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INTERAGENCY INTELLIGENCE ASSESSMENT

15 November 1985

THE CUBAN PRESENCE IN ANGOLA

This Interagency Intelligence Assessment was prepared under the auspices of the National Intelligence Officer for Africa. The Assessment was coordinated at the working level within the Central Intelligence Agency, the Defense Intelligence Agency, the National Security Agency, and the intelligence organization of the Department of State. Also participating were the intelligence organizations of the Departments of the Army, the Navy, and the Air Force; and the Headquarters, Marine Corps. Information available as of 8 November 1985 was used in the preparation of this Assessment.

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INTERAGENCY INTELLIGENCE ASSESSMENT

THE CUBAN PRESENCE IN ANGOLA

Based on a recent review of all-source information, the Intelligence Community believes that there are now approximately 36,000 Cuban military personnel in Angola. Of this number, we estimate that 28,000 belong to Cuban combat units--mostly ground forces, and 8,000 are Cuban military advisers attached to various Angolan Armed Forces (FAPLA) units. The total of 36,000 military personnel reflects a 5,000-man increase since 1982, when insurgent successes and South African military operations in Angola led Havana to boost its assistance to Luanda. In addition to the military, some 6,000 civilians work in some capacity for the Angolan Government, bringing the overall total of Cubans in Angola to 42,000.

Cuban pilots comprise the primary operational component of the Angolan Air Force and often fly missions in support of FAPLA units operating against the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA). Some Cuban advisers working closely with Angolan soldiers in the field also become involved in active combat. Most other Cuban forces, however, apparently avoid an active combat role and are employed primarily in defensive postures.

The Intelligence Community does not expect a significant increase in Cuban force levels in Angola during the next six months, although several hundred additional troops may arrive as the Cubans fill out newly formed units. We also do not anticipate any withdrawal of Cuban troops, even if FAPLA garners some major military successes against UNITA. A dramatic expansion of the UNITA insurgency could lead to another measurable increase in Cuban troop levels or a greater direct combat role by Cuban ground forces. Luanda and Havana both appear convinced of the need for a continued large Cuban military presence in Angola.

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DISCUSSION

Estimate of Cuban Military Personnel in Angola

The Intelligence Community believes that approximately 28,000 Cuban combat troops are currently stationed in Angola. This figure excludes military advisers and logistical support personnel assigned to Angolan Armed Forces units and Cuban civilian personnel. Of the 28,000 Cuban troops in Angola, we estimate that approximately 21,000 are organized into at least 13 Cuban brigade type units, approximately 5,300 operate air defense sites, and another 1,300 are air force personnel.* In addition, reporting [redacted] indicates that several hundred Cuban security personnel are assigned to the Angolan Ministry of Interior.

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The Community's estimate of 28,000 combat troops reflects an increase of approximately 5,000 troops since late 1982. During late 1983 and throughout 1984, Cuba conducted a significant augmentation of its troop strength in Angola. This increase in Cuban military personnel was in response to the significant expansion of the UNITA insurgency in Angola and, to a lesser extent, to numerous South African military operations in the southern part of the country.

Most of the additional Cuban troops have been assigned to northern Angola, where they are defending large population centers against possible UNITA attacks. Since 1982, new Cuban brigade type units or elements of brigades have been identified in Luena, Malanje, Luanda, and Lobito. The increase in Cuban military strength in the north has not come at the expense of a drawdown in Cuban personnel in southern Angola.

The Cuban response to frequent South African cross-border operations into Angola has been limited to the deployment to the south of additional air defense units. With this exception, Cuban military forces have not moved closer to the Angolan-Namibian border since 1982.

In addition to the 28,000 combat troops, the Intelligence Community believes that there are also approximately 8,000 Cuban military advisers attached to FAPLA units. This figure includes military advisers, technicians, trainers and staff, many of whom serve in logistics, and brings our estimate of total Cuban military strength in Angola to 36,000.

*Totals are not exact due to rounding.

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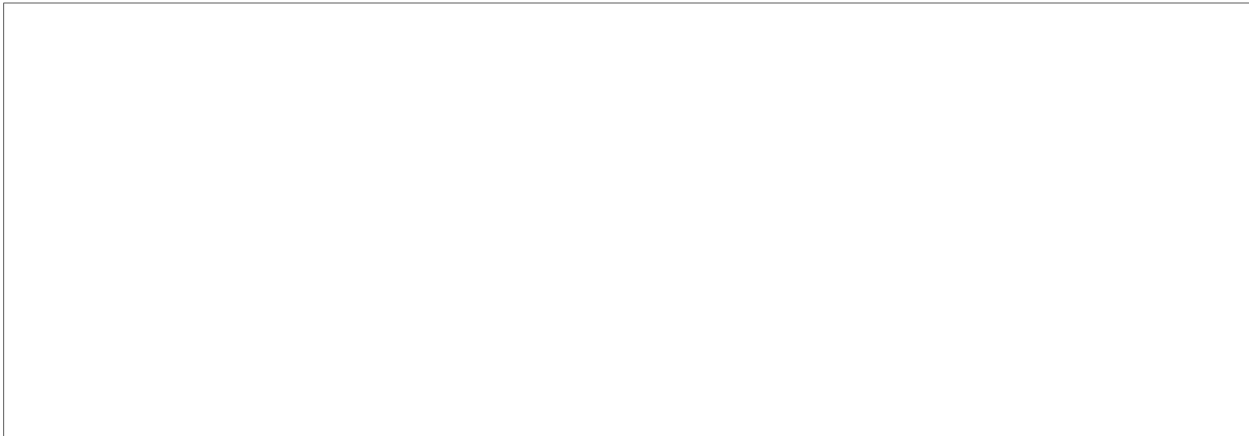
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Role of Cuban Military. Cuban units perform a number of essentially defensive functions in Angola. Cuban ground forces are located in all but one of Angola's military regions. For the most part, army units garrison major provincial towns and defend selected key installations such as mines, dams, bridges, airfields, and the important oil facilities in Cabinda Province. As the UNITA insurgency has expanded, Cuban combat units have also been stationed to defend major roads and have also performed convoy escort services.

