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Angola's Civil War: Outlook for 1985



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An Intelligence Assessment

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February 1985

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Angola's Civil War: Outlook for 1985



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An Intelligence Assessment

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Office of African and Latin American Analysis. It
was coordinated with the Directorate of
Operations. Comments and queries are welcome and
may be addressed to the Chief, Southern Africa
Branch, Africa Division, ALA, 

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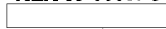
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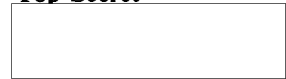
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**Angola's Civil War:
Outlook for 1985**



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Key Judgments

*Information available
as of 1 February 1985
was used in this report.*

UNITA insurgents have made steady gains in Angola's nearly 10-year civil war, despite being outnumbered and outgunned by the Cuban- and Soviet-supported Angolan Army. The insurgents have made good use of their advantages in quality of manpower and leadership to take and hold the military initiative.

We do not believe, however, that either side will make decisive gains in the coming year, although the intensity of the fighting is likely to increase throughout the country. UNITA probably will make some gains but not at the pace it has enjoyed in the past, nor will it be able to take the key positions the government chooses to hold and defend.

Last year, UNITA continued its offensive operations and secured solid control of southeastern Angola and stepped up operations in the northern part of the country to the point where it now threatens the outskirts of Luanda. These gains came despite the fact that the Angolan Army was strengthened by substantially increased Soviet military deliveries, more Cuban troops, and reorganization and restructuring of its security establishment. On at least two occasions the Angolan Army struck back at the insurgents in major offensives intended to win back areas held by UNITA. Neither offensive was successful.

During 1984 the insurgents showed that they could sustain offensive operations with substantial forces at increased distances from their bases of support and at the same time defend territories won against the government offensives. Some UNITA weaknesses were exposed, however, when its efforts to capture government positions were blocked by Angolan advantages in firepower and air support and resistance of government troops in well-defended positions.

For the coming year, UNITA publicly promises more of the same sorts of operations, particularly in the Luanda area, where substantial insurgent forces have been dispatched to increase the pressure on the capital. UNITA also promises to increase attacks on Angola's economic resources with special attention to the multinational oil companies. The government, we believe, will try to block or even push back UNITA's extended operations. The role of the Angolan Air Force is likely to increase in the coming year, as the government probably will strike insurgent supply lines and base areas and provide air support for ground offensives against UNITA-held territory.

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This relatively even match despite an imbalance of forces, we believe, could be changed significantly by such outside factors as Namibian independence and some form of Cuban troop withdrawal, Savimbi's death, or sharply increased Soviet and Cuban involvement:

- A Namibian settlement that resulted in the withdrawal of South African troops would deprive UNITA of its main lines of outside support, eliminate South Africa as a deterrent to Angolan action, and open UNITA's base areas to Angolan attack.
- A total Cuban withdrawal would be a disaster for Luanda, only slightly alleviated if accompanied by a South African withdrawal from Namibia.
- A partial Cuban withdrawal without a South African withdrawal from Namibia would likewise be a disaster for Luanda, in our judgment, but slower to develop as UNITA would move to gain control of most of the country.
- On the other hand, we believe a partial Cuban withdrawal with a South African departure from an independent Namibia probably would hurt UNITA more than the government, although the war would be likely to continue for years.
- Savimbi's death or incapacitation would be a major blow to the insurgent cause and, although UNITA has an experienced cadre, the insurgents probably would lose much of the momentum they have generated in the last two years.
- Soviet and Cuban escalation that directly committed Cuban combat troops to battle and was supported by more Soviet weapons could make inroads into UNITA's heartland. We believe that such an escalation is not likely under present circumstances, but that it could take place if Moscow or Havana saw a precipitous decline in Luanda's fortunes and decided to block a victory-bound insurgent force.

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Unless there are such dramatic changes in the situation, we believe the current stalemate is likely to persist. However, gradually mounting insurgent pressure could lead to a failure of will on the government's part which is severe enough to cause Luanda's backers to abandon the fight, leaving the field to UNITA, or cause a political realignment in Luanda that would pave the way for reconciliation talks. We do not believe that such a development is likely in the next year or so. If, in coming years, Luanda is unable to reverse the trend and its situation continues to deteriorate, a dramatic change in Angola's internal dynamics becomes increasingly likely, almost certainly resulting in a major shift in the military and political equation.



