

Director of Central Intelligence

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Special National Intelligence Estimate

South Africa's Changing Policy Agenda: Implications for US-South African Relations

Key Judgments

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**SOUTH AFRICA'S CHANGING POLICY
AGENDA: IMPLICATIONS FOR
US-SOUTH AFRICAN RELATIONS**

KEY JUDGMENTS

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is being published separately
with limited distribution.

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THIS ESTIMATE IS ISSUED BY THE DIRECTOR OF CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE.

THE NATIONAL FOREIGN INTELLIGENCE BOARD CONCURS.

The following intelligence organizations participated in the preparation of the Estimate:

The Central Intelligence Agency, the Defense Intelligence Agency, the National Security Agency, and the intelligence organizations of the Departments of State and the Treasury.

Also Participating:

The Assistant Chief of Staff for Intelligence, Department of the Army

The Director of Naval Intelligence, Department of the Navy

The Assistant Chief of Staff, Intelligence, Department of the Air Force

The Director of Intelligence, Headquarters, Marine Corps

The Department of Commerce

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KEY JUDGMENTS

Changed perspectives and policies in Pretoria are likely to continue straining US-South African bilateral relations. We believe this deterioration will continue for the next several months as Washington and Pretoria—both under increasing political pressure at home—react to each other's statements and actions. There is a reasonable likelihood, however, that after a few months renewed cooperation on matters of shared interest will resume. Nevertheless, given South Africa's volatile domestic and regional problems, any present judgment must be tentative, and we do not rule out a sharper deterioration that could last for a longer period.

While the freedom of action of the Botha government to undertake internal actions that would ease the strain in bilateral relations is limited—given its preoccupation with restoring domestic order—it could pursue certain actions that would have this effect. The most fundamental of these would be to make substantial progress in resolving the issue at the root of domestic disorder in South Africa: the exclusion of blacks from national political life. One key development would be winning the agreement of Zulu Chief Minister Buthelezi and other major black leaders to participate in the government's reform process. Approval of Buthelezi's plan for multiracial administration of Natal Province would help, but Buthelezi and others have also made clear that the government must give a statement of intent, recognize South African citizenship for all blacks, and release the imprisoned African National Congress (ANC) leader Nelson Mandela. New South African Government actions and reforms that would essentially meet these conditions would diminish opposition to the government and be a positive stimulus to bilateral relations.

Pretoria's perceptions of US statements and actions are also important to restoration of cooperative relations. The Botha administration appreciates that Washington condemns apartheid and desires sociopolitical change in South Africa, but it is sensitive to US actions that derive from that condemnation, such as possible new economic sanctions. Successful efforts to block or diminish such proposed new sanctions would alleviate South African concern. Continued efforts by the United States to persuade the surrounding states that the presence of ANC guerrillas fosters insecurity, and consequent aggressive behavior, in Pretoria would speak to Pretoria's perception that Washington does not understand its legitimate concerns. Renewed efforts to assist the

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Mozambique Government and encourage additional European support would respond to frequent complaints by South Africa that the West has not helped it to strengthen the Nkomati Accord as a key element in regional stability. Similarly in Angola, any action by the United States that would improve the prospects for Cuban troop withdrawal or an accommodation between the ruling Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA) and the insurgent National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA) would also be seen as underscoring US appreciation of broad security concerns in southern Africa.

In the 1983-84 period, the South African Government pursued policies that acknowledged the United States as an important interlocutor in regional events. Examples include the Nkomati and Lusaka agreements with Mozambique and Angola in 1984. Pretoria also appeared to pay greater heed to US suggestions, criticisms, and quiet pressures to speed domestic political and social reforms. The government's willingness to undertake new initiatives was based in part on its reading of the attitudes of the new US administration, the recognized utility of US diplomacy in resolving persistent regional problems, increasing concern over Soviet Bloc threats, and the belief that conservative governments in Washington as well as London could offer a unique opportunity to blunt South Africa's growing international isolation.

Revised and changed South African perceptions of regional events and domestic pressures have led Pretoria to policy adjustments in 1985. Domestically, it has become preoccupied with the need to reassert order over its black population and reassure its white electorate in the face of black protests, riots, strikes, and general dissidence.

