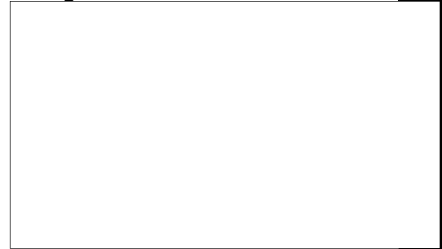




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**Mozambique:
Are the Cubans Coming?**



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An Intelligence Assessment

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ALA 82-10173J

December 1982

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Mozambique: Are the Cubans Coming?



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An Intelligence Assessment

This assessment was prepared by

Office of African and Latin American
Analysis, with a contribution from the Office of
Soviet Analysis. Comments and queries are welcome
and may be directed to the Chief, Southern Africa
Division, ALA,

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The paper was coordinated with the National
Intelligence Council and the Directorate of
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**Mozambique:
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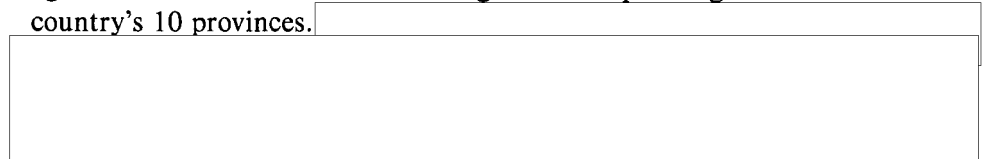
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Key Judgments

*Information available
as of 25 December 1982
was used in this report.*

We believe that during the next few months Mozambican President Machel may call for Cuban combat forces to help his government in its war against South African-backed insurgents now operating in most of the country's 10 provinces.

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The meeting in mid-December between senior South African and Mozambican officials to discuss mutual security concerns could delay a request by Machel for Cuban troops. Given the failure of the two sides to resolve less serious problems in the past, however, we doubt that they will be able to reach a political accommodation that would lead Pretoria to rein in the anti-Machel insurgents. As a result, we expect Machel's situation to continue to deteriorate. It is difficult to predict exactly when the regime will view the insurgent threat as dire enough to call for Cuban forces, but Machel is already under sufficient pressure, in our view, to make such a request at any time.

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The USSR and Cuba, in our judgment, would probably agree to send a limited number of Cuban troops to Mozambique if they deemed this essential to maintaining a pro-Soviet, Marxist regime in Maputo. The Soviets would probably conclude that a failure to move decisively to keep the Mozambican regime in power would cast doubt on the USSR's reliability in the eyes of its other Third World allies and would encourage the United States to challenge its interests elsewhere.

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We believe that between 3,000 and 5,000 Cuban troops would initially be sent; more might follow later. On the basis of its experience in Angola and Ethiopia, Havana probably would judge that a force of this size would be adequate to handle the current situation in Mozambique. The initial contingent would probably consist of at least one brigade—approximately 2,000 to 3,000 personnel—from Cuba's forces in Ethiopia, supplemented by additional troops from Angola. Havana, in our view, would be unlikely to replace these forces unless the security situations in Ethiopia or Angola deteriorated markedly. We believe Havana would be less likely to send troops to Mozambique directly from Cuba because of the greater logistical problems involved.

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An initial troop contingent would probably be airlifted, and this could take place in a matter of days. Before sending troops, the Soviets might deliver additional heavy equipment by sea. [redacted]

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[redacted] Moscow already has sent a sizable number of tanks, 20 armored personnel carriers, and air defense equipment to Mozambique, possibly in preparation for a Cuban troop deployment. [redacted]

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In our view, South Africa's initial reaction to the arrival of Cuban combat forces in Mozambique would depend to a considerable extent on where the Cubans were deployed. If—as we believe likely—Cuban troops were sent to northern Mozambique rather than the Maputo area, we think Pretoria would respond at first with stepped-up aid to the Mozambican guerrillas and perhaps with covert operations against the Cubans and other targets. We do not rule out direct South African military actions, however. [redacted]

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US interests in southern Africa would be jeopardized if Cuban combat forces were sent to Mozambique. African leaders probably would place some of the blame for the escalation of the conflict on Washington, arguing that the United States, by failing to compel Pretoria to rein in the guerrillas, was partially responsible for the situation that had led to the introduction of Cuban troops. Moreover, with the arrival of Cuban combat forces in Mozambique, we believe [redacted]

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[redacted] that Africans would become even more inclined than they already are to suspect the United States of favoring Pretoria—particularly if a military confrontation developed between South Africa and Cuba.

