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Cuban defector aids insurgents in Angola

By ALFONSO CHARDY
Herald Staff Writer

JAMBA, Angola — Eight years ago, as an 18-year-old in the town of Las Mercedes in Cuba's easternmost province of Oriente, Miguel Garcia Enamorado was dating girls, going to school and getting ready to go into the army.

Then the call came from his regional Committee for the Defense of the Revolution: Would he volunteer for internationalist work in Angola?

Enamorado said yes — chiefly, he says now, because he was excited about going abroad and helping in the reconstruction of a sister Marxist nation ravaged by civil war.

Today Enamorado is in Angola, all right. He is no longer with his Cuban buddies rebuilding the country, however. He defected and is now working for Jonas Savimbi's rebel army, the National

Union for the Total Independence of Angola.

Now 27, Enamorado is one of at least two Cubans known to have defected to Savimbi's UNITA since Cuban forces landed in Angola in 1975. UNITA says it is holding "dozens" of other Cubans as prisoners at several sites and that most of them are disillusioned with their role in Angola and would like to defect or go home.

Enamorado works as an electrician in Jamba, UNITA's so-called provisional capital and main military base about 50 miles from the border of South African-controlled Namibia. The other Cuban, Angel Pablo Chacon Mojenjo, also of Oriente, works in another rebel-controlled area about six hours by truck from Jamba. UNITA officials say neither Cuban has been in combat against his former allies.

A spokesman in the Cuban Interests Section in Washington said confirmation of the two Cubans' identities and the circumstances under which they left the Cuban army would take several days. The spokesman also said he could not confirm or deny that "dozens" of Cuban soldiers have fallen captive to UNITA forces.

Enamorado, who was interviewed in Jamba in the presence of a UNITA officer, said he went to Angola in 1978 thinking he was going as an internationalist to help in the reconstruction of the nation.

Instead, he said, he was placed in a military unit whose task was to find and destroy "armed mercenaries" or rebels opposed to the Cuban presence and the Marxist government in the Angolan capital of Luanda.

"I started to see that Cubans were going back dead to Cuba and I concluded that there was a civil war in Angola," said Enamorado.

"Then [Cuban President] Fidel Castro no longer said that we were rebuilding Angola but that we were here to fight South African racists who were trying to take over the country."

He never encountered any South Africans, Enamorado said. Instead, he said, his unit's orders were to search for UNITA guerrillas and "kill whomever we could kill."

"I did that for 26 months," he recalled, two months longer than the required 24-month duty tour. The reason for the extended stay, he said, was that his replacement did not arrive in time.

The delay and disillusionment with his mission led Enamorado to defect along with Chacon Mojenjo, the other Cuban, on Sept. 20, 1980, while serving with a Cuban regiment in Lubango Province north of Jamba.

"In the end," said Enamorado, "we were only massacring the Angolan people and saw that in the end Fidel's internationalism was meant to exploit other peoples. He is an instrument in the hands of the Russians to dominate other nations, but he uses the mask of proletarian internationalism to deceive the world."

Enamorado said it was relatively easy to defect, since UNITA units always were in the vicinity of his Cuban regiment headquarters at Lubango.

"It was just a matter of leaving the perimeter fence of the Cuban site and walking down the road a little and we found UNITA bases," he recalled.

"We were received well and we explained our situation and that we wanted to join UNITA to fight the Cubans with them and they agreed," he added.

A UNITA officer later said that at first the rebels who met the Cubans distrusted them but that later they showed their loyalty and are now accepted as virtual Angolans.

In fact, Enamorado, who rarely speaks Spanish now, is beginning to lose his distinct Cuban accent, and his vocabulary includes many Portuguese words.

At the time he defected, he had the rank of sergeant in the Cuban army and commanded an armored car.

Although Enamorado longs to see his father and mother in Cuba, he doubts he will ever return home — at least as long as Castro is in power in Havana.

"I feel fine here," he said. "I feel like a brother to UNITA people. I feel Angolan. I've already given my life to them."