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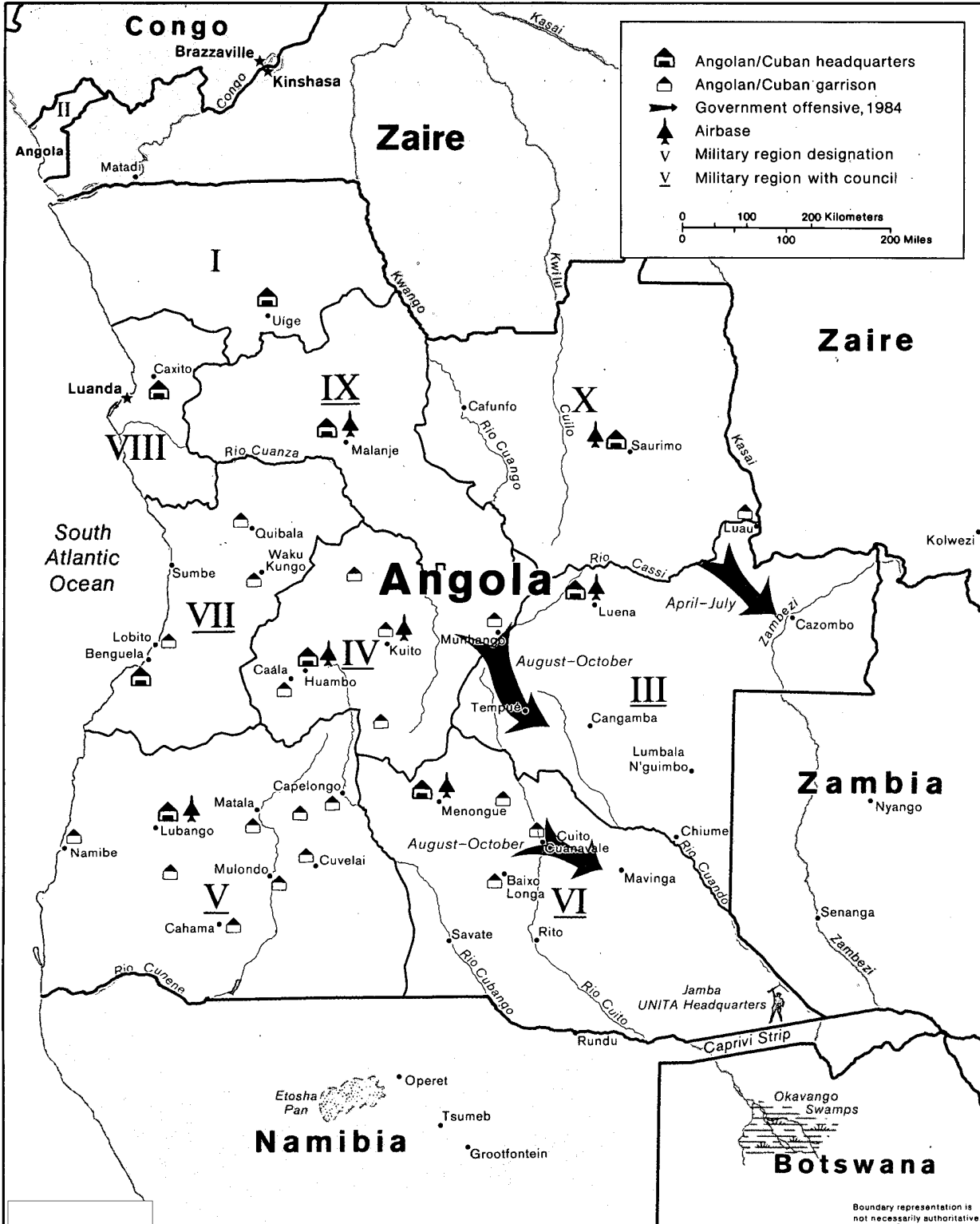
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Figure 1
Angolan and Cuban Forces



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Angola's Civil War: Outlook for 1985

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Introduction

The Angolan civil war that pits the Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA) government in Luanda against Jonas Savimbi's Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA) is now in its 10th year of steadily increasing violence. UNITA has made its most impressive gains in the last two years and now controls at least a quarter of the country and operates to some extent throughout most of the remainder.

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- Continued pressure on urban areas, including the temporary capture of the provincial capital of Sumbe; start of an effort to target Cuban, Soviet, and government officials marked by the car-bombing of Cuban headquarters in Huambo; and raids near Luanda itself.
- Aggressive attacks on such important economic targets as diamond mines, roads, and rail lines, and, for the first time, raids on Angolan oil facilities.

We believe battlefield developments over the coming year will be critical for both contestants, as each side's political strategy requires military momentum for success.¹ If the government could slow or even show some realistic hope of reversing the trend of UNITA's battlefield successes, the dos Santos regime probably would gain significant flexibility—both internally and externally from its Soviet and Cuban backers—to negotiate the withdrawal of Cuban troops. UNITA, for its part, cannot afford to relinquish the military initiative that buttresses Savimbi's demand for a part in any regional settlement. With both sides apparently ready to commit substantial forces to battle, 1985 promises to be the hardest fought year to date.

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These actions showed that UNITA could deploy, support, and sustain conventional and guerrilla forces far from its base in southeast Angola and could seriously disrupt government and economic targets with growing frequency.

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Key 1984 Military Developments

Beginning with its "second general offensive," launched in November 1983, UNITA greatly expanded the civil war in both scope and intensity during 1984.² Among the key military actions during the year were:

- Seizure of the Cazombo Salient, which gave UNITA total control over the border with Zambia and, for the first time, control of some of the border with Zaire.
- Deployment of UNITA's regular forces in appreciable strength into the northern half of the country and sustained operations throughout the region.