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In addition, the Western-sponsored negotiations on the Namibian problem would be likely to collapse, because a new influx of Cubans into the region would probably lead South Africa to pull out of the talks. Finally, if—as seems likely—Mozambique granted the USSR access rights to naval or air facilities in return for Cuban combat assistance, the Soviets would be able to expand their maritime reconnaissance in the Indian Ocean. [redacted]

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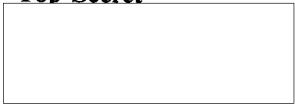
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**Mozambique:
Are the Cubans Coming?**



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Introduction

The widening South African-backed insurgency in Mozambique and occasional South African military operations inside that country have created a sense of desperation among officials in Maputo and led them to consider asking Cuba to send combat forces.



Largely as a result of the insurgency, Mozambique's leftist government has expanded its military ties with the Soviets and Cubans in recent years. Moscow has provided an array of ground weapons and other heavy equipment along with some 500 to 800 advisers. Havana's 800 to 1,000 military advisers play a key role in the Mozambican military's counterinsurgency operations.

This paper examines the present security situation in Mozambique, Soviet and Cuban perspectives on a possible deployment of Cuban troops, the mechanics of introducing such forces, and South Africa's likely reaction. Finally, it explores the impact of a Cuban troop influx on US interests in the region.

Deteriorating Security Conditions

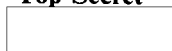
The South African-supported Mozambique National Resistance Movement (NRM) has had considerable success in expanding its forces and operations during the past two years. Numbering only in the hundreds when they began operating in the late 1970s, the guerrillas are now around 10,000 strong,

about half of them are armed. Last spring, insurgent forces moved out from their strongholds in the central Mozambican provinces of Manica and Sofala and began operating in force in the southern provinces of Gaza and Inhambane. More recently, guerrillas—numbering in the thousands—moved northward into populous and economically important Zambezia Province as well as parts of Tete Province.

As a result, President Machel's regime fully controls only the key cities of Maputo, Beira, and Nacala, parts of Maputo Province, and most of the northeastern provinces of Nampula and Cabo Delgado. Even



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Beira, the second-largest city, is frequently without water or electricity because of attacks on facilities just outside the city.



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South African military operations in Mozambique have added to the Machel regime's unease. In early 1981, South African commandos entered a suburb of Maputo and destroyed buildings belonging to the African National Congress (ANC), the principal South African dissident group. There have been at least three sophisticated sabotage operations since then in the Beira area, and considering the NRM's limited technical capabilities, we believe the South Africans almost certainly played a key role in these incidents. The most recent such attack caused extensive damage to fuel storage facilities in Beira in early December. Finally, South African troops initiated a number of shooting incidents along the border in November and December.



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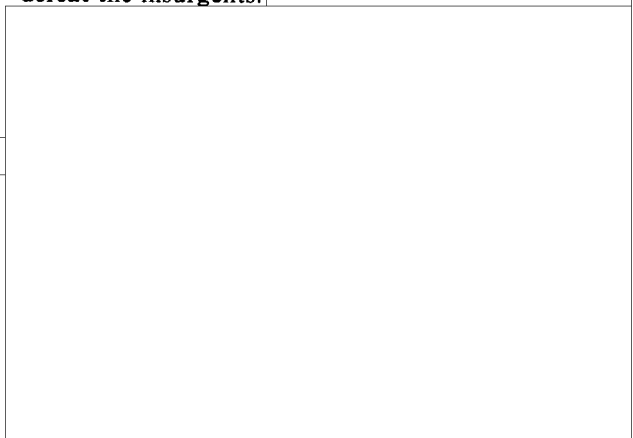
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The Mozambican military—weakened by shortages of food and other supplies, low morale, inexperienced leadership, and rising defections—is clearly unable to defeat the insurgents.



