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Central Intelligence Agency



Washington, D. C. 20505

DIRECTORATE OF INTELLIGENCE

8 July 1986

Angola-Zaire: An Uneasy Peace [Redacted]

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Summary

The traditionally uneasy relationship between Angola and Zaire has worsened noticeably in recent months as suspicions on both sides have mounted about each other's willingness to increase aid to dissident groups. The summit scheduled for 10 July in Luanda between Angolan President dos Santos and Zairian President Mobutu is unlikely to relax growing tensions, even though we expect both leaders to give lip service to improving diplomatic relations. [Redacted]

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[Redacted]

Although we doubt that Kinshasa will reduce its involvement with UNITA, President Mobutu is working hard to reduce Zaire's regional isolation, project a more nonaligned foreign policy, and improve relations with Moscow in the unrealistic hope that such cosmetic moves will paper over growing difficulties with Angola. [Redacted]

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Should tensions continue to mount in the wake of the summit, we believe Angola will take limited military moves against Kinshasa, probably including increased hot pursuit operations against UNITA forces using Zaire as a sanctuary or limited cross-border raids by regular Angolan Army troops. We

This memorandum was requested by Raymond Smith, Deputy Director, Office of Southern African Affairs and Edward Killham, Director, Office of Central African Affairs, Department of State. The paper was written by [Redacted] African Division of the Office of African and Latin American Analysis. The paper was coordinated with the Directorate of Operations. Questions and comments are welcome and may be directed to the Chief, Africa Division, ALA [Redacted]

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expect, however, Luanda would weigh carefully the pros and cons of renewing substantial assistance to Zairian dissidents in recognition of the likelihood of a strong Western response to a major incursion as happened in the 1977 and 1978 invasions of Zaire's mineral-rich Shaba region. Nevertheless, we judge that Angola might be tempted to renew major support for Zairian dissidents in the event of additional evidence that Zaire had supported a dramatic UNITA attack on oil facilities in Cabinda

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Under such circumstances, Soviet reservations about resurrecting anti-Mobutu dissidents in Angola might diminish. At this juncture, however, we have no evidence to confirm frequent Zairian allegations that preparations for a Shaba III is already under way.

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relations between Angola and Zaire have cooled noticeably in recent months largely because of both sides' heightened concerns about each other's willingness to increase aid to dissident groups. In our view, bilateral relations are more strained than at any time since Angola supported Zairian rebel invasions into Zaire's Shaba region in 1977 and 1978 in retaliation for Kinshasa's support for the MPLA's opponents in the 1975-76 civil war that followed Angola's independence from Portugal. Moreover, we do not expect that Zairian President Mobutu's visit to Luanda--now scheduled for 10 July --will defuse growing tensions.

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Background

Tensions between Angola and Zaire are nothing new. Zaire since the 1960s supported the National Front for the Liberation of Angola (FNLA), a pro-Western nationalist movement, and subsequently extended assistance to Jonas Savimbi's National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA) after Angola's independence in November 1975. UNITA and the FNLA had joined forces in an unsuccessful effort to block the Soviet- and Cuban-backed Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA) from seizing control in Luanda. In turn, the MPLA, probably with Soviet acquiescence, in the late 1970s provided enough training, equipment, and bases to enable anti-Mobutu dissidents called the Front for the National Liberation of Congo (FLNC) to invade Zaire's Shaba region in both 1977 and 1978.

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Following the defeat of these invasions, Angola and Zaire managed to achieve a modus vivendi of sorts by maintaining a broad range of contacts



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and cooperation on certain issues, such as refugees. Nevertheless, fundamental differences between Kinshasa and Luanda rooted in personality difference between their leaders, opposing ideologies, and differing foreign policies account for many of the longstanding bilateral frictions. (See Appendix for a fuller background discussion of Angolan-Zairian relations).

