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Central Intelligence Agency



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DIRECTORATE OF INTELLIGENCE

28 February 1985

ANGOLA: IMPACT OF ALTERNATIVE REGIONAL SETTLEMENTS

Summary

The impact of alternative regional settlements on the situation in Angola varies widely. Calculations by the affected parties--Angola, South Africa, and UNITA--of the effects of the different outcomes will continue to influence US efforts to broker a diplomatic solution. [redacted]

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We examine briefly three alternatives involving a Namibian settlement and a Cuban withdrawal, and discuss the possibility and likely impact of reconciliation talks between the MPLA government and UNITA. Because we believe a settlement probably would involve the US government in monitoring the withdrawal of Cuban troops, we also look at a few of the numerous verification problems that could arise. [redacted]

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This typescript memorandum was prepared for the Director of Central Intelligence by [redacted] South Africa Branch, Office of African and Latin American Analysis. It was coordinated with the Directorate of Operations and the National Intelligence Officer for Africa. Comments and queries may be directed to the Chief, South Africa Branch, [redacted]

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Alternative Settlement Scenarios

A regional settlement that involved Namibian independence under UN Resolution 435, withdrawal of South African forces from Namibia and some form of Cuban troop withdrawal from Angola would have significantly different impacts on the participants depending on the extent of the Cuban drawdown and the pace with which it was completed. Another alternative would involve talks between the Angolan government and UNITA intended to lead to a reconciliation that would end the civil war.* [redacted]

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The withdrawal of South African forces from Namibia is rigidly specified in UN 435. After implementation and arrival of the UN peacekeeping contingent, South African troops would be confined to their garrisons and, in steps over a period of 12 weeks, would be reduced to a total of 1,500 men. At the end of seven months, when elections are held, the remaining South African contingent would depart. [redacted]

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1. Complete and Simultaneous Cuban Withdrawal and UN 435

This essentially is the South African position first advanced in May 1982. The proposal calls for departure of all Cuban military personnel--combat troops, advisers and technicians--from Angola over a period of 12 weeks in such a manner that the number of Cubans and South Africans in the region was essentially equal once the process got underway.

- We believe that a Cuban withdrawal at this pace would throw the Angolan army into disarray and lead to collapse of the regime. At this stage of the war, compensating for the loss of the Cuban combat troops guarding the main garrisons, and more importantly, the advisers and technicians that run Angola's war machine, probably would be an insurmountable problem for Luanda. Although the South African withdrawal from Namibia would deprive UNITA of the South African deterrent and sustaining long-term support, UNITA probably would strike quick and hard to settle the issue before supply shortages cut into its capabilities.

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- Luanda has made it clear, both publicly and privately, that implementation of this alternative is completely out of the question. We believe there is no likelihood this scenario can be brought about. [redacted]

2. Partial Cuban Withdrawal After Completion of South African Withdrawal

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This proposal was advanced by Luanda in November and apparently was vetted by Angola's Cuban and Soviet backers. Luanda said that after implementation of UN 435--that is, the complete withdrawal of the South African Air Force from Namibia and the drawdown of South African troops in Namibia to 1,500 men--20,000 Cuban troops would be withdrawn over a three-year period. A substantial, but unspecified, residual Cuban force would remain behind--10,000 by Luanda's count, but probably more like 15,000 by our estimates.

- This alternative, in our judgment, would hurt UNITA more than the government. Sufficient Cuban military personnel would remain behind to help guard Angola's key facilities and otherwise support operations by the Angolan army. Although the Angolan army would be weakened, the troops to be withdrawn are to be taken primarily from southwestern Angola where they help defend against South African incursions and where UNITA is not particularly active. Soviet weapons deliveries would continue, major urban areas would be protected, and economically vital oil production would be secured. In contrast, UNITA would lose the support necessary to sustain the conflict at its present levels and South African protection of its sanctuary in the southeast, even if given a "golden handshake" by Pretoria. Eventually, we believe, UNITA would lose momentum, although the conflict would continue for some years as a lower intensity guerrilla war. Lessons elsewhere, such as the FDN in Nicaragua, however, suggest that Savimbi may prove surprisingly resourceful in securing at least minimal levels of support from other donors and continue to pose a threat to Luanda.

- We believe both Pretoria and Savimbi would reject this alternative. [redacted]

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3. Small Residual Cuban Force Remains, Faster Pace of Withdrawal

A possible compromise might leave behind a smaller Cuban residual force of 3,000 to 5,000 troops, with the Cubans departing at a faster pace of perhaps two years in conjunction with U.N. 435.