For its part, the government was unsuccessful in wresting territory from UNITA. Buoyed by an increase in Soviet military deliveries and Cuban troops, Angolan forces tried first to win back the Cazombo Salient. Luanda also launched a major offensive later in the year to recapture key points in UNITA's southeastern area of control; the Angolan forces were able to penetrate UNITA-held territory, but pulled back without achieving any permanent gains. Nonetheless, government offensive and defensive actions pointed up potential UNITA vulnerabilities to Angola's growing air strength and the difficulty lightly armed insurgents face in attacking dug-in MPLA units.

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Military Prospects for the Coming Year

Although an increase in the intensity and extent of the civil war is likely in 1985, we do not expect either side to make any decisive breakthroughs in the absence of major changes in the diplomatic setting.

UNITA's Plans. At the special party congress held at UNITA's headquarters in early November 1984, Savimbi publicly claimed that the movement's defeat

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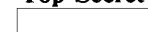


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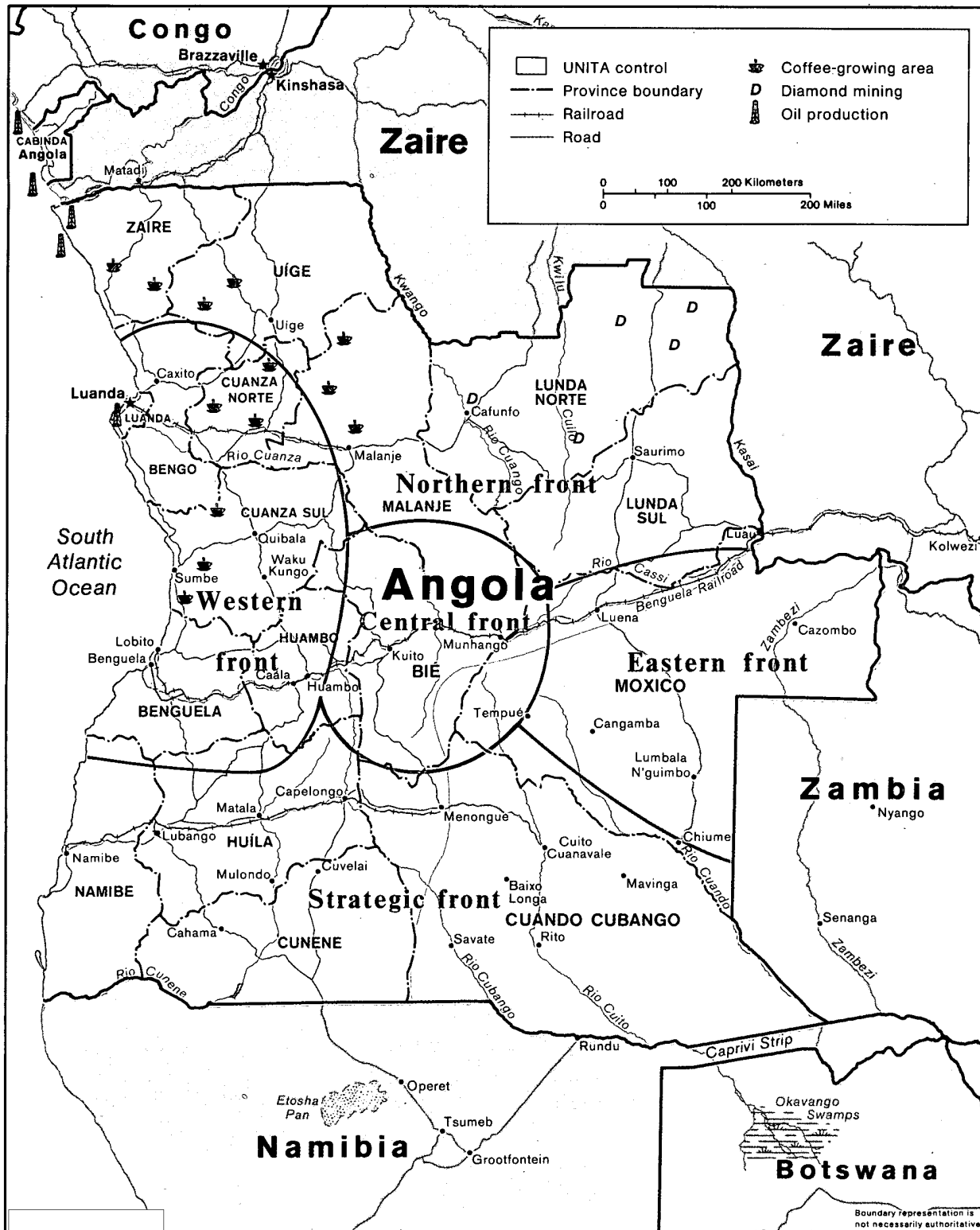