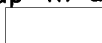
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Sources of Current Tensions

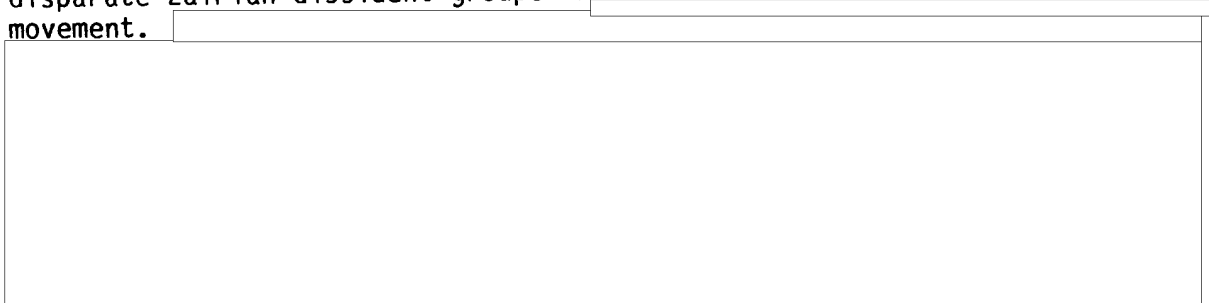
As revealed in conversations with US officials, Mobutu's fears of Angolan intentions intensified late last year after Luanda succeeded for the first time in several years in putting UNITA on the defensive and recapturing some territory near Angola's border with Zaire. US Embassy reporting suggests that Mobutu has long supported UNITA, in part because of its potential usefulness as a buffer against the continued presence of FLNC dissidents in Angola. In our view, UNITA's presence along much of Angola's border with Zaire's Shaba region denies the dissidents bases near this vital mineral producing area and puts Savimbi's group in a position to gain intelligence and--if necessary--to harass FLNC.

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Mobutu's security fears are compounded by his growing sense of isolation in the region and by reports of Libyan efforts to unite disparate Zairian dissident groups into a militarily viable opposition movement.

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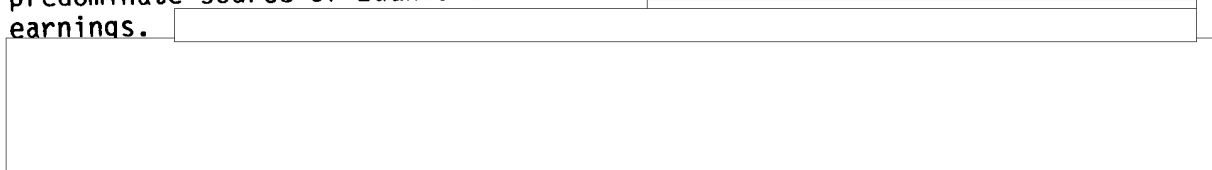


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From the Angolan perspective, Luanda's suspicions of Zairian good faith clearly have increased in recent years, a reflection of Angola's growing conviction that Zaire has allowed UNITA use of Zairian territory as a safehaven, especially those areas near the diamond and coffee rich northern provinces as well as near the Angolan exclave of Cabinda--the predominate source of Luanda's crude oil exports and foreign exchange earnings.

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We believe specific incidents and persistent rumors during the past year have only compounded Angolan fears:



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-- Earlier seeds of doubt were sowed in May 1985, when the Angolans discovered a map of Zaire on a South African soldier captured while on a sabotage mission against oil installations in Cabinda.

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-- The smooth transfer by UNITA to Zaire in March 1986 of over 150 hostages--expatriate employees captured at a diamond mine in the northern town of Andrada--and the subsequent refusal by Zaire to return to Angola those UNITA forces that accompanied the captives also heightened Angolan suspicions

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Reactions to Date

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Embassy reporting suggest that leaders in both Kinshasa and Luanda are leaning toward believing the worst of each other. Paranoia over the threat posed by Zairian exiles in nearby countries is running even higher than usual in Kinshasa, while Luanda is inclined to believe that massive US aid is flowing through Zaire to UNITA. Although their perceptions are in part skewed, they are no less troubling or real to Presidents' Mobutu and dos Santos as they prepare for their summit, now scheduled for 10 July. In our judgment, should their security concerns intensify, the prospects for a rash reaction or miscue will increase.