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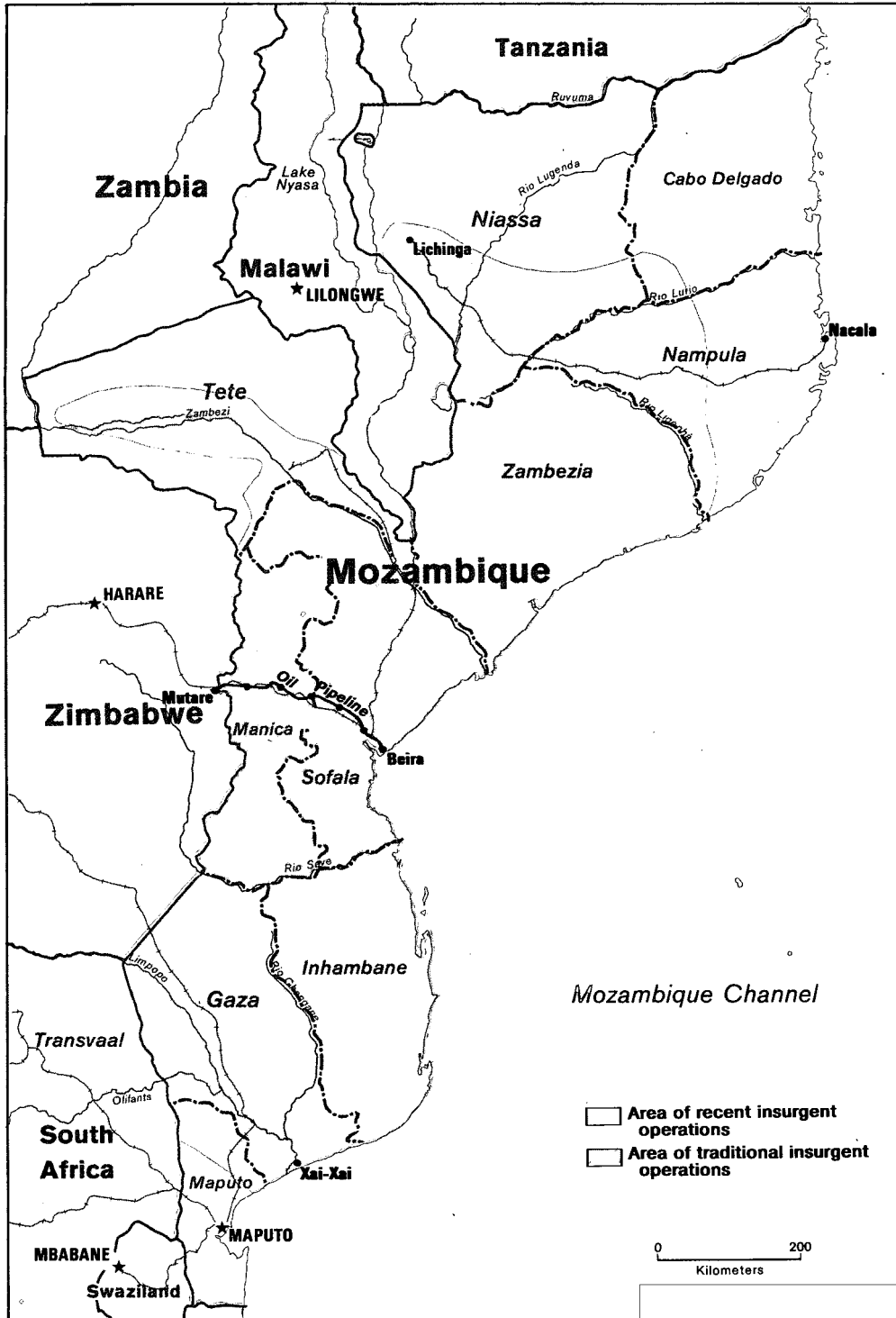
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Soviet and Cuban Perspectives

A Mozambican call for Cuban troops in the near term would be the first significant test of Andropov's policy in the Third World. At least initially, he would be inclined to temporize, in part because a sizable Cuban troop deployment would undercut Moscow's current campaign to assuage the United States and the West—and even China—about Moscow's intentions. He would be particularly concerned about the impact of such a move on the USSR's relations with Western Europe, especially countries like West Germany and France, which have been diplomatically active in trying to settle the Namibian problem. For this reason, Andropov and his Politburo colleagues might initially look to alternatives, such as more military aid to Mozambique or even a limited accommodation between Maputo and Pretoria. [Redacted]