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Figure 2
UNITA Fronts



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Comparative Strengths



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of the government offensive the month before meant that Luanda no longer had the military capacity to launch major offensives against UNITA-controlled areas. UNITA claimed that its whole military apparatus was ready to launch an offensive against the country's northwestern provinces. [redacted]

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In a press interview during the congress, Savimbi claimed that, by late December, 7,000 fully trained and equipped troops would be ready to reinforce UNITA's forces in the north to "close strongly on Luanda." [redacted]

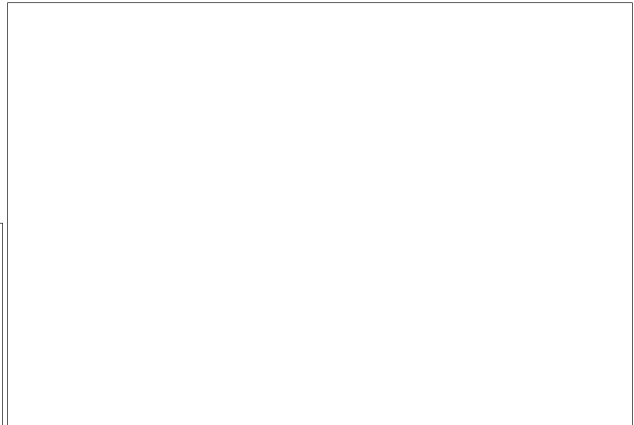
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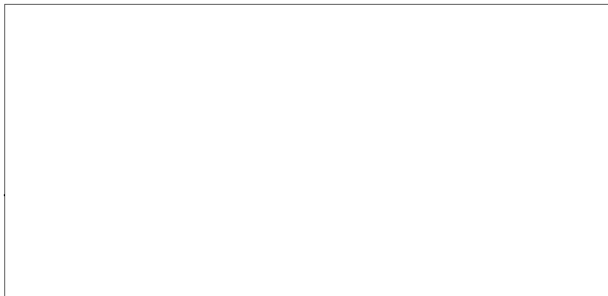


Substantial Soviet military deliveries over the past several years have equipped the ground forces with a full range of Soviet conventional weapons. In addition, the Soviets recently have accelerated aircraft deliveries, and the Angolan Air Force, augmented by Cuban pilots, now has almost 200 modern jet fighters and helicopters. [redacted]

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Government Responses. The government almost certainly will attempt to use its newly acquired military muscle to try to block or even push back UNITA's extended operations. Luanda also may attempt to cut insurgent supply lines to the north through increased ground operations along the central portion of the Benguela rail line. [redacted] there is a strong concentration of government forces near Munhango where UNITA's supply route crosses the rail line. [redacted]

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The government enjoys manpower and firepower advantages over the insurgents. Despite the larger government army, Soviet military equipment, and Cuban support, however, UNITA has managed to make steady gains over the years. The insurgents have gained the initiative because much of the Angolan advantage in manpower and firepower is tied down in defense of fixed positions and not available for offensives against the insurgents. Furthermore, [redacted] [redacted] UNITA enjoys advantages in quality of manpower and, in general, its troops probably are better trained, better led, and more dedicated. [redacted]

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An attempt to strike at the supply lines would be even more serious for the insurgents if the Angolans were to commit their growing air strength to the operation.

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25X1 [redacted] Angolan aircraft attacked some UNITA vehicle convoys and base camps during 1984; Savimbi himself publicly admitted that Angolan aircraft bombed one of his field hospitals, suggesting that at least one of the larger base camps was struck. Nonetheless, the air operations were not sustained long enough to impair UNITA's operations. [redacted]

but pressure on these positions probably will be sustained through guerrilla raids. UNITA's operations against economic targets are likely to worsen the country's deteriorating economy. However, the insurgents are not strong enough to sustain attacks on oil facilities, and we do not expect that they will be able to significantly disrupt oil production in the coming year, despite probable raids or hostage taking. [redacted]

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25X1 We believe the government also may attempt air-strikes on major UNITA bases in the southeast and even on the insurgent headquarters at Jamba. The government may now be persuaded that its strengthened Air Force, as well as improved air defenses, gives it less reason to worry about a possible South African response. [redacted]

Effects of External Factors

Progress in the regional negotiations leading to independence for Namibia and some form of a Cuban troop withdrawal from Angola would have a significant impact on the civil war. The situation would also be changed by Savimbi's death or by shifts in the degree of involvement by each side's foreign backers. [redacted]

25X1 It is also likely that the government will launch more major offensives to reclaim UNITA-controlled territory. Although the offensives in 1984 were not successful, government forces were not routed; and the Angolan Army, despite Savimbi's boast of having rendered it impotent, retains the capability to launch future attacks. [redacted]

Namibian Independence. A Namibian settlement, by itself, that resulted in the withdrawal of South African but not Cuban forces, we believe, would hurt UNITA for the following reasons:

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- UNITA would lose the deterrent value of South African forces deployed in Namibia, leaving its base area vulnerable to sustained Angolan ground and air attacks. We believe the Angolan Government strongly desires to initiate attacks in this area.

