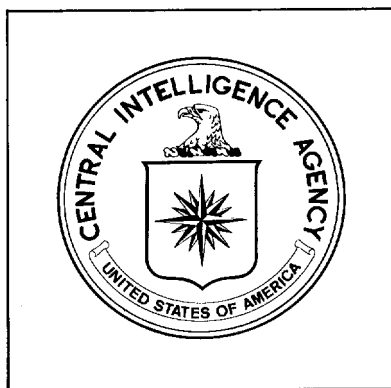


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No. 0653-75
April 10, 1975

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§ 5B (1), (2), and (3)
Automatically declassified
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MIDDLE EAST – AFRICA – SOUTH ASIA

This publication is prepared for regional specialists in the Washington community by the Middle East - Africa Division, Office of Current Intelligence, with occasional contributions from other offices within the Directorate of Intelligence. Comments and queries are welcome. They should be directed to the authors of the individual articles.

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Egypt

Results of Arafat's Visit to Cairo

Egypt's President Sadat apparently made few concessions to Palestine Liberation Organization chairman Yasir Arafat during his visit to Cairo this week. According to sketchy accounts of their meeting, the president promised only that Egypt would continue its efforts to "guarantee" PLO participation at Geneva. It was also agreed that the two would work toward an early meeting of the "confrontation forces"--Egypt, Syria, and the PLO--to coordinate their strategies. Such a meeting is likely before the Arab summit in June.

In Cairo, Arafat may have given more than he received. According to press reports, he insisted that the PLO must attend the Geneva conference if the substance of the Palestinian problem was to be discussed, but conceded that the military secretariat of the 20-member Arab League could speak on behalf of the Palestinians if the conference were to consider only another round of military disengagement agreements. If confirmed, such a concession would mark a significant shift in Arafat's position toward that of Sadat, who recently suggested that the Arab League could represent the Palestinians at Geneva. Sadat considers this a possible way around Israel's objections to negotiating with the PLO.

Despite claims of a healing in the Egypt-PLO rift, Sadat is probably not confident that he has won lasting concessions from Arafat. Continued strains are reflected in the Cairo media's treatment of the Sadat-Arafat meeting. Although emphasizing the positive, the press has said openly that complete

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harmony on strategy and tactics is always "a difficult matter" even among those with common objectives.

Commentators have laid stress on Egypt's importance to the Palestinian movement, acknowledging that the Palestinian issue is the crux of the Middle East problem, but reminding readers that the issue would not have risen to its current importance without Egypt's action. (CONFIDENTIAL)



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Angola

Another Mediating Organization Set Up

The military commanders of the three liberation groups that share power in Angola's transitional government issued a communique on April 8 in which they disavowed the further use of force to settle disputes among their organizations. The communique follows almost two weeks of intermittent fighting in Luanda between two of the groups. Fighting finally tapered off last week, but it could flare up again at any time.

The communique notes that the three groups will establish a "non-partisan" organization to be called the "Preventive Force." The force will be responsible for mediating disputes among the competing liberation groups. The groups will each contribute an equal number of personnel to the force.

At this time there is no reason to believe that the new force will live up to its responsibility. It will join an already cumbersome network of joint organizations--political, military, and police--charged with maintaining order and resolving conflicts among the groups. None of these joint organizations have succeeded in rising above the interests of the individual groups represented, and the Preventive Force is unlikely to prove the exception. (CONFIDENTIAL)

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Angola-Namibia

Border Incident

The South African defense minister publicized on April 9 a recent minor shooting incident on the Angola-Namibia (South-West Africa) border between a South African patrol and unknown elements on the Angolan side. According to the US consul general in Luanda, the incident apparently took place late last month and involved elements of the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA), which is establishing a strong presence in southern Angola.

The incident itself is of little importance, and similar events can be expected from time to time. The encounter may, however, draw international attention to separatist sentiment in southern Angola that could be interpreted by some observers as another obstacle in the territory's transition to independence. In our view, this separatist sentiment is weak and there is little likelihood it will further complicate Angola's move toward independence.

In some respects, southern Angola has long been a world unto itself. The Portuguese did not really establish their control over the area--particularly that portion in the extreme south populated by the Cuanhama tribe--until just before World War I. During the war, the Portuguese were forced to fall back because of German agitation among the Cuanhama.

Lisbon virtually wrote off the area until the early 1960s, when Portuguese development of the territory had pushed southward. By this time, the Cuanhama had become deeply involved in the nationalism

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that was developing among the Ovambo, their parent tribe in Namibia. This movement eventually led to the formation of the South-West Africa People's Organization (SWAPO), which is leading the insurgency against South Africa's control of Namibia.

Some nationalists on both sides of the border have favored the establishment of a separate Ovambo state made up of a portion of southern Angola and northern Namibia. The idea has not gained much momentum over the years, and SWAPO has repeatedly disavowed any support for a separate Ovambo state while maintaining its goal of independence for all of Namibia. Angola's forthcoming independence, however, has probably sparked some renewed interest in the idea of a separate Ovambo state.

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[REDACTED] the recent incident along the border was provoked by Ovambo elements within UNITA who favor a separate state. The leader of these elements is believed to be UNITA's director for southern Angola, who was born in Namibia and has close ties with SWAPO.

In a press conference in southern Angola on April 3, after the border incident had become known in the territory, UNITA's director for southern Angola defended his organization's right to engage in political activity in the area, but failed to give a satisfactory explanation for the incident. The US consul in Luanda reports that a small band of UNITA irregulars apparently seized a Portuguese border post and expelled the Portuguese into Namibia, but no definitive picture of the incident has emerged so far.

The South Africans who would probably like to believe there is some movement for a separate Ovambo state emerging in the area, might be tempted to play

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up the separatist issue as a psychological ploy to disrupt SWAPO. The UN deadline for the end of South Africa's occupation of the trust territory is May 30, but Pretoria is unwilling to relinquish control by that date. (CONFIDENTIAL)

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