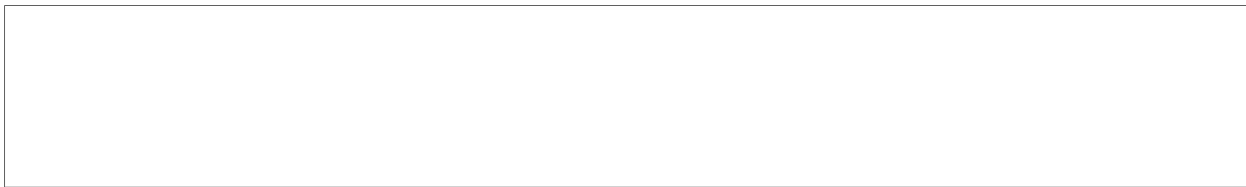
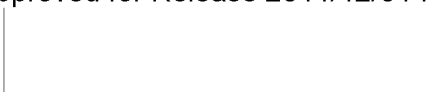
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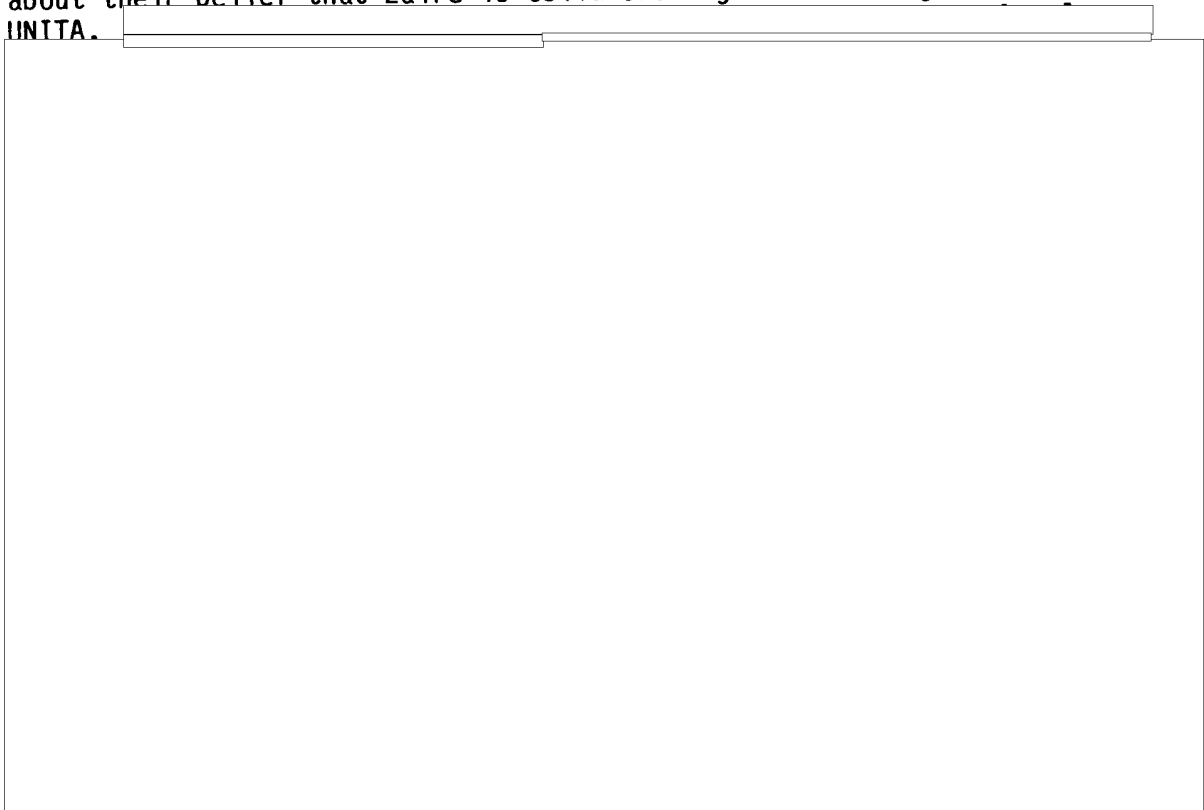
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Meanwhile, diplomatic reporting shows that the Angolans have privately complained to a wide range of diplomats in Luanda as well as to leaders of the Frontline States and the Organization of African Unity about their belief that Zaire is collaborating with Washington to aid UNITA.