We believe, however, that the USSR and Cuba eventually would probably agree to send a limited contingent of Cuban troops to Mozambique if such forces seemed essential to preserve a pro-Soviet, Marxist regime in Maputo. The USSR, in our judgment, would not send its own combat units to Mozambique, although it probably would augment its military advisory team and continue to increase its arms shipments. [Redacted]

Inhibiting Factors. We believe that neither the Soviets nor the Cubans are eager to send Cuban combat forces to Mozambique. Both Moscow and Havana recognize the risks and costs that such a move would entail. [Redacted]

One of their key concerns almost certainly is the possibility of a South African military response that could result in heavy Cuban casualties and perhaps force a choice between the introduction of more Cubans or an embarrassing withdrawal. Even in the absence of direct South African retaliation, insurgent attacks could cause substantial Cuban casualties. Havana would have difficulty concealing a heavy casualty rate, and over time this would help undercut the popularity of the regime. Since 1980, the regime in Havana has been particularly sensitive to any issues that might further undercut popular attitudes toward its leadership. [Redacted]

Soviet and Cuban officials presumably also realize that Cuban forces could become bogged down in a frustrating struggle against the guerrillas. Neither Moscow nor Havana wishes to be caught up in a protracted conflict such as in Angola. [Redacted]

Financial considerations, too, could be a restraining factor. Mozambique, unlike Angola, is not a major exporter of oil and lacks foreign exchange to pay for Cuban forces. Indeed, it is unable to pay for the Soviet military aid it already receives. The Soviets almost certainly recognize, therefore, that they would have to underwrite the costs of deploying Cuban forces.¹ [Redacted]

Situations elsewhere in the world might work against a deployment of Cuban forces to Mozambique. Havana's first priority in providing support to foreign governments is its stake in ensuring the survival of the Sandinista regime in Nicaragua. A sharp deterioration in the situation there probably would forestall a Cuban deployment of troops to Mozambique. A major new South African invasion of southern Angola or a Somali incursion into the Ogaden might similarly constrain Havana from sending forces to Mozambique. [Redacted]

Factors for Involvement. The Soviets, in our judgment, would probably calculate that a failure to move decisively to save the Mozambican regime would cast doubt on the USSR's reliability in the eyes of its other Third World allies. The new Soviet leadership, which has already restated the USSR's commitment to sustaining revolutionary regimes in the Third World, would probably reason that failure to rescue a pro-Soviet regime, even one that is of only peripheral importance to Soviet interests, could strengthen US resolve to challenge Soviet interests elsewhere in the Third World. The prospect of acquiring access rights to Mozambican naval and air facilities in return for saving the Mozambican regime might be a further

¹ Moscow would not be incurring totally new expenditures, however, if some of the Cubans came from Ethiopia, where we assume the Soviets already provide funds for their presence. [Redacted]

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incentive for Moscow to favor a positive response to a request by Maputo for Cuban troops. The Soviets might also hope to use their enhanced influence to strengthen the position of pro-Soviet officials in the Mozambican leadership. [Redacted]

The Cubans, for their part, might see increased Cuban military involvement in Mozambique as an excellent opportunity to extract a significant increase in aid from Moscow at a time when Cuba is faced with severe economic problems. Cuban President Castro may also look upon Cuban military support for Machel as a means of enhancing his and Cuba's international prestige at the time of the seventh Nonaligned Summit in India next March, when he is expected to relinquish the chairmanship of the Non-aligned Movement. In addition, Castro could decide that the safety of the estimated 1,800 to 2,000 Cubans (civilian and military advisers) already in Mozambique hinged on the insertion of a major Cuban combat force; such a judgment apparently played a key role in his decision to send forces to Angola in November 1975. In the final analysis, however, we believe Soviet wishes will be the main factor in determining Castro's course of action. [Redacted]

On balance, then, we believe the Soviets and Cubans would deploy Cuban combat troops to Mozambique if the regime there asked for them and if they deemed it essential to remaining in power. Even if Cuban President Castro proved reluctant to comply with such a Mozambican request, we believe Cuba's dependence on the USSR would compel Castro to go along with a Soviet decision in favor of sending troops, provided that Moscow used its substantial leverage. [Redacted]

Recent Signs of Concern. In the meantime, there are increasing signs that officials in Havana and Moscow are worried about the situation in Mozambique and expect a request for Cuban forces to be made soon. Last summer, according to US Embassy reporting, the Cuban Ambassador to Maputo stated privately that he thought Mozambique would call for Cuban troops. [Redacted]

