

22 June 1977

TS-771547-77: Memorandum for Mr. Brzezinski from DCI

MEMORANDUM: Savimbi's Guerrilla Activities in Angola

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22 June 1977

MEMORANDUM FOR: The Director of Central Intelligence

VIA : Deputy to the Director for National Intelligence

FROM : [Redacted] National Intelligence Officer for Africa

SUBJECT : Assessment of Savimbi's Activities and Prospects in Angola

1. Action Requested: That you approve the attached memorandum on Savimbi's activities and prospects in Angola, and sign the covering note (also attached) to Mr. Brzezinski.

2. Background: Mr. Brzezinski on 8 June informed you by memorandum that the NSC needed an assessment of the present scope and longer term prospects of Savimbi's (UNITA's) guerrilla activities in Angola. He related this requirement to the forthcoming (30 June) "African review" by the PRC.

3. The attached response was prepared by the NIO/AF on the basis of materials provided by CIA/DDI and by DIA. The response has been coordinated both within CIA and by working level representatives of the NFIB agencies. The conclusion of the assessment is that:

- Savimbi's forces now move freely in an area of southcentral and southern Angola, although the Cubans and Neto's forces still occupy major towns there.
- Savimbi can survive any offensive the Cubans are likely to mount against him.
- But Savimbi's ethnically based forces probably cannot enlarge much on the territory they now control without substantial outside help.
- Savimbi's long-term prospects, over the next two years, thus depend on a decision by Havana and Moscow to negotiate or abandon Neto rather than to continue to try to break what amounts to a stalemate.

3. Recommendation: That you approve this response and forward it to Mr. Brzezinski accompanied by the covering note.



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Attachments /s/ Stansfield Turner

APPROVED: \_\_\_\_\_  
Director of Central Intelligence

DISAPPROVED: \_\_\_\_\_  
Director of Central Intelligence

TS-771547-77/1  
Copy No. 7

DATE: 27 JUN 1977

TOP SECRET  
The Director  
Central Intelligence Agency



Washington, D. C. 20505

27 JUN 1977

Dear Zbig:

The attached memorandum on Savimbi's guerrilla activities in Angola and long term prospects responds to your request to me of 8 June for an assessment to support the forthcoming Africa review by the PRC. Briefly, we believe that Savimbi has the men and materiel to survive as a guerrilla against Neto and the Cubans over the next two years, but that he will not be able to expand his present territory very much unless he has substantial outside assistance. Without such assistance, Savimbi's long term future depends mainly on whether Moscow and Havana are willing to continue to support a frustrating campaign against him.

Please let me know if you have comments or questions on this subject.

Yours,

/s/ Stansfield Turner

STANSFIELD TURNER

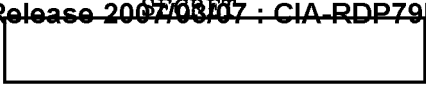
Attachment

The Honorable Zbigniew Brzezinski  
Assistant to the President for  
National Security Affairs  
The White House

TS-771547-77  
Copy No. 7

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22 June 1977

MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: Savimbi's Guerrilla Activities in Angola