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Weighing Their Options

Both Angola and Zaire appear to be trying to anticipate each other's next steps and are actively weighing the costs and opportunities of their respective options. However, a review of [redacted] US Embassy reporting suggests to us that at this point neither side has made any firm plans for further actions against each other. [redacted]

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The Angolan Perspective. We believe that any options Angola considers vis-a-vis Zaire must be weighed against its own demanding internal security situation and the need to focus its main energies



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against UNITA activities inside Angola. While we have received mixed signals on the issue of timing, [Redacted]

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Angola still appears preoccupied with taking advantage of the dry season--from May to November--to mount another annual offensive against UNITA, probably in several weeks as an extension of fighting now under way in the area of Munhango. [Redacted]

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[Redacted] We believe Angola will continue to look for concrete evidence of Kinshasa's collusion with UNITA and for opportunities to present its case against Zaire in the OAU and the other international meetings, perhaps including the UN Security Council. In our view, such moves--while certain to enhance Kinshasa's discomforture--are likely to lead to louder protestations of good neighborliness from Zaire but probably little else. [Redacted]

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Another option Angola seems to be exploring is encouraging other Frontline states* to either turn a blind eye to or to grant covert support to the activities of anti-Mobutu dissidents in their countries. Several diplomatic reports indicate that Frontline leaders at a meeting in April in Luanda discussed Mobutu's support for UNITA, particularly his alleged role in facilitating US aid. [Redacted]

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[Redacted] some Frontline states [Redacted] may give greater consideration to enhancing anti-Mobutu dissident capabilities as a means of showing solidarity with the beleaguered Angolans. [Redacted]

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Ultimately [Redacted]

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[Redacted] we judge that Luanda would probably take some limited military moves against Kinshasa, but weigh carefully further efforts to resurrect FLNC for another major attack on Zaire. [Redacted]

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[Redacted] To remind [Redacted]

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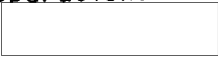
* The Frontline States include Angola, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Mozambique, Botswana, and Tanzania. [Redacted]

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Kinshasa of its vulnerability, the Angolans could easily increase their cross-border operations into Zaire--with overflights, troop crossings or both. 


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-- A limited cross-border attack. As a more pointed reminder to Zaire, a small number of forces--either Angolans disguised as Zairian dissidents or perhaps even a reconstituted FLNC unit--could enter Zaire on an attention-getting, small-scale raid. The brief occupation of a small town in Shaba or the heavyhanded treatment of some civilians would almost certainly cause severe concern to Mobutu, who probably would rush elite troops from Kinshasa to the border area. 

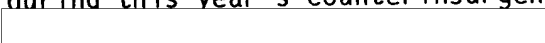

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We believe any major Angolan resuscitation of FLNC would be a long-term option, given the time that would probably be required to get the nearly moribund organization on its feet, the stiff manpower and logistics demands of current anti-UNITA operations, and the need for Soviet and Cuban acquiescence and probable support. FLNC, according to sketchy US Embassy reporting, has been in disarray for several years. Embassy reporting from Kinshasa suggests that while perhaps between 2,000 and 3,500 combat-age FLNC males reside in Angola, only a small proportion of them would be readily available for combat operations. Moreover, we suspect much of their spirit and commitment has been sapped since their failure to take Shaba in 1977 and 1978 and by probable fighting with UNITA, which operates in FLNC areas in northern Angola. In addition, the defection of key Zairian dissident leaders--such as former Prime Minister Nguza Karl-I-Bond--and the failure of new leaders to emerge suggest yet other weaknesses. 

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Nonetheless, we judge that Luanda would be tempted to renew support to FLNC under certain circumstances. This would include a dramatic UNITA attack on oil facilities in Cabinda, serious Angolan military setbacks during this year's counterinsurgency effort 

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 Under such circumstances, it is our view that Moscow might overcome some of its reservations about FLNC and the consequences of supporting it, resulting in more active Soviet interest in the group. 


