

ARTICLE APPEARED
ON PAGE A-3NEW YORK TIMES
10 May 1984

Cuba Said to Resist Leaving Angola

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Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, May 9 — Cuba has told Angola that it opposes beginning a phased withdrawal of its troops from Angola now because a settlement in southern Africa might help President Reagan's re-election prospects, Administration officials said today.

Cuba is thought to have 25,000 to 30,000 troops in Angola. Because of its resistance to withdrawing them, State Department officials, who earlier this year were saying they were mildly optimistic about a diplomatic breakthrough, said they no longer expected an accord before the end of the year.

The officials said their information on the Cuban position had come from third parties who had discussed the matter with the Angolans. Because of the Administration's refusal to negotiate with Cuba about southern Africa, it has been difficult for the United States to obtain a firsthand view of the Cuban position, officials said.

U.S. and Cubans Confer

After a long debate in the Administration, however, the United States Interest Section in Havana was authorized last month for the first time to explain the American position on Angola and other southern African issues to Cuban Foreign Ministry officials, State Department officials said. "The Cubans listened but said little," one official said. "Our impression is that we won't get anywhere."

The Cubans were told, an official said, that the United States was supporting efforts to gain independence for South-West Africa, also called Namibia, under United Nations auspices, and that a Cuban withdrawal from Angola, Namibia's neighbor to the north, was necessary to bring this about.

The apparent Cuban reluctance to do anything that might seem to aid Mr. Reagan's political fortunes follows a pattern set by the Soviet Union, which has also refused to cooperate with the Administration in reducing tension and reaching agreements. On Tuesday, Moscow announced that it would not send a team to the Olympic Games in Los Angeles.

In February, after months of diplomatic efforts, the Reagan Administration was able to put together an agreement between Angola and South Africa, which administers Namibia in defiance of the United Nations. The South Africans agreed to a phased withdrawal of their 1,500 troops from southern Angola. This was a condition set by the Angolans for progress on Namibian independence, the withdrawal of Cuban forces from Angola, the withdrawal of South African troops from Namibia and the entry of United Nations forces into the area. Once the Cubans begin to leave, the United States will establish diplomatic relations with Angola, officials said.

South Africa Has a Condition

The South Africans have said they will be willing to go along with the United Nations plan for Namibian independence if the Cubans are withdrawn from Angola. The United States supports the South African demand as realistic.

The South Africans have now moved their troops to the last of the agreed staging points on the Angolan side of the border, a town called Ngiva, State Department officials said. At the rate the withdrawal is going, the South Africans could be out of Angola by the end of May, one official said.

This would then make the question of Cuban withdrawal acute, officials said, because nothing can happen until such a timetable is worked out. The Cubans began arriving in Angola as soon as independence was declared in November 1975 to support Government forces against rebel forces.

Cuba Explained Its Problems

In March, President José Eduardo dos Santos of Angola spent three days in Havana with a large delegation discussing strategy with President Fidel Castro and other Cubans. They ended their talks with a reaffirmation that they would carry out "the gradual withdrawal" of Cuban troops once their conditions were met.

These conditions included the withdrawal of South African troops from Angola, acceptance of the United Nations plan and South Africa's ending its

raids against Angola and its aid to Angolan rebels.

But State Department officials said their information was that the Cubans told the Angolans, in effect, that although the Angolans could ask them to leave whenever they wanted to, they had problems of their own that they wanted Angola to take account of.

Primarily, the Administration officials said, the Cubans said the United States had blamed them for trouble in El Salvador because of their support for the Sandinistas in Nicaragua. The Cubans reportedly said they were concerned that a phased withdrawal from Angola would be seen as a major diplomatic achievement for the Reagan Administration and would encourage more pressure against Cuba.

Chester A. Crocker, the Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs, has just finished a tour of West European capitals in which he briefed allies on the situation. He is now in Egypt and plans to go to the Sudan but has no plans, officials said, to confer with the Angolans.

Officials said high-level contacts with Angola were expected to resume late this month or next month.

Recent intelligence estimates on the number of Cuban combat troops in Angola have risen to 25,000 to 30,000. The estimate had been about 20,000. There are also said to be 3,000 to 5,000 Soviet military advisers and several thousand Cuban civilians present. In addition, East Germans train the police and fly Angola's airplanes.

The Angolans, who receive about \$1.5 billion a year in foreign exchange from Western oil companies, including Gulf and Texaco, have to pay the Cubans, Russians and East Germans from \$750 million to \$1.5 billion.