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**Interagency  
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Memorandum**

*Angola: Short-Term Military and  
Political Prospects*

**Secret**

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INTERAGENCY INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM\*

ANGOLA: Short-Term Military and Political Prospects\*\*

PRECIS

The prospects for Angola are bleak. The fighting shows every sign of continuing indefinitely. Neither the Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA) nor its adversaries -- the National Front for the Liberation of Angola (FNLA) and the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA) -- can hope to gain effective military control over all of Angola in the near term. Prospects for a political solution are equally remote, since at present there exists no basis for agreement among the three movements for participation in a government of national unity.

The military advantage in Angola already appears to be shifting once again in favor of the MPLA, largely owing to substantially increased foreign military assistance. Angola's strong ethnic and regional divisions, reflected in the three liberation movements and reinforced by the fighting among them, will make it exceedingly difficult for any one movement to gain effective political and military control over the entire country. Nevertheless, it may soon be possible for the MPLA to challenge the FNLA and UNITA in their ethnic strongholds in the north and south and to extend its military presence throughout much of the territory. Even so, the MPLA would continue to be threatened by serious political and military opposition, and its Luanda-based regime would be both politically and economically unstable, possibly for years to come.

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\* *This memorandum was drafted by CIA and was reviewed by representatives of State/INR, DIA, and CIA.*

\*\* *See also Interagency Intelligence Memorandum: The Short-Term Outlook for Angola, 31 October 1975.*

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Ideally, some kind of political solution could be found in which all three of Angola's liberation groups could participate in a government of national unity. The major obstacle to a government of national unity is the MPLA, which has arrogated to itself the role of Portugal's successor. It has been encouraged to maintain an uncompromising stand toward its rivals by the massive military and political support it is receiving from the Soviet Union and Cuba.

The future of the FNLA and UNITA depends on their ability to force the MPLA, either militarily or politically, into accepting them into a government of national unity. While this seems to be UNITA's preferred option, it is less certain that the FNLA would even now be preparing to accept a power-sharing arrangement with the MPLA. Their ability to force a military stalemate depends in part on their obtaining continued military assistance on a par with that provided the MPLA by Moscow and Havana. Without this support FNLA-UNITA strength is likely to erode gradually, leaving them dependent on foreign political pressure to convince the MPLA to agree to a coalition government.

Equally important is the ability of the two movements, which have both suffered serious organizational weaknesses in the past, to survive the likely intensification of MPLA military pressure. Moreover, given the undercurrent of mistrust and suspicion that still exists between the FNLA and UNITA, their continued political and military cooperation cannot be counted as certain.

The MPLA's political dominance is by no means assured. The MPLA's African supporters have mounted a campaign to reverse the Organization of African Unity's (OAU) policy of neutrality toward Angola and gain OAU endorsement of the MPLA. The longer the fighting continues without a political solution in sight the greater will be the pressure within the OAU to grant recognition to the MPLA in order to avoid protracted and acrimonious debate over the Angola problem, which has already placed severe strains on African unity.

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Initially, Portugal's refusal to recognize either of the self-proclaimed "governments" in Angola influenced many non-African countries to remain neutral. Leftist pressures in Lisbon and "radical" African pressure on the OAU to recognize the MPLA continue, however. If Lisbon and the OAU, or even significant numbers of OAU members, recognize the MPLA regime, there will be little reason for other countries not to follow suit. If Lisbon refuses to extend recognition, its position eventually will become irrelevant -- if it hasn't already -- and more countries will look to the OAU for guidance on recognition.

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DISCUSSION

The Military Situation

1. The current level of fighting is being sustained by foreign involvement with the seesaw pattern of military successes achieved by the warring sides a reflection of the level of foreign assistance. Prior to and after liberation on 11 November, the FNLA/UNITA side had made important advances at the expense of the Popular Movement. The tide has now turned with the MPLA moving on the offensive in a number of fronts.

2. The MPLA's improving military position is the result of a massive resupply effort by the Soviet Union, the presence of Soviet technicians and advisers, and several thousand professional Cuban troops within the Popular Movement's military forces. So far both Moscow and Havana have shown a willingness to continue their support at whatever level is necessary to enable the MPLA to prevail in the military struggle, i.e., more than to match any external assistance given the MPLA's opponents. It is possible, however, that Moscow -- in response to strong diplomatic pressure from Washington or a sharp reversal in the MPLA's military fortunes -- might encourage the formation of an MPLA-dominated coalition government or at least initiate discussions toward some other compromise arrangement such as federation.

3. The FNLA and UNITA cannot hope to match these levels of assistance from any of its African supporters. Pretoria will undoubtedly continue to provide material assistance even though it may withdraw its troops, but cannot hope to match the amount of Soviet and Cuban support for the MPLA. Zaire, the other major supporter of the FNLA and UNITA, is undergoing a severe financial crisis which will act as a steady drain on the resources in both men and material that it can provide. China, once a major source of material support for the FNLA, has backed away from any direct assistance in order not to jeopardize its good standing in the broader African community.

