulted in the elimination of the insurgent threat.

#### The Situation Today

12. The Cuban government is clearly worried by the mounting problems it faces in Angola. What appeared last year as a relatively easy triumph for Cuban "internationalism" is now becoming a foreign policy quagmire. From the Cuban viewpoint, the difficulties are many and serious:

--Angola is experiencing deteriorating economic and social conditions;

--political instability was heightened by the uprising on May 27--the Cubans reportedly played a critical role in putting down the revolt;

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--there is increasing resentment among Angolans toward the Cuban presence; and

--the defeat of the Katangan invaders has kindled fears of a Zairian military retaliation.

13. So far, the Cuban response has been escalation. In mid-April and early May of this year the Cuban government began activating reservists for service in Africa. [redacted]

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[redacted] not less than 4,000 reservists were activated during this period. All apparently were asked to volunteer for one year of service in Angola.

14. Six Cuban merchant ships sailed from Cuba for Angola in May, compared with an average of about two per month since the end of the civil war. At least three of the ships apparently carried a mix of troops and military equipment (see Table). The urgency felt by the Cubans was demonstrated by the frantic nature of the loading process. Work continued around the clock, the hurried pace caused at least one serious accident, and confusion was rampant.

15. During the escalation the Cubans also used their airlift capability. [redacted] has reported that since early May, the twice-weekly Cubana flights--utilizing Soviet leased and piloted IL-62 aircraft--were flying to Angola with full capacity loads of 136 passengers and returning to Havana nearly empty. [redacted] reported that the same pattern was being followed by the weekly flights by the Cuban-owned Bristol Britannia aircraft, which has an 88-passenger capacity.

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16. The flights in May reportedly carried both civilian and military personnel. During the month there were nine IL-62 flights and five Bristol Britannia flights permitting a maximum total of 1,650 seats in each direction. Given the reported small number of passengers from Angola to Cuba, the net influx of Cuban personnel by air could have been as high as 1,500 persons in May alone.

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[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] This would increase the estimated size of the Cuban presence in Angola to 13,000 to 18,500. An estimated 4,000 to 5,000 are civilian technicians, most of whom are believed to be reservists who could be mobilized in place if necessary.

18. Other indications of Cuban concern have appeared in recent weeks. Raul Castro, Cuba's Armed Forces Minister and number two man in the Cuban leadership, made a hastily arranged and unannounced visit to Angola after the uprising in May. Moreover, Angola may have been the primary reason for a rare meeting of the Central Committee of the Cuban Communist Party on June 10. During Raul Castro's trip, he reportedly inspected the critical military zones, including Cabinda, and Angola's borders with Zaire and Namibia. The communique issued after his visit pledged continued Cuban support for the beleaguered Neto regime and suggests that the Cubans are not yet ready to start looking for a way out.

#### The Outlook

19. The fresh troops arriving from Cuba will probably enable Neto to survive the current crisis. Their presence probably will enable the Angolan government to bring the insurgency in Cabinda and northern Angola under control. There have been several reports indicating that an influx of Cuban troops into Cabinda has occurred in recent weeks. Some minor success against Jonas Savimbo's UNITA forces in the south also may be achieved. Over the long term, however, the Cuban/MPLA forces will probably be unable to effectively neutralize the insurgent threat without a much larger military force.

20. Even though Cuba's military involvement in Angola has been much greater than either Havana or Moscow anticipated, the rapid reinforcement indicates that the limit of Havana's support has not yet been reached. Despite the apparent addition of some 3,000 to 4,000 soldiers, Cuba still faces the likelihood of a steadily worsening situation accompanied by pressures for additional military and technical support. With few options available, Castro may escalate further; he probably would be willing to raise the number of combat troops by an additional 5,000 to 7,000. In the meantime Cuba will probably press some East European nations and the USSR for additional material aid as well as some African nations for greater moral support.