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25X1 *Likely Outcome.* We do not believe that either side will make decisive military gains in the coming year, although the strengthened military capabilities of both sides are likely to increase the intensity of fighting throughout the country. UNITA's increasing manpower, [redacted] has changed the fighting into a more conventional conflict with more of the insurgents organized in larger, battalion-sized units. We also believe that the government forces are better deployed and equipped than they were a year ago. [redacted]

- UNITA would lose its easy and secure arms supply and outside contact, which, in our view, are largely irreplaceable. Although we believe Zaire is friendly to UNITA, it keeps a low profile and probably would permit only relatively small amounts of aid to be covertly infiltrated. Furthermore, continuing improvements and expansion of Angola's air defense system would make covert air delivery more difficult and risky. [redacted]

25X1 UNITA probably will make additional advances in the coming year, but more slowly than in 1984. The insurgents' supply lines are extended farther than they have been in past years. Improved government defenses and likely offensive operations against UNITA's supply lines and base areas probably will cut into UNITA's ability to supply its forces and may even require the insurgents to pull back some troops to guard rear areas. [redacted]

The likely reduction in South African support, coupled with UNITA's increased vulnerability, would weaken UNITA's ability to sustain the conflict at its

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UNITA, in our judgment, will not be able to capture and hold any of the key provincial centers or garrisons

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present levels and would threaten UNITA's northern expansion, in our judgment. UNITA claims to have reserve supplies for several years of operations, but, without an alternative to the South African supply line, the need to husband resources probably would force UNITA to cut back on its level of activity. [redacted]

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[redacted]

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[redacted] most government and party circles in Luanda are convinced that loss of South African support would take away most of Savimbi's military capability. While we do not share this extreme view, we do believe that if UNITA were separated from its South African backers by an independent Namibia—and Soviet and Cuban support for Luanda continued—UNITA would lose momentum and within several months would begin to lose territory to government forces. [redacted]

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Cuban Withdrawal. By contrast, a Cuban withdrawal—either partial or total and without a Namibian settlement—would be disastrous for the Angolan Government. Angola's dependence on Cuban combat units to defend the key provincial centers and on Cuban advisers and technicians in key support positions is, we believe, too great to be compensated for, in either the short or long term, without a significant loss of Angola's military capability. [redacted]

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Total Cuban withdrawal probably would lead to an immediate breakdown in the ability of the Angolan Army to prosecute the war. A partial withdrawal that left Cuban forces and technicians holding a few key points, such as Luanda, a few other provincial centers, and important oil-producing areas, would have less immediate impact, but would allow UNITA to concentrate on the few remaining areas of government strength and probably give the insurgents effective control of most of the country. [redacted]

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If, however, a Cuban withdrawal were accompanied by the withdrawal of South African forces from

Namibia, the impact on the civil war is more difficult to assess:

- Total Cuban withdrawal, even with Namibian independence, probably would spell the end of the MPLA regime, in our judgment. At this stage of the war, compensating for the loss of the 25,000 Cuban combat troops guarding the main garrisons and, more important, the advisers and technicians that run Angola's war machine probably would be an insurmountable problem for Luanda. Although UNITA would lose its sustaining long-term support, it probably would be tempted, in the event of a Cuban withdrawal, to strike quick and hard to settle the civil war before supply shortages cut into its capabilities.
- A partial Cuban withdrawal—of one-half to two-thirds of the 35,000 Cubans, for example—in the wake of a Namibian settlement that left behind the Cuban technicians and advisers and sufficient combat troops to guard Angola's key facilities, we believe, would hurt UNITA more than the government. Although the Angolan Army would be weakened and possibly lose some territory initially, Soviet weapon deliveries and economically vital oil production would continue. UNITA would lose the support necessary to sustain the conflict at the present level, its relatively secure sanctuary, and eventually its momentum. The conflict, we believe, would continue for some years, but the trend would not be in UNITA's favor. [redacted]

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Savimbi's Removal. Savimbi's death or incapacitation would be a major blow to the insurgent cause. We believe Savimbi's dynamic personal appeal and exceptional leadership qualities would be impossible to replace and his abrupt removal from the scene probably would lead, in the short term, to considerable disorganization within the insurgent leadership. Savimbi has no widely recognized successor of his stature, but UNITA does have an experienced cadre who are tough, able, and committed to the cause. This leadership probably would be able to retrench and continue the battle, although probably at considerably reduced levels. [redacted]

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[Redacted]

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Luanda apparently believes that Savimbi's death would ensure a government victory; several press reports suggest the MPLA has tried to assassinate Savimbi. In December, according to one report, the regime sent aircraft to bomb a rally where Savimbi was believed to be speaking. Although unsuccessful, the attempt may have generated the recent rumors reported by the press in Luanda that Savimbi had been killed. [Redacted]