Summary

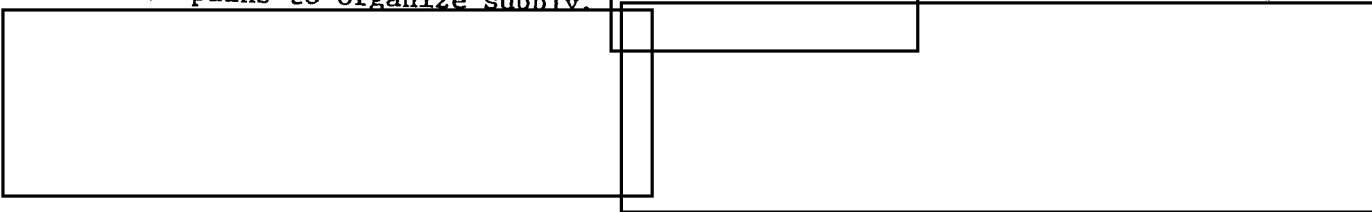
1. Jonas Savimbi's effective leadership of UNITA has kept in the field a force of about 7,000 regular and 8,000 irregular fighters; this force now moves freely within and is supported by the inhabitants of an area of southern Angola that is roughly between a third and a half of the country's territory. In this area, UNITA does not occupy the major towns, which remain in Cuban and MPLA hands, and its administrative organization is probably rudimentary, in part because operations in ethnically friendly territory do not really require much elaboration at this stage. Given this base area, and UNITA's demonstrated ability to survive major offensives against it, it has good longer-term prospects for maintaining forces in being and in effect denying southern Angola to the MPLA/Cuban regime in Luanda. At the same time, an effort by Savimbi to expand much beyond his present limits would encounter some of the same difficulties now faced by the MPLA and its Cuban supporters. Under these circumstances, Savimbi's movement is not likely to "take over" in Luanda in the foreseeable future. Its long term prospect for achieving, or more likely sharing, national power in Angola will depend on the intensity of Neto's problems within the MPLA; the duration of the Cuban commitment to Neto; and the MPLA's eventual willingness to abandon its claim to exclusive jurisdiction.

UNITA's Assets

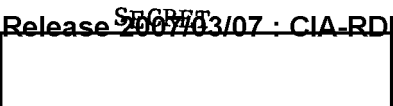
2. The major single asset of Savimbi's movement is Savimbi himself. He has impressed Americans and other foreigners as serious, hard working, realistic, intelligent, and easy to deal with. Within his movement, he insists on discipline and allows virtually no autonomy to his subordinates. This organizational principle and the force of his personality have kept UNITA free of the factionalism and feuding that have characterized the other Angolan nationalist movements.

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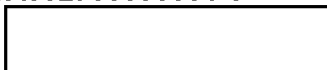
3. Among Savimbi's strengths is his attention to the welfare of his troops in the field. He commands loyalty because he appoints effective subordinates and takes pains to organize supply.



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4. These units conduct reconnaissance and patrols, man road blocks, and are the basic elements for offensive operations; larger concentrations probably conduct the "sieges" that UNITA maintains to isolate the MPLA and Cuban forces occupying towns within the UNITA area of control. A specially trained unit operates against the Benguela Railway and other rail lines and bridges. These UNITA units are armed with a variety of light infantry weapons left over from the civil war or captured from the Cuban/FAPLA forces. UNITA reportedly has 8-9 months supply of small arms ammunition. There are relatively few weapons of large calibre, although UNITA does have various sizes of mortars, bazookas, and rockets, for example. Motor transport is scarce, largely for want of fuel, and captured armored vehicles are used for static defense. In the area of their operations, UNITA forces have a logistical advantage over their opponents, as well as the advantage of operating in a familiar geographic and a friendly ethnic environment, and when used in combination with guerrilla tactics these more than balance the technical superiority of Cuban/MPLA forces operating far from base.

5. Other, so-called irregular UNITA forces, claimed to number 8,000, guard stores, participate in political indoctrination, and generally conduct themselves along what UNITA believes to be Maoist lines. Military duties for this group evidently shade off into political and social action; UNITA officials assert that, as they have gained the military initiative in southeastern Angola from the Cubans and FAPLA, greater emphasis is being placed on political action programs.

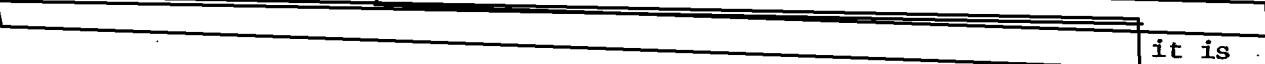
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7. The geographic limits of Savimbi's territory -- his "zone of influence" -- include most of southern and southeastern Angola, but not the southern coast nor, apparently, the far southern border with Namibia. The provinces of Cuando-Cubango, Cunene, Moxico, Mocamedes, Huila, Bie, Huambe, Benguela and parts of Cuanza Sul, Malanje, and Luanda would be included. Within this area, UNITA "controls" the countryside along and south of the Benguela railroad in that it has the allegiance of the local population, sharply limits the movement of FAPLA/Cuban forces, and is subject to only sporadic opposition from them. Notable exceptions to UNITA's control within its own zone are the towns of Cangamba, Serpa Pinto, Huambo and Bie -- all still occupied by FAPLA/Cuban garrisons.