Since the late 1970s, the direct Cuban combat role of ground forces has been limited. On occasion and after a FAPLA request for such assistance, Cuban units have provided artillery support and have been involved in limited combat. Cuban installations have also been attacked by UNITA forces, and the Intelligence Community believes that Cuban units have displayed greater willingness since 1982 to fight aggressively to protect threatened population centers from UNITA attacks.



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Cuban air defense personnel are assigned to Angola's mobile and fixed SAM batteries and air warning radar sites. Most of these installations--12 of the 18 air warning radar sites and most of the SAM batteries--are located along the Namibe-Menongue Rail Line or elsewhere in southern Angola. Cuban personnel play the key role in coordinating Angola's growing air defense network.

The 260 Cuban pilots in Angola fly virtually every type of aircraft in the Angolan inventory, including transport planes, helicopters, and air superiority jet fighters, and comprise the primary operational component of the Angolan Air Force. Of all Cuban personnel in Angola, the pilots most often perform combat roles, flying air support missions for FAPLA units engaging UNITA insurgents. We believe Cuban pilots have conducted most of the air strikes against UNITA positions during the recent FAPLA offensive.



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The 8,000 Cuban advisers are active throughout the Angolan military, working in the Ministry of Defense and as foremen, maintenance men, trainers, and unit advisers. Many of these personnel probably often find themselves in combat situations, as they work closely with Angolan Armed Forces units down to the company level and accompany them in operations against UNITA. Reporting [redacted] also indicates that Cuban military personnel advise and train South-West Africa People's Organization and African National Congress members in Angola.

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Cuban Casualties. Evidence of Cuban military casualties in Angola is not often available, is mostly anecdotal and therefore frequently imprecise. Although the numbers have varied greatly over the years, previous estimates of Cubans killed and wounded in Angola--ranging from 2,000 to 10,000--have been based primarily on casualties suffered during Havana's initial involvement during the Angolan civil war in late 1975. Cuban casualties apparently dropped substantially after 1978 when most, if not all, combat responsibilities were turned over to FAPLA. We believe that the lower end of the 2,000 to 10,000 range is probably the more accurate measure of Havana's losses up through the early 1980s.

Since 1982, however, the spread and intensification of UNITA guerrilla activity apparently has taken a mounting toll on Cuban military personnel. Whether this growth in casualties is due to UNITA's efforts to target Cuban personnel or to a more active role in counterinsurgency operations by Cuban troops is not clear. In any case, the total number of Cubans killed and wounded in Angola since 1975 probably now stands at 4,000 to 5,000. In addition to combat casualties, several thousand Cubans have died as a result of accidents or disease.

Cuban Civilian Advisers

In addition to the 36,000 Cuban military personnel assigned to Angola, the Intelligence Community estimates that Havana has another 6,000 civilian personnel in country. Distinguishing civilian from military personnel is often difficult because many supposedly civilian employees probably are on the Cuban Ministry of the Revolutionary Armed Forces' payroll.

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Cuban civilian personnel work in all parts of the Angolan government bureaucracy, performing both advisory and functional tasks. Cuban civilians serve as teachers, doctors, construction workers, agricultural experts, and in numerous other economic fields. Most Cuban civilians probably work in areas where they enjoy the protection of Cuban combat units rather than FAPLA personnel.

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Trends over the Next Six Months

There has been no significant increase in Cuban force levels since May 1985, although troop strength continues to grow slightly as some newly formed units are brought up to full manning levels. The Intelligence Community expects that Angola will continue to receive new military equipment from the Soviet Union, such as air defense systems, that will also require the deployment of additional Cuban personnel. We do not expect, however, that Cuban military strength will jump much above 36,000, although several hundred new troops may arrive as the Cubans fill out units that currently are under strength. Nevertheless, a dramatic expansion of the UNITA insurgency could lead to another measurable increase in Cuban troop levels or a greater direct combat role by Cuban ground forces. We believe that Havana is determined to preserve the current Angolan Government and will respond to an increased threat against Luanda. Cuba has the capability to provide additional military forces. For instance, more military personnel could be provided in a relatively short time from either Cuba or its expeditionary force in Ethiopia.

We believe there is almost no prospect for the withdrawal of Cuban troops from Angola during the next six months.

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The Angolan Government depends for its survival on keeping its Cuban protectors. Despite the recent increase in casualties, we believe that Cuban losses in Angola remain politically and militarily acceptable to Havana. In fact, we expect Havana to maintain its current troop levels even if FAPLA inflicts some significant military setbacks to UNITA.

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*Department of State Footnote: The Angolan Government, in its November 1984 "plataforma," accepted the linkage between Cuban troop withdrawal and a negotiated settlement on Namibia. The State Department believes there is a conflict within the Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola on Cuban withdrawal, but the negotiating track has been kept open.

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