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Cuban and Soviet Escalation. To make an appreciable difference in the military situation, we believe Cuban troops would have to take on a major, direct, and sustained role in the fighting. As they did in 1975, the Cubans would have to deploy for conventional operations against UNITA's forces. In the southeast, for example, where the war has taken on a more conventional character, Cuban brigades—supported by armor, artillery, and air support—could make inroads into UNITA-controlled territory and capture or cut insurgent bases and supply lines. To sustain these operations, the Cubans probably would also have to augment substantially their troop strength in Angola and be prepared to accept the higher casualties that would result. [Redacted]

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We believe Soviet assistance, particularly in stepped-up deliveries of weapons and aircraft, would be necessary to support a substantial expansion in the Cuban combat role. The Soviets probably also would be required to raise their advisory and technical presence in the country to support a greater intensity in the combat operations. [Redacted]

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We do not believe the Soviets or the Cubans are prepared at this time to take such a step. Despite the slow but steady decline in government fortunes, the Cubans apparently have not committed substantial forces directly to combat operations. On at least two occasions of self-proclaimed emergencies for Luanda—the South African invasion of Angola in late 1981 and UNITA's capture of Cangamba in August 1983—Havana responded by sending additional forces, not by changing the rules of engagement. We believe Soviet advisers in Angola are prohibited from participating in combat situations and limit their presence to headquarters or positions out of the line of fire. [Redacted]

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Moscow's and Havana's evident preference for limiting their direct involvement in the civil war, however, could be challenged if Luanda's fortunes were to decline precipitously, either through rapid UNITA military advances or an internal collapse of the regime leadership. We believe the Soviets and the Cubans would move quickly to try and stabilize the situation. The Cubans probably would be able to hold out in Luanda and major provincial centers until Moscow and Havana decided their next move. As long as Cuban troops were available to do the fighting, we do not believe the Soviets would commit their own combat troops. Even then, comments from Soviet officials suggest that Moscow does not believe Angola is of such importance as to warrant the direct engagement of Soviet combat forces and prestige. Moreover, Moscow almost certainly realizes that only massive numbers of Soviet forces could decisively alter the military balance, and even then, as Afghanistan has proved, such actions could not guarantee the defeat of UNITA's forces. [Redacted]

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In our view, any future Soviet and Cuban escalation—other than continued Soviet arms deliveries—is likely to be a response to further deterioration in the government's military position and would be primarily aimed at stabilizing the existing standoff between Luanda and the insurgents. We believe the Soviets and Cubans will act to prevent the MPLA regime from losing the civil war, but are unlikely to accept the costs, largely Cuban casualties that would be suffered in direct combat, required to win the war. [Redacted]

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Long-Term Prospects

In the absence of dramatic changes in the diplomatic situation, the leadership of either side, or the military dimensions of the conflict, we believe the current situation is likely to persist: in effect, an overall stalemate with UNITA holding the upper hand in the countryside, and the government, with Cuban backing, holding the main urban areas and key economic facilities. [Redacted]

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[Redacted]

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[redacted]

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Without external factors or developments to change the situation, we do not believe that either side has the strength or the ability to defeat its opponent without a protracted conflict. The insurgent military forces are too strong and their support within the country is too deep to be eliminated without a long-term military and political effort on the part of the government. On the other hand, UNITA lacks, and is unlikely to gain, the capability to capture the major Angolan centers or to take on, in direct combat, major Angolan or Cuban military units. [redacted]

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This stalemate, however, could be ended, not by any specific military defeat or battle but by gradually mounting and sustaining pressure by either side until its opponent lost the will to continue the conflict. In such a situation, we believe Luanda would break first. We believe the MPLA regime is more fragile than UNITA and has less potential for generating support among Angola's rival ethnic groups than do the insurgents. [redacted]

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Under these circumstances, a failure of will in Luanda and a severe decline of morale within the dos Santos regime could lead Luanda's backers to wash their hands of the whole enterprise and leave Luanda open to conquest. Alternatively, there also could be a major political realignment within the regime, such that Luanda was willing to compromise its power in negotiations with UNITA that lead to a reconciliation. [redacted]

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Neither event is likely in the next year or so, in our judgment. The Angolan military seems convinced that all of its Soviet military hardware will make a difference when fully committed to battle. However, if in the next two years Luanda is unable to reverse the military trend in UNITA's favor and its prospects remain bleak, a dramatic change in Angola's leadership dynamics becomes increasingly likely. [redacted]

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[redacted]

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[Redacted]

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Appendix A

Major Military Developments in 1984

During the past year, UNITA continued its thrust to the north which it initiated in late 1982 when insurgent forces broke out of their southeastern stronghold. The insurgents capped their first general offensive when they seized Cangamba in August 1983—the first major setpiece battle by UNITA against a prepared and apparently well-defended government strongpoint. The capture of Cangamba—which was not permanently occupied by the insurgents—demonstrated the growing strength of Savimbi's conventional forces and was a major blow to Luanda's morale. On the other hand, the heavy casualties suffered by UNITA in the battle, [Redacted] made the insurgents wary of further attacks on government strongpoints. [Redacted]