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The historical record suggests that Moscow probably has ambivalent attitudes toward FLNC. We believe that the Soviets almost certainly would discourage Angola from aiding them until the conclusion of a dry-season offensive and might even oppose such aid at any point given their longstanding doubts about the performance of Zairian dissidents. 

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 We doubt that Mobutu's current flirtations with the Soviets would be enough to woo Moscow into blocking renewed Angolan aid to the Zairian dissidents.

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Havana, which provided military training to FLNC in the late 1970s, would probably be willing to support the rebels even at the risk of losing its diplomatic ties to Zaire. [Redacted]

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The Zairian Perspective

In our judgment, Zaire will continue recent efforts to deal with what it sees as a worsening security situation, growing regional isolation [Redacted] [Redacted] On the political front, Mobutu is likely to continue to emphasize regional diplomacy in an effort to counteract Frontline censure over Zaire's support to UNITA. Recent US Embassy reporting suggests that Mobutu's vehement public denials of support for UNITA and his recent decision to reactivate its membership in the OAU are primarily calculated to reduce his regional isolation. [Redacted]

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In addition, we believe that Mobutu is trying to improve currently poor relations with the USSR in the hope--unrealistic in our view--that Moscow might forestall possible Angolan retaliation. Moreover, Mobutu may believe that expanded ties with Moscow--such as permitting Aeroflot landing rights or Soviet involvement in a limited number of economic projects--will give him greater leverage in Washington. He might even entertain the idea of visiting Moscow to make more visible any warming of bilateral relations. [Redacted]

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[Redacted]

Despite his growing security concerns, we believe Mobutu will continue to discreetly help UNITA infiltrate Angola and to provide use of airfields, personnel, and intelligence support to facilitate the transfer of materiel to UNITA. [Redacted]

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[Redacted] Should UNITA suffer serious setbacks during the next six months, we judge that Mobutu would probably come under pressure from Savimbi and South Africa to provide

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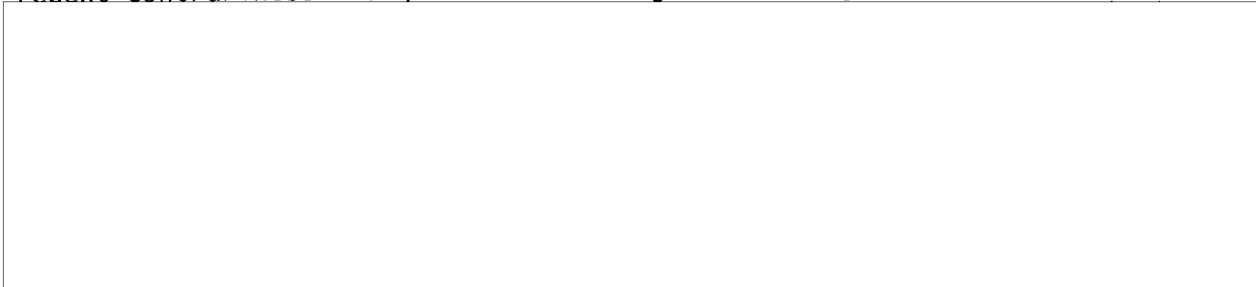
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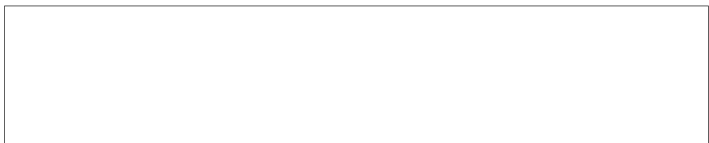
UNITA with staging areas inside Zaire. Without specific security guarantees from his Western backers, however, we doubt that Mobutu would risk such visibly increased support. 