Since the beginning of 1982, there has been an unprecedented number of visits involving high-level Mozambican officials concerned with military matters and Cuban and Soviet officials. Cuban Political

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[Redacted]

Bureau member Jorge Risquet, who had previously been in charge of Cuban military and civilian personnel in Angola, led delegations to Mozambique in January and in September and October. Senior Cuban military officers were with him on both occasions. Probably partly in response to issues raised at these visits, Machel visited Havana in May. [Redacted]

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The Soviets sent Ye Samoteikin, one of President Brezhnev's personal aides, to Maputo in January, and chief political commissar of the armed forces Yepishev visited Mozambique in May. In turn, Mozambican Defense Minister Chipande visited the USSR last spring. In November, Machel met with top Soviet military officials—Defense Minister Ustinov; Chief of the General Staff Ogarkov; General Sokolov, the first deputy defense minister who oversees Soviet operations in Afghanistan; and Colonel General Sergey-chik, the first deputy chief of the organization responsible for Soviet military aid—when he was in Moscow for Brezhnev's funeral. In addition, a high-level Soviet military delegation, [Redacted]

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[Redacted] was in Mozambique in late December. The delegation apparently was sent to assess the situation and make recommendations to Moscow. [Redacted]

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We know [Redacted] that the USSR has made at least three deliveries of military hardware to Mozambique since last spring. In addition to tanks, artillery, and air defense equipment, the shipments have included the Soviets' first delivery to southern Africa of an advanced armored personnel carrier, the BMP. The only other BMPs in Sub-Saharan Africa are in Ethiopia, where they are operated by Cubans. [Redacted]

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Possible Indicators

In our view, a variety of considerations have prevented Machel from calling for Cuban forces. Despite his Marxist orientation, we believe he would prefer to minimize foreign involvement, particularly that of the Soviets and their allies, in the counterinsurgency effort. Machel has [Redacted] voiced disapproval of Angola's dependence on Cuban troops. Machel probably also realizes that the governments of most neighboring states would be disturbed by an influx of Cuban troops, and that calling in the Cubans would undermine Mozambique's efforts over the past few years to expand economic and other links with the West. Finally, Machel almost certainly is aware that an influx of Cuban troops into Mozambique would raise the prospect of a full-scale South African attack. [Redacted]

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We believe, however, that the security situation is so precarious that the Mozambican regime could ask for Cuban troops at any time and that such a decision could come without concrete new indicators. Nonetheless, one or more of the following developments might well precede—and prompt—a request for Cuban forces:

- Insurgent activities even closer to Maputo. *The guerrillas already operate in force some 130 kilometers north of the city and have carried out operations in the vicinity of Xai-Xai, the capital of Maputo Province.*

- Sabotage operations inside Maputo. [Redacted]

[Redacted]

- New South African military operations. *The South Africans might carry out further raids in Mozambique against facilities belonging to the ANC along*

the lines of the attack they conducted in a suburb of Maputo in 1981. In December 1982 they mounted a similar operation in Maseru, Lesotho. [Redacted]

[Redacted] the attack in Maseru was intended in part as a warning to Mozambique, which—they alleged—has been increasing its military and political support to the ANC. Pretoria might also choose to mount further covert operations against key economic facilities in Mozambique and attribute responsibility for such attacks to the NRM. 25X1

- A sharp new upsurge in Mozambican military defections. [Redacted]

[Redacted]

- Increased dissension within the Mozambican leadership. [Redacted]

[Redacted]

Machel and other senior Mozambican officials last fall told Western diplomats that Maputo may feel compelled to accept Communist troops to protect Soviet Bloc economic technicians from insurgent attacks. Machel and Foreign Minister Chissano have asserted that the USSR, Cuba, Bulgaria, and Hungary have pressed them to accept troops. While we do not necessarily take these Mozambican statements at face value, we are reluctant to dismiss them solely as ploys designed to alarm the West. [Redacted]

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The Mechanics of Deployment

Finding the Troops. We believe the Cubans would initially send between 3,000 and 5,000 troops to Mozambique. On the basis of its experiences in Angola and Ethiopia, Havana probably would judge that a force of this size would be adequate to handle the current situation in Mozambique. We would expect the first elements of a Cuban expeditionary force to come from Ethiopia and Angola rather than from Cuba. [Redacted]