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8. Savimbi also has foreign friends, whose support is useful but not critical at this time.



it is

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25X1 of course in the South Africans' interest to keep the Angolan regime focused on its internal insurgency problems so as to limit practical support for SWAPO's operations against targets in Namibia. UNITA has close ties with the British, [redacted]

[redacted] 2  
Zambian President Kaunda, who has had similar relationships, is an old supporter of Savimbi. The "moderate" West Africans, Senghor and Houphouet-Boigny, are also favorably inclined, but Zaire under Mobutu is not trusted by Savimbi, and the French fall in this category too. The UNITA leadership, despite its home grown quality, has considerable experience in exploiting these foreign relationships.

UNITA's Liabilities

9. Many of UNITA's strengths are also sources of weakness. Savimbi's ability to dominate the organization and enforce discipline means that, despite the existence of a group of talented subordinates who work well together, none has anything like his stature or would be able to take his place as a national Angolan figure if he were to be removed from the scene. There are signs that Savimbi is aware of and attempting to remedy this situation, but is still moving slowly in delegating authority.

10. The ethnic core of UNITA is among the Ovimbundu people of the central highlands of Angola, although the movement has been and is supported by other tribes of the southern and eastern regions and its top leadership includes Cabindans and others from outside its base area. This degree of ethnic homogeneity, along with Savimbi's talent as a mediator, is the source of much of UNITA's cohesiveness, but it simultaneously inhibits UNITA's acceptance as a national movement. If and when UNITA mounts substantial military operations outside the area in which it now moves freely, it will be moving in what is now still an alien ethnic environment. This again is a disability that Savimbi is aware of and one that he is trying to overcome, but if he does so he will probably owe more to the ineptitude and disarray in the MPLA than to his own efforts.

11. From a military standpoint too, UNITA's logistical problems would multiply as it sought to expand and, unless there had been very thorough political preparation, it probably would have to adopt more conventional tactics. In these conditions, the lack of armor and heavier firepower would become more telling as Savimbi's forces moved out of their accustomed habitats. Savimbi's success in hanging on and in keeping the FAPLA/Cuban units to the towns has encouraged him to consider a northern offensive, but unless the MPLA had collapsed internally or the Cubans had already given up, it is unlikely that he could carry such an operation through successfully without substantial foreign support.

25X1 UNITA's Prospects

12. UNITA's current thinking [redacted] indicates [redacted]

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Savimbi's basic objective is to drive the Cubans and Soviets out of Angola and replace the Neto regime with a "government of national unity" led by UNITA. But how? At one point Savimbi thought of declaring a "liberated republic" in southern Angola, but this idea smacks of ethnic separatism which he wants ultimately to overcome.

13. A safer, less spectacular, but in some ways more difficult course would be to develop UNITA's political and administrative apparatus in the area it now largely controls, and to use this as a secure base for politico-military operations against the MPLA regime. Such a longer range strategy could make use of the underground assets UNITA may have in Luanda and other coastal and northern cities, whose takeover at some point will be essential to long term success. But this strategy assumes that Neto and the Cubans will continue to stumble and that [redacted] after a couple years Neto will collapse for primarily internal reasons. Savimbi's pressures could, of course, contribute to such a collapse or to a change of leadership in the MPLA; they might in time also force the MPLA to some kind of compromise with Savimbi -- although there are now no indications that Neto is considering a deal. But if Neto does not cave in one way or another, and the Cubans remain committed to defend him, UNITA would remain an essentially regional insurgency which could be contained though not suppressed.

14. The answer to Savimbi's dilemma thus does not lie primarily with his own assets and liabilities but with those of his opponents in Luanda and Havana -- and Moscow. As long as Castro continued to receive strong Soviet backing and could see some military progress against the insurgents, he probably would be willing to commit additional civilian resources and combat troops to Angola beyond the 3-4,000 Cubans arriving there now. Savimbi too can survive, but the key to his doing more than that is in the will of the Cubans to continue to provide those technical and military services that allow the Neto regime to survive as the "government" of Angola.

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