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Despite Mobutu's unusual interest in recent Soviet proposals to improve relations, we expect any Zaire-Soviet rapprochement will be limited because of Mobutu's longstanding distrust of Soviet motives and desire to retain a security relationship with the US and other Western backers--especially the French and the Belgians, who intervened on Zaire's behalf during the Shaba incursions of 1977 and 1978. Mobutu, however, may allow tensions in relations with the US to remain high for the near term and could join other regional states in their criticism of Washington's southern African policies. In our view, Mobutu probably judges that his recent contrariness has given him leverage in Washington for increased aid



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Appendix

Angola-Zaire: A Troubled Relationship

Fundamental Difference: Zaire and Angola have for years been part of the larger East-West struggle in sub-Saharan Africa as the historical record shows that each country's relationship with and dependence on rival big powers has been a key element in the undercurrent of mutual distrust between the two countries. Open source reporting indicates that Angolan and Zairian views are diametrically opposed on most African problems and international issues. Angola, by all accounts, is one of Africa's leading "radical" states, while Zaire is considered one of the continent's most conservative. In addition, Angola has close diplomatic links with most black nations in southern Africa and participates actively in regional organizations like the Frontline States, the Southern Africa Development and Coordination Conference, and the Organization of African Unity. Zaire, by contrast, has traditionally been viewed as the odd country out in the Southern African political landscape. [REDACTED]

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Of the nine countries that surround Zaire, Kinshasa has always regarded Angola as potentially the most dangerous. [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] Despite occasional flirtations with Moscow, Zairian President Mobutu has often displayed an almost paranoid fear of Communism, frequently citing the "red belt" around Zaire fueled by the pervasive Soviet and Cuban presence in Angola and Luanda's own avowed commitment to Marxism-Leninism. Luanda's frequent verbal attacks on Zaire's major Western backers, combined with Mobutu's growing sense of isolation, underscore the Zairian leader's worries. [REDACTED]

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Supporting Each Other's Dissidents: Zaire from the early 1960s served as a base of support for the National Front for the Liberation of Angola (FNLA), a pro-Western nationalist movement led by Holden Roberto that vied with the Soviet-backed Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA) in opposing Portuguese rule in Angola. Joseph Kasavubu, Zaire's President from 1961 to 1964, provided support for the FNLA, while Moise Tshombe, Zaire's President in 1964-65, curtailed FNLA activities because his own support came from the Portuguese in Angola and white settlers in Zaire. [REDACTED]

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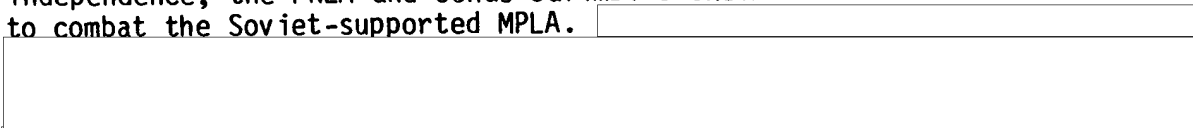
With Mobutu's assumption of power in 1965, however, the Zairian Army began organizing, training, and equipping FNLA soldiers. In the mid-1970s, Zaire served as a conduit for US and Chinese military aid to the FNLA. By 1974, approximately 10,000 to 12,000 FNLA guerrillas resided in Zaire. [REDACTED]

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After the failure in early 1975 of the Alvor agreement under which the three Angolan factions--the FNLA, MPLA, and UNITA--had agreed to participate with Portugal in a transitional government leading to independence, the FNLA and Jonas Savimbi's UNITA formed a loose coalition to combat the Soviet-supported MPLA.



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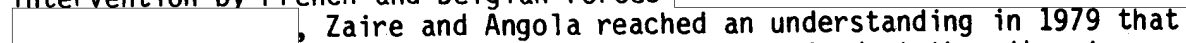
As the MPLA--with substantial Soviet and Cuban military support--strengthened its military position beyond Luanda in 1976, Zaire provided sanctuary to large numbers of defeated FNLA soldiers and occasional safehaven to UNITA guerrillas under pressure from Angolan and Cuban troops.

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Angola retaliated for Zaire's earlier support to FNLA and UNITA by providing support for the abortive invasions of Zaire's mineral-rich Shaba region in 1977 and 1978 by the anti-Mobutu Front for the National Liberation of Congo (FLNC), also known as the "Katangan gendarmes". Angola provided training bases, military instructors, and equipment to the FLNC.