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We estimate that at least one brigade—approximately 2,000 to 3,000 troops—would come from Ethiopia. It would probably be supplemented by up to 2,500 Cuban troops from Angola. Another possibility, albeit remote, is that the Cubans might send troops from the Congo to Mozambique. [Redacted]

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[Redacted] up to 2,000 Cuban troops may be present at Pointe Noire (Congo) as part of the force defending Angola's Cabinda enclave. [Redacted]

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We doubt that Cuba would replace any of these troops unless the military situation in the Ogaden or southern Angola deteriorated dramatically:

- In Ethiopia, the Cuban expeditionary force—estimated at approximately 11,000 men, of whom about 8,000 are formed into four combat brigades—has been relatively inactive. It could probably be reduced by 2,000 to 3,000 personnel without significantly affecting the situation in Ethiopia.
- In Angola as well, the Cubans probably would not have to replace troops sent to Mozambique. We estimate that there are now well over 20,000 Cuban troops in Angola, and many of them have been largely inactive. Troops taken from Angola would most likely be drawn from the Luanda or Cabinda areas and not from southern and central Angola, where Cuban and Angolan forces are fighting against insurgents of the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA). [Redacted]

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notice. Several reserve units in the Cuban Army could also be mobilized quickly for overseas service. [Redacted]

Moving Troops and Equipment. The initial contingent of troops would probably be airlifted to Mozambique by the Cubans. Cubana Airlines aircraft—some capable of transporting 120 to 180 troops each—and Cuban military transports could airlift 1,000 to 1,500 personnel from Ethiopia, Angola, or Cuba to Mozambique in one or two days. The entire contingent probably could be flown to Mozambique within a week. Ethiopian, Angolan, and Mozambican civil airliners could also be used to shuttle troops. Judging from past Cuban troop deployments to Africa, the Soviets could also provide aircraft for the airlift. [Redacted]

Before sending troops, the Cubans, we believe, would prefer that sufficient heavy equipment be on hand in Mozambique for an armored or mechanized infantry brigade. The movement of this equipment might take place only days or weeks before the arrival of a troop contingent, but it could also be pre-positioned several months in advance. Heavy equipment for an armored brigade began to arrive in Ethiopia in 1977, shortly before the Cuban expeditionary force. [Redacted]

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The Soviets and Cubans have an adequate fleet of

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² Although it is conceivable that some Cuban combat units are already stationed at Matola, we believe this is unlikely. [Redacted]

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Havana could, of course, send troops directly to Mozambique from Cuba, but we believe this is less likely in view of Cuban concern over the Nicaraguan situation. The elite Special Troops of the Ministry of Interior—the first Cuban combat units sent to Angola in November 1975—can be sent overseas on short