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UNITA Operations

After the victory at Cangamba, UNITA announced the start of a second general offensive in November 1983 that was intended to extend the war northward into hitherto relatively unaffected areas of Angola. The offensive also was aimed at disrupting the Angolan economy by attacks on economic facilities and resources. In addition, UNITA announced that it would lay siege to the cities through commando raids while regular and guerrilla forces secured control of the countryside. [Redacted]

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As a first step, UNITA's forces seized the Cazombo Salient before the end of the year, giving UNITA total control of Angola's border with Zambia and, for the first time, control of a small portion of the border with Zaire. In January 1984, UNITA tried unsuccessfully to follow up this victory by capturing Luau, a key border town on the Zairian border and an important symbolic target for the insurgents. [Redacted]

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[Redacted]

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UNITA began to deploy its regular forces in appreciable strength north of the Benguela rail line beginning in late 1983. [Redacted]

UNITA had, by the end of that year, 10 battalions of regulars operating north of the rail line with the western and northern fronts. Troops from these fronts pushed northward and continued hit-and-run raids on small government centers, ambushes of government convoys, destruction of bridges, and general disruption of the country's internal transport. Insurgent forces in the north, [Redacted]

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[Redacted] also established permanent base camps and continued their attempts to recruit the local population. [Redacted]

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UNITA kept its promise to threaten Angola's major urban areas when the insurgents successfully conducted, in March, a hit-and-run attack on lightly defended Sumbe on Angola's western coast. Sumbe was the first provincial capital to be captured, albeit briefly, by the insurgents. In April UNITA raiders exploded a car bomb outside a Cuban headquarters and housing area in Huambo that killed a number of Cubans and probably some civilians. This event, [Redacted]

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[Redacted] marked the start of a campaign to target Cuban and Soviet officials as well as senior members of the MPLA government. [Redacted]

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By the end of the year, UNITA's forces were closing on Luanda. Raids on small outlying cities and the attacks on the powerlines into the city beginning in October increased jitters in the capital, [Redacted]

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[Redacted] UNITA forces also set up base camps in the mountainous area east of the city, apparently to support continued operations aimed at cutting Luanda off from the rest of the country. [Redacted]

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UNITA's attacks on Angola's economy were equally aggressive. UNITA forces repeatedly cut the road to the northeastern diamond-producing area. Although the government publicly claims it has reopened parts of the road, [Redacted]

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[Redacted]

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[Redacted] supply convoys have been reduced from three per month in 1983 to one every three months, and then only with strong military escorts. The diamond industry has been forced to rely on frequent and expensive airlift to maintain what the managers say is a money-losing operation.

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[Redacted]

UNITA also struck twice at the diamond mine at Cafunfo in February and December 1984. On both occasions, foreign nationals working at the mines were captured. In the December attack, the aircraft operated by a charter US air cargo company was burned, and two Americans were captured and a third was killed. [Redacted]

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In 1984 UNITA conducted its first raids on Angolan oil facilities. In April it attacked and burned storage tanks at a small well site on Angola's mainland southwest of Luanda, and in July the insurgents damaged an onshore pipeline in oil-rich Cabinda Province. Neither attack significantly damaged Angola's oil industry—the mainstay of the Angolan economy—but the raid in Cabinda marked one of the first UNITA operations in this Angolan exclave province.

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[Redacted]

Government Responses

Stung by the fall of Cangamba in August 1983, the Angolan Government initiated a series of steps to strengthen its armed forces. [Redacted]

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[Redacted] Moscow-trained Iko Carrieria, Angola's Air Force chief, was the driving force, if not the architect, of the reorganization of the Angolan military and security forces aimed at improving the coordination of military and civilian resources in counterinsurgency operations. For example, regional military councils were established in six of the 10 military regions where the government said the insurgent threat was the greatest. In addition, in a move designed to consolidate decisionmaking on national security matters, senior government officials with responsibilities for military and counterinsurgency matters were organized into a Defense and Security Council, chaired by President dos Santos. [Redacted]

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The Angolans also sought assistance from their key backers. A high-level Angolan delegation visited Moscow in early September 1983 to ask for more arms,

[Redacted] The Angolans also told Havana in September they might ask for more troops, and the Cubans said publicly that more would be sent if needed. [Redacted]

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Soviet military deliveries accelerated rapidly after mid-1983, and Cuba, [Redacted] began to augment its forces. By early 1984 the Cubans, [Redacted] had sent an additional 5,000 troops, bringing the total to as many as 35,000 military personnel. [Redacted]

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[Redacted] Angolan garrisons also revealed a major effort to upgrade facilities and defenses at bases and provincial centers in northern and eastern Angola where UNITA forces were expanding their operations. Substantial improvements were made to the defenses of Luena, Malanje, and Huambo, for example, and [Redacted] additional defenses at numerous smaller regional centers. [Redacted]

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Apparently encouraged by their growing strength, the Angolans tried at least twice in 1984 to win back territory controlled by UNITA. The first effort, launched in April, was, [Redacted] intended to recapture the Cazombo Salient. At least four Angolan brigades attempted in a series of operations to take Cazombo, the primary town in the salient. Although the Angolan forces regained some ground, UNITA's forces, consisting primarily of its regular battalions, apparently were able to block further moves [Redacted]