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4. The MPLA had fallen back about as far as it could afford to and with the unprecedented assistance of the Soviets and Cubans has launched a counteroffensive, which has blunted its rivals' advance on the capital. Employing 122-mm rockets manned by Cubans, the Popular Movement has stopped the FNLA's advance on Luanda, once within ten miles of the city. The MPLA captured the FNLA stronghold of Caxito, some 40 miles from Luanda and may push the FNLA back even further. The FNLA has established a defensive line at the Lifune River, which could be overrun at any time, despite substantial Zairian backing with men and equipment.

5. Thus far, Cabinda and its oil wealth remain firmly under MPLA control. A Zairian-led effort by the Front for the Liberation of the Enclave of Cabinda in early November failed. Another attempt is virtually certain but even with a substantially increased Zairian effort, the likelihood of success is problematic. The recent pattern of FNLA and UNITA reversals has given their supporters new grounds for concern over this support -- which is vital if the FNLA and UNITA are to have any prospect of success against the Popular Front.

6. The success of the drive from the south along Angola's coast by the FNLA and UNITA to a point about 100 miles from Luanda can be attributed to the participation of several hundred South African and a few Portuguese professional soldiers who understand the tactics and logistics of such a campaign. Until recently, the campaign was also helped somewhat by the tendency of the MPLA to give ground rather than sustain heavy losses.

7. The intense publicity focused on South Africa's role in Angola has already jeopardized Pretoria's carefully nurtured policy of detente with black Africa and is forcing South Africa to reconsider its involvement. The South African government has implied that it will withdraw its forces rather than risk them in heavy fighting so far north,

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where the presence of South African troops cannot be justified to black African nations on Pretoria's pretext that South Africa is protecting its own interests along the Angola-Namibia border. Without South African participation, the FNLA and UNITA cannot sustain their northward advance and may not be able to hold the territory they now have in the face of heavy Soviet weapons manned by Cuban troops.

8. Charges of massive South African involvement are being widely disseminated by the MPLA and its African supporters. In African eyes, the presence of significant numbers of white troops discredits the FNLA and UNITA by lending credence to charges that they are dominated and manipulated by foreigners. Although some African states have been willing to tolerate South African participation so long as it was nominal and reasonably well concealed, they cannot justify open South African participation and may be forced to denounce it.

9. Nigeria, for example, recently recognized the MPLA regime. The Nigerian decision to reverse its position of neutrality toward Angola's liberation groups was taken principally because of the growing attention being given to the presence of South African forces in Angola. Although the Nigerians have serious misgivings about Soviet support for the MPLA as well, and hope the MPLA will not become a puppet of Moscow, those misgivings pale in relation to Nigeria's antipathy toward the white minority regime in Pretoria and its intervention in Angola.

#### The Political Situation

10. At the present time the MPLA's political future is by no means assured, at least over the short term. It has not been able to gain overwhelming international recognition of its self-proclaimed government. The surge of recognitions from Communist, Third World, and African countries seems to have peaked for the time being, with only 27 countries, including 11 African, recognizing the Neto government as of 25 November. Nigeria's decision on 25 November to abandon its policy of neutrality and recognize the MPLA "government" may, however, be a turning point in the MPLA's favor.

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11. If the FNLA and UNITA cannot maintain their military effectiveness, they can only hope that international opinion will uphold their right to participate in an independent Angolan government and convince the MPLA to accept a political compromise. The danger for the FNLA and UNITA is that their military credibility will erode to the point that the MPLA regime will attract broad international recognition as the sovereign power in Angola. This would put the FNLA and UNITA in a position of rebellion against universally recognized authority and make it extremely difficult for them to attract foreign military or political support.

12. Most countries outside Africa are ill-informed on the situation in Angola and they will maintain a wait-and-see policy regarding recognition. Many governments were strongly influenced by Portugal's position when it relinquished sovereignty to the "Angola people," and decided not to recognize either of the "governments" established by the liberation groups.

13. Most African states are supporting the policy of neutrality called for by the Organization of African Unity. At the same time, a drive is underway to win OAU endorsement of the MPLA's regime. Somalia, which has recognized the MPLA, has called for an OAU emergency summit meeting to discuss Angola. The MPLA's African supporters are in the forefront of the drive for the summit and they apparently see a good chance to gain official OAU endorsement of the Popular Movement's regime as the sole legitimate government in Angola. If the drive continues to gain momentum, the summit could be held within a week or so.

14. Many countries fear the effect of airing African differences at a summit, however, and their desire for a Foreign Ministers meeting instead may prevail. In either case, an OAU meeting may not result in an agreed African position. If it fails to do so, some African countries will continue to wait

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for the situation inside Angola to be clarified and the MPLA is likely to be the main beneficiary. Others may feel at liberty to recognize one of the contending regimes.

15. In summary, the prognosis is not good for Angola. Even if the MPLA cannot eliminate the FNLA and UNITA, their influence as a strong force will be diminished in the face of continued MPLA pressure, backed by substantial material and political support from the Soviets' and the latter's allies.

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