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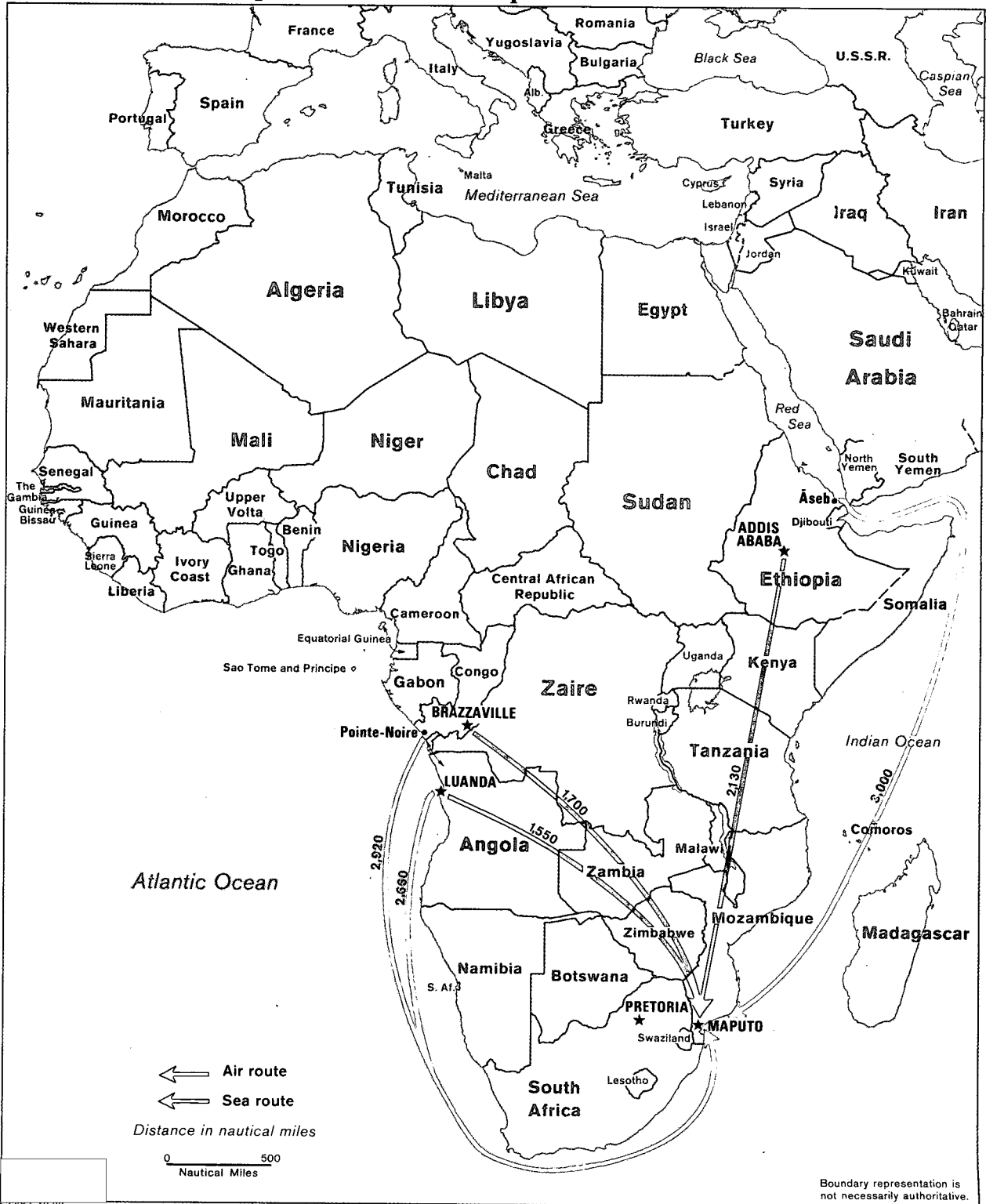
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Possible Cuban Troop Routes to Mozambique



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cargo and passenger ships, and Ethiopia and Angola possess several amphibious landing ships that are capable of moving equipment and troops to Mozambique. The movement of an armored brigade and its equipment from Ethiopia would require at least three Soviet or Cuban cargo ships. The brigade's troops could be moved to Mozambique by two Soviet passenger ships or a combination of converted Cuban cargo ships and amphibious landing ships. The movement of troops and equipment from Ethiopia and Angola by sea would require at least two to three weeks to complete. [Redacted]

The Cubans, wary of possible South African military retaliation, would probably send the bulk of their forces to northern Mozambique. Several battalion-size camps are located near Beira, for instance, and together they are capable of accommodating a Cuban brigade. Should the Cubans nonetheless deploy forces to southern Mozambique, they could make use of the recently expanded facility at Matola, which is only 60 kilometers from the South African border. [Redacted]

Wherever Cuban troops arrived, we believe they would avoid playing a direct role in the counterinsurgency at first, although this could change over time. They probably would guard ports and other economic installations and man garrisons in the main cities, thus freeing more Mozambican troops for combat. [Redacted]

South African Reaction

South African officials have stated publicly that they would find a Cuban troop presence in Mozambique intolerable, and they have told the US Government privately that the arrival of Cuban forces would trigger a South African military attack. The recent South African attack against ANC facilities in Lesotho, as well as South Africa's almost certain involvement in the December raid on oil depots in Beira, underscores Pretoria's toughening attitude toward its neighbors and its willingness to employ military force. [Redacted]

We believe, however, that the South Africans might well react cautiously at first. Pretoria almost certainly harbors doubts about the extent of Western support it could count upon in any direct military confrontation with Cuban forces in Mozambique. Most officials in