Regionally, the South African Government has lowered its expectations as to the usefulness of collaboration with US regional diplomatic efforts, and it has moved to reassert its interests through unilateral actions, including a return to overtly coercive actions such as the June 1985 raids into Botswana and Angola. Pretoria sees the Namibia/Angola negotiations as at an impasse and is disappointed that the Lusaka Agreement and the subsequent South African withdrawal from Angola were not followed by any agreement by the MPLA to patrol the Namibian-Angolan border to control incursions by the South-West Africa People's Organization (SWAPO).

Foremost among Pretoria's responses are increased and heavyhanded efforts to curb protest and intimidate dissenters, to strike at the ANC, both internally and regionally, and to continue efforts to win over leaders of black opinion in order to persuade them to begin consultations with the Botha government and participate in the government-ordered political process. Relations with neighboring states as well as

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international relations have been subordinated to these domestic concerns. Heightened white resentment of Western criticism and threats of sanctions have reduced the Botha government's receptivity to US and Western demarches and attempted interventions to change specific South African domestic actions. While it still desires constructive relations with Washington, Pretoria's expectations in terms of using the United States to break out of isolation or to advance its regional security interests have been diminished and may be further reduced if Washington should increase its criticism or even invoke sanctions.

During the next 12 months, several volatile factors could work to further strain US-South African bilateral relations. These include:

- The South African Government's determination to regain control over the increasingly militant black population, leading to use of repressive tactics that in turn would provoke new outcries in the West and demands on Washington to take punitive actions.
- A continuing South African recession that hits hardest at the black population by raising unemployment and cutting government services.
- Heightened concern in South Africa for its sovereignty, which could cause greater scrutiny or interdiction of official and private US efforts to fund and promote activities inside the country. US programs that provide assistance to education, human rights groups, and nonwhite trade unions could suffer.
- Continuing ANC and SWAPO programs of sabotage and terrorism that will generate demands among the government's most important constituencies to strike back at home and in the region.

At the same time, however, other factors will work to limit the bilateral fallout and stabilize relations. These include:

- The Botha government's continuing recognition that it must avoid total isolation from the West, a view shared by the increasingly influential business community. Concern about the psychological effect of Western sanctions and increased isolation on white citizens also will temper South African reactions.
- The Botha government's continuing implementation of socio-political reform and pursuit of dialogue with black opinion leaders, including even discreet contacts with ANC President Tambo. This will work to Pretoria's favor even if talks do not bear immediate fruit.

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- US and Western dependence on South African minerals as well as South Africa's need for Western markets, which will not lessen in the next 12 months.
- The concern shared by Pretoria and Washington about Soviet Bloc activities in Africa and their common goals of circumscribing and rolling back Soviet advances.
- The increased diplomatic interaction and cooperative exchanges with some African states, particularly the Frontline States, which South Africa's diplomatic efforts have brought are gains that the regime will be reluctant to forsake. They provide a variety of opportunities for South Africa to exercise influence and seek to achieve its regional and domestic goals through behind-the-scenes exchanges with black African leaders.

Whether relations stabilize after some months or continue to deteriorate, the current attenuation of US-South African relations contains important implications for the United States. Over the next several months:

- Pretoria will become increasingly nonreceptive to US advice, requests, pressures, and efforts to consult.
- There will be increasing domestic pressure on the Botha government to retaliate against US criticism and possible sanctions, but Pretoria will attempt to defuse such pressures primarily by rhetoric. The harassment or interdiction of official US programs such as scholarship, human rights, or trade union financial aid programs cannot be ruled out.
- The momentum for voluntary disinvestment by US companies in South Africa is likely to accelerate, reducing US leverage and weakening a significant force for nonviolent reform in South Africa.
- Continuing heavyhanded repression by South Africa of domestic dissent and attacks on ANC facilities outside its borders will create new pressures on Washington to "punish" South Africa. At a minimum, new UN Security Council resolutions proposing Chapter VII mandatory sanctions may be expected.
- Any new restrictions on US nuclear technology transfer to South Africa could derail discussions concerning further increase of International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) surveillance and safeguarding of South African nuclear production.

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