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[Redacted] the fighting had been heavy, and abandoned Angolan strongpoints and equipment were seen along the main road in the area. [Redacted]

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[Redacted] the Angolans called off the operation by the end of July and made no further efforts to recapture the salient. [Redacted]

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[Redacted]

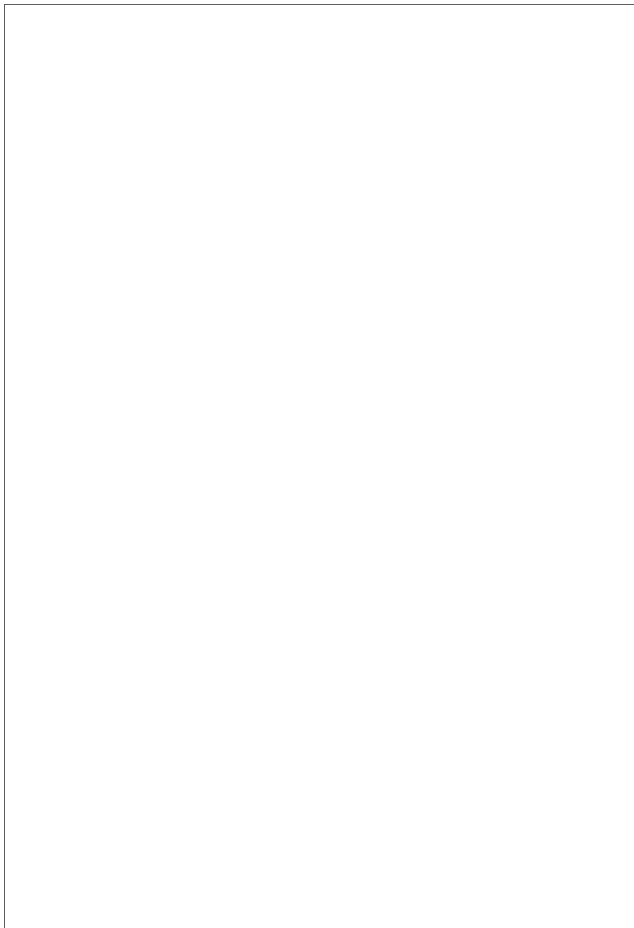
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UNITA continued to maintain an aggressive presence in the countryside and conduct frequent raids on roads or rail lines, economic targets, or small government administrative centers. Surface transportation in Angola remains risky, and even military resupply convoys are forced to travel with substantial escort. Civilian traffic, [redacted] moves only with difficulty or is nonexistent. [redacted]

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Most important, UNITA showed that it could defend regions it deems important—its area of control in southeastern Angola—from government offensive efforts to retake the territory. On at least two occasions last year, UNITA's conventional forces drove back major conventional military offensives by Angolan forces. [redacted]

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On the other hand, UNITA failed on at least two occasions to capture positions the government was willing to defend. In January 1984, UNITA failed to take Luau despite the apparent high priority placed on its capture. In July two UNITA battalions, [redacted]

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[redacted] tried to capture the small garrison at Baixo Longa in southeastern Angola. Although UNITA overran the relatively undefended dirt airstrip, it was unable to capture the government position. Rather than risk further casualties, the UNITA forces called off the battle. [redacted]

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Lessons Learned

UNITA thus held on to the initiative last year, turned back two government offensives, and was able to score some impressive gains. However, a strengthened Angolan military establishment, bolstered by increased arms support from the Soviet Union, enjoyed success on a few occasions and was able to expose some of UNITA's military weaknesses. [redacted]

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In 1984 UNITA showed that it could deploy, support, and sustain conventional and guerrilla forces at great distance from its base of supply in southeastern Angola. In doing so, it had to maintain and defend a lengthy supply line from enemy attack, despite occasional problems such as food shortages and air raids on supply convoys. UNITA also proved by its raid on Sumbe that it could organize attacks on government positions with multibattalion regular forces augmented by indigenous guerrillas. [redacted]

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UNITA's failures underscored its weaknesses:

- The ability of government forces to resupply the isolated garrisons by air and deliver sustained close air support against attacking UNITA forces has rendered the insurgent troops vulnerable if they remain concentrated. [redacted]

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[redacted] Angolan use of air support increased significantly in 1984 and probably will increase even more in 1985. UNITA has no significant defense against government air attacks.

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[Redacted]

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- The lack of fire support in sufficient quantities to overcome well-dug-in and protected government forces limits UNITA's ability to capture defended Angolan positions. The light infantry weapons and light mortars upon which UNITA relies are not adequate to blast out government troops in carefully bunkered and entrenched positions with multiple lines of defense. Most UNITA successes have resulted from attacks on isolated and ill-prepared government positions. [Redacted]

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These weaknesses are magnified by an increasing willingness of Angolan troops to fight from well-defended positions, especially if assured of air support and resupply. [Redacted]

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