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Following the defeat of the two Shaba invasions, each time with intervention by French and Belgian forces



Zaire and Angola reached an understanding in 1979 that neither country would allow opposition movements aimed at the other to operate actively from their respective territories. Both governments also began to work through diplomatic channels to try to defuse security problems and to find areas for cooperation.

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Areas of Cooperation: Despite longstanding bilateral frictions, Angola and Zaire pursue a broad range of official contacts at several levels. Both governments over the years have generally adhered to a two-track policy: discussing mutual hostilities in private while publicly putting the best face on their relationship. Even in recent months, Kinshasa and Luanda have stressed publicly their commitment to a good neighbor policy and to nonintervention in the internal affairs of the other.

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In the diplomatic sphere, Kinshasa and Luanda have embassies in each other's capitals as well as consulates--Zaire in Luena and Angola in Lubumbashi. Open press reporting indicates that cabinet-level officials occasionally exchange visits, and for all their differences, Mobutu and dos Santos have met several times over the years, most recently in Kinshasa in February 1985 in what our Embassy in Kinshasa described as an outwardly cordial atmosphere.

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At lower levels, [Redacted]

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[Redacted] Zairian ruling party official attended an MPLA party congress in Luanda last December at the MPLA's invitation, according to open press sources.

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Potentially, the most significant agreement signed between the two countries at the summit early last year was an accord covering defense and security issues, including a renewed pledge not to let their respective territory be used to undermine each other's stability. [Redacted]

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[Redacted]

The two countries have generally cooperated on refugee issues, a chronic problem given the unsettled security situation and uncertain economic climate in much of Angola and Zaire. While the numbers fluctuate, the UNHCR estimates that some 30,000 to 40,000 Angolans reside in the Shaba region of Zaire. We lack similarly reliable figures for the number of Zairian refugees in Angola, but estimate that there are several thousand Zairians there. Luanda was distinctly irritated earlier this year, however, when Kinshasa received from UNITA forces over 150 foreign nationals captured when the insurgents overran the diamond mines at Andrada. In the past, Zaire had not allowed UNITA to release prisoners into Zairian territory. [Redacted]

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Trade between Angola and Zaire is practically nil, aside from smuggling operations. The two countries have established a maritime freight agreement to deal with transit problems on the Zaire River, a medical aid agreement, and an information exchange commission. [Redacted]

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Limits to Cooperation: While the historical record shows that diplomatic and security links have aided both countries in dealing with some potentially sticky situations--such as the unscheduled landing in Zaire last year of an Angolan aircraft carrying Cuban military personnel--there are limits to the effectiveness of such ties. [Redacted]

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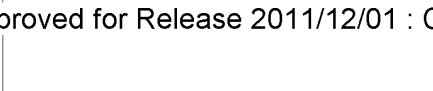
-- The defense and security accord has not prevented Zaire from continuing to grant safehaven and logistic assistance to UNITA nor Angola from continuing to harbor anti-Mobutu elements.

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SUBJECT: Angola-Zaire: An Uneasy Peace

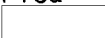


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- Original--Raymond F. Smith, Deputy Director, Office of Southern African Affairs, and Edward L. Killham, Director, Office of Central African Affairs, Department of State
- 1--Phillip Ringdahl, Director of African Affairs, NSC
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- 1--Edward G. Lanpher, Director, Office of Southern African Affairs, Department of State
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- 1--Douglas Holladay, Working Group on South Africa and Southern Africa, Department of State.
- 1--Anthony S. Dalsimer, Director, Office of Analysis for Africa, INR, Department of State
- 1--Jerry Galluci, Desk Officer for Angola, Department of State
- 1--Ralph Bressler, Desk Officer for Zaire, Department of State
- 1--James Wood, Assistant Secretary of Defense for Africa, International Security Affairs, Office of the Secretary of Defense.



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- 1--Walter Barrows, Assistant to the Director, International Security Agency.
- 1--DDI
- 1--NIO for Africa
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- 1--PDB Staff
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