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21. The economic burden of Angola is not yet an important constraint on Cuban policymakers. The estimated 13,000 to 18,500 men now stationed in Angola represent only a small fraction of Cuba's labor force and an economic drain of about \$40 million to \$45 million annually--only 0.5 percent of total GNP--assuming average worker productivity and zero Cuban unemployment. Actual maintenance costs are probably even less. The diversion of merchant vessels for logistical support involves at most 10 percent of the Cuban fleet and a financial loss of \$15 million annually if these vessels were available for charter.

22. Virtually all other costs of the Cuban involvement are borne by the USSR. Moscow has replaced--probably on a grant basis--most of the military equipment which Havana has sent to Angola. Most of the equipment used in Angola, however, has been furnished directly by the Soviet Union. The Soviets have loaned Soviet planes and pilots to facilitate Cuban logistics and have leased Cuba two long-range IL-62 aircraft for twice-weekly flights to Luanda. This has enabled Havana to continue uninterrupted its civil air service on Cuba's current route network.

23. While the real economic cost is relatively small, Havana is reportedly becoming increasingly concerned over the Cuban populace's exaggerated perceptions of the cost of the Cuban involvement in Angola. Few Cubans have detailed knowledge of Havana's overall commitment in Angola, but they are aware that the highly visible call-up of forces has coincided with a sharp economic downturn. The Cuban leaders have consistently and correctly maintained in all of their public announcements that the island's economic downturn is due to low world sugar prices. Nevertheless, the populace apparently views the Angolan adventure as a major cause of Cuba's economic difficulties. Castro prefers to rule through genuine popular support rather than repression and does pay close attention to mass attitudes. Out of respect for public opinion, he has never told the Cuban people the full story of the intervention in Angola.

24. If Havana is faced with continued demands for a significant expansion of its forces, the Cuban leadership may find itself forced to reassess its policy. USSR's attitude toward a worsening Angolan situation will weigh heavily upon Cuba's actions. The Cuban presence

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there is dependent upon the continued full backing of Moscow. Cuba does not possess the military capabilities or the economic strength to go it alone. Even more important, Cuba itself is economically and militarily dependent upon the USSR. But their different roles in Angola may cause Moscow and Havana to develop different views on the most appropriate policy to follow. Thus, there is potential for friction--but not conflict--between the two.

25. The most likely Soviet reaction, however, will be to balk at providing financial and material support for a major expansion of the Cuban presence. At the same time, the USSR will probably refrain from attempting to dictate whether the Cubans should utilize their own resources to finance the increase. In the absence of strong Soviet pressure for a specific policy, the Cuban decision would be influenced primarily by Fidel Castro's views and secondarily by economic implications and political pressures within the Cuban leadership.

26. Castro's natural inclination would be to stick it out with President Neto. The Cuban leader probably senses that a defeat would seriously erode Cuban influence on the continent and undermine his campaign to become a major leader in the Third World. Furthermore, Castro probably realizes that an even more negative reaction would be provoked by a sudden switch of Cuba's support from Neto to another leader or faction. Finally, Castro is a confirmed revolutionary, convinced that supporting other revolutionaries--be they guerrilla fighters or legitimate governments--is a moral obligation.



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28. The position of the military will be represented by Raul Castro. His recommendations will probably have the greatest influence on Fidel's decisions. The younger Castro probably would be more willing than other members of the hierarchy to commit additional military resources to Angola. Nevertheless, he is unlikely to continue the tactics of escalation if the military situation continues to worsen, especially if the Cuban forces suffer heavy casualties. Given that situation, Raul Castro would probably decide that a negotiated settlement was necessary. If Raul were to weigh in on the side of those arguing against increased support for Angola, Fidel most probably would agree that a policy change was in order.

29. Thus, the Cubans are still committed to the Neto regime. An additional 3,000 to 4,000 troops were sent to Angola in May and Raul Castro pledged continued support during his visit in June. The Castro regime would probably be willing to raise the number of troops by an additional 5,000 to 7,000 if necessary. A further commitment, however, would be unlikely without strong Soviet support and some military progress against the insurgents. Without those ingredients the Cuban leadership would probably be forced to seek a negotiated solution.

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