- The impact of this alternative on either side is more difficult to assess. UNITA would lose the South African deterrent and sustaining supply within a matter of weeks, and would be tempted to intensify the conflict and settle the issue. However, Luanda

would have substantial Cuban forces on hand for at least a year and probably could ride out the initial onslaught. Over time, however, Luanda's dependence on Cuban manpower is greater, in our view, than UNITA's reliance on a South African presence in Namibia, and we expect that Savimbi's forces would begin to prevail as the Cuban troop withdrawal neared completion.

- We believe the South Africans and UNITA might accept this package, provided they were assured on verification and implementation procedures. Luanda, on the other hand, probably would balk at such a deal--since it only postpones the MPLA's demise by a year or two over the first alternative--unless it believed that it could cheat on the withdrawal schedule. [redacted]

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4. Reconciliation Negotiations between Luanda and UNITA

Left to their own devices, we do not believe that serious negotiations or talks between the government and the insurgents are likely, unless the MPLA's military situation deteriorates rapidly. If such talks are held now, we do not believe they would lead to a reconciliation. Savimbi demands, as his price for ending the civil war, complete withdrawal of Cuban forces from Angola and serious negotiations leading to reconciliation. Moreover, Savimbi's popularity and charisma frightens almost everyone in the faction-ridden MPLA government.

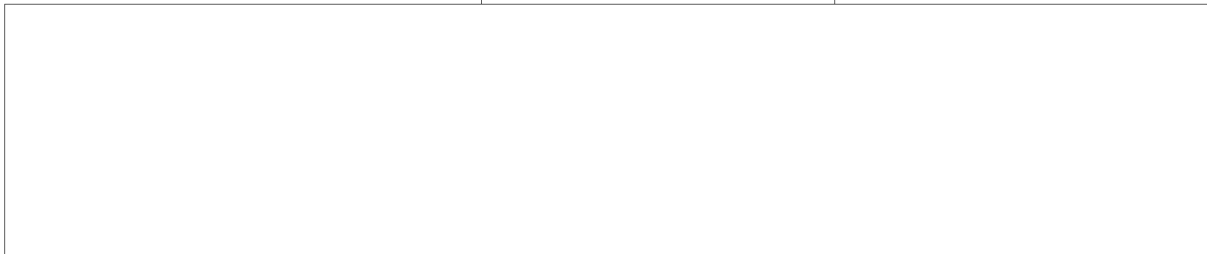
- Savimbi reportedly has said that he would explore the possibility of a partial Cuban withdrawal if it occurred in conjunction with reconciliation talks. We do not believe, however, that Luanda's agreement to talk, by itself, would be enough for Savimbi to accept a package with a sizeable residual Cuban force, since talks could fail and leave Savimbi militarily disadvantaged.
- In the unlikely event of successful reconciliation talks resulting in a government of national unity, the question of Cuban troops probably becomes moot. Savimbi is unlikely to agree to any settlement that puts him in Luanda with a Cuban presence there. [redacted]

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Verifying a Cuban Withdrawal [redacted]

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[redacted]

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We believe that of these 35,000 Cuban military personnel, 25,000 are combat troops serving in ground combat units, air defense missile and radar units and in an aviation component that includes pilots and their ground crews. The 25,000 man combat component generally is deployed in or near major provincial capitals or in larger garrisons. We are more confident of our estimate on combat troop strength [redacted]

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[redacted] We believe the remaining 10,000 men serve as advisers to Angolan combat units and at all levels of the Angolan military establishment, as well as in various technical and specialist positions. [redacted]

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Most speculation about settlement alternatives center on the figure of 30,000 Cuban military personnel, although we believe all the parties know there are actually more.

- Luanda, consequently, will be most interested in limiting verification to Cuban troop departures from Angola, in an effort to buttress a negotiated residual force level with the "uncounted" Cubans.
- South Africa and UNITA, on the other hand, will want to verify the residual force level, in effect forcing Luanda to withdraw "counted" and "uncounted" Cuban military personnel.

Moreover, verification problems would also arise in defining which Cubans are military personnel and which are civilians, of which we estimate there are about 6,000. There is a strong likelihood that the "civilian" contingent would quickly come to be made up of individuals with military training and experience, as has happened over the past year in Nicaragua. [redacted]

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Monitoring the departure of Cuban troops would be easier than monitoring those remaining in a residual force, unless extreme care were taken to specify locations and functions before hand [redacted]

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