Pretoria would, in our estimation, be concerned that direct attacks by their forces could lead to a situation in which South Africa would be at war, without active Western support, against Soviet-backed Cuban forces in Mozambique and along the Namibian-Angolan border. Senior South African officials have often alluded to their "betrayal" at the hands of the United States when, in their view, Washington reneged on commitments to back Pretoria after large numbers of Cuban troops arrived in Luanda during the Angolan civil war in the mid-1970s. [Redacted]

In our view, the probability of direct South African military retaliation would vary with the regions and circumstances in which the Cubans might be deployed, although we cannot categorically rule out such a response in any event:

- The arrival of Cuban troops in Maputo would be more likely to trigger direct South African military retaliation than a Cuban troop deployment to the Beira and Nacala areas in northern Mozambique.
- Pretoria would be less likely to attack Cuban troops if they arrived in small groups and dispersed quickly. [Redacted]

In any event, we expect that Pretoria would take a number of steps in response to the arrival of Cuban forces, in part to mollify South African public opinion. At a minimum, we believe the South Africans would increase their support to the NRM. They probably would also carry out covert operations against key targets within Mozambique—including, perhaps, attacks on Cuban and other Communist personnel that they would try to pass off as NRM operations. If these measures failed to prevent Cuban-Mozambican advances against the NRM, direct South African military action would become more likely. [Redacted]

Still, we suspect that there is more ambivalence in Pretoria on the question of Cuban combat forces than official statements indicate. Some officials might well see certain advantages in a limited influx of Cuban combat forces into Mozambique. These officials probably believe that the deployment of Cuban forces in

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Mozambique would lead to stronger ties between South Africa and the West, particularly the United States. At a minimum, Pretoria probably calculates that the Cubans' arrival would halt a growing Western dialogue with Mozambique that has recently been accompanied by Western pressure on Pretoria to rein in the NRM. [Redacted]

Prospects

The meeting in mid-December between South African Foreign Minister Botha and Mozambican Security Minister Veloso could help delay a request by Machel for Cuban troops. The Mozambicans had been trying to arrange such talks for several months in obvious hopes of reaching some private understanding with the South Africans over ANC activities in Mozambique that would lead to a reduction in Pretoria's support for the NRM. During the talks, which both sides described as cordial, the officials exchanged views on the ANC and the NRM and agreed to discuss these issues later in greater depth. [Redacted]

While it is possible that this meeting could mark the beginning of a process of accommodation between Pretoria and Maputo that would obviate Machel's need for Cuban combat support, we do not believe this is probable:

- Earlier discussions between senior Mozambican and South African officials accomplished little. Pretoria has continued to increase its support to the NRM, and the ANC has continued to launch attacks from Mozambique.
- Machel would have difficulty reining in the ANC. Several influential officials in his regime would oppose such a move, and his border guard would probably be unable to prevent ANC teams from crossing into South Africa.
- South Africa, in any event, would be unlikely to reduce its aid to the NRM. Pretoria's support for the guerrillas is an inexpensive, efficient means of helping to maintain its economic hegemony in the region. [Redacted]

Nonetheless, we expect a series of follow-on meetings at lower levels between the Mozambicans and the South Africans. From the Mozambican perspective, however, these probably will be overshadowed by the likely continued deterioration in the security situation at home. As a result, we believe that Machel almost certainly will continue to consider obtaining combat support from Havana. [Redacted]

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Implications for the United States. US interests in southern Africa could be damaged in a number of ways if Cuban combat forces were sent to Mozambique.

- Black southern African leaders probably would place some of the blame on Washington for the escalation of the conflict. They could be expected to argue that the United States, by failing to compel Pretoria to rein in the insurgents, was partially responsible for the situation that had led to the introduction of Cuban troops. With the arrival of Cuban combat forces in Mozambique, moreover, Africans would become even more inclined than they already are to suspect the United States of favoring Pretoria—particularly if a military confrontation developed between South Africa and the Cubans.
- The Western-sponsored negotiations on the Namibian problem would be likely to collapse, since an influx of Cubans into southern Africa would probably cause South Africa to pull out of the talks.
- Maputo would be likely to halt a number of Western-sponsored economic projects in Mozambique that are designed in part to ease economic troubles facing the Western-oriented regimes in landlocked Zimbabwe and Malawi.
- Mozambicans would probably grant Moscow access rights to naval or air facilities in return for Cuban combat forces. Soviet access to airfields in Mozambique would permit expanded maritime surveillance in the Indian Ocean. [Redacted]

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