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Covert UNITA Aid Opposed on Hill

Intelligence Panel Chairmen Say Any Such Help Should Be Open

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The chairmen of the Senate and House intelligence committees have decided to oppose covert military assistance to noncommunist forces fighting in Angola and are urging the Reagan administration instead to seek to convince Congress of the need for an open assistance program.

The bipartisan advice from Sen. David F. Durenberger (R-Minn.), chairman of the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, and his counterpart in the House, Rep. Lee H. Hamilton (D-Ind.), came as the administration indicated yesterday that it still prefers a new covert-aid program to the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA) headed by Jonas Savimbi, who arrives in Washington today for an intensive two-week lobbying campaign for U.S. support.

Durenberger said in an interview yesterday that he felt "fairly strongly" that any U.S. aid to UNITA "ought to be overt" and approved by Congress. He said he is pressing the administration "to go that route."

That sentiment was echoed by Sen. Patrick J. Leahy (D-Vt.), ranking minority member of the Senate intelligence committee, who said, "If we're going to get involved in these kinds of activities, then we ought to do it overtly, not covertly."

Hamilton concurred, saying that such "a major policy decision" requires full congressional debate and approval.

That resistance from senior congressional leadership is likely to make the administration's pursuit of covert aid for UNITA more difficult. The administration has submitted to the intelligence committees a proposal for an initial \$10 million to \$15 million in covert military and other assistance to Savimbi. Yesterday, White House deputy press spokesman Edward P. Djerejian suggested that the administration still favors the covert approach.

Although the administration would welcome an expression of public support from Congress for Savimbi, he said, "what we in the administration have in mind clearly is more than just moral support for UNITA."

"The administration is seeking all appropriate support for UNITA which will be effective. We are working with Congress toward this end," he said.

State Department spokesman Bernard Kalb, signaling White House opposition to congressional proposals for up to \$50 million in open U.S. aid to Savimbi in his decade-long fight against the Marxist regime in Angola, said the administration "does not believe that legislation mandating aid to UNITA would be an effective way to proceed."

A senior White House official said yesterday that Reagan intends to publicly embrace the goals of Savimbi during his visit. "Then you've created a measure of public pressure on yourself not to stand aside and let things go under" when Savimbi may be involved in more intense fighting later this year, the official said.

Underlying opposition to covert aid is congressional unease over the expanding role of the Central Intelligence Agency in open-ended guerrilla wars against Soviet- and Cuban-backed regimes. Many members of Congress question whether such activities are appropriate for the CIA. They also voice concern that resources and energy will be diverted from the agency's primary task of gathering and evaluating intelligence.

Reflecting on the congressional concern, Hamilton said, "If you want to provide money to Savimbi, you ought to make the request to Congress and have an open debate. It's an important significant departure with great ramifications [for the United States] beyond Savimbi and Angola."

"That kind of decision ought not to be submitted to a few members of Congress who do not have the

power to disapprove," he added, referring to his committee's legal inability to stop CIA operations.

Leahy and Hamilton limited their comments to their feelings about how Congress should deal with the issue in general and avoided discussion of the administration's proposal now before their committees. Leahy said he had no position yet on whether the United States should give any aid to Savimbi.

Some Republican members of the Senate intelligence committee now appear to favor the approach spelled out in a resolution submitted Dec. 10 by Senate Majority Leader Robert J. Dole (R-Kan.) and five cosponsors, including Durenberger, that would make U.S. aid for UNITA and possible economic sanctions against Angola later this year dependent upon the Angolan government's policies.

If Angola's Marxist leadership refuses to engage in "good-faith negotiations" with UNITA and continues preparations for a new military offensive against Savimbi, the resolution said, "then the Senate would support the provision early in 1986 of material assistance to UNITA and would impose economic sanctions against those sectors of the Angolan economy which provide resources to support the Cuban troop presence."

The latter refers to Angolan oil exports, which mostly go to the United States. The United States, with \$1.1 billion in 1984, was Angola's largest trading partner.