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Fear of Seeming Wimpy

The people promoting an encore in Angola ought to get hold of "In Search of Enemies," the inside account of the original fiasco by John Stockwell, the former chief of the CIA Angola Task Force.

They need not fear they would enrich a snitch. The CIA was so exercised over Stockwell telling the whole appalling story of the Angolan operation that it took him to court—and won. His royalties go to the government, and his money may even now be being used to fund the kind of madness he so inexorably recounts.

But if those who want to do it all over again can't be persuaded to read his book, maybe they would study one paragraph. Stockwell is describing the impact of a Washington Post story in 1975, which revealed the presence of South African troops fighting with Jonas Savimbi, the head of UNITA, the guerrilla group that would benefit by an Angola replay.

"The propaganda and political war was lost in that stroke. There was nothing the Lusaka station [CIA headquarters in Zambia where the war was run] could invent that would be as damaging to the other side as our alliance with the hated South Africans was to our cause."

But we are poised to renew that alliance with the South Africans in Angola. The president artlessly revealed that he favors covert operations. Two congressmen, one an 85-year-old Democrat, the other an undeclared Republican presidential candidate, want overt aid and have boldly proposed a bill funding UNITA to the tune of \$27 million.

Rep. Claude Pepper (D-Fla.), the guardian of senior citizens, is frank, at least, about why he is sponsoring the return to folly. He never heard of Angola, he told a House committee, until his Cuban-American constituents called it to his attention. The presence of some 35,000 Cuban troops in Angola is an affront to the folks who spend

their lives thinking up ways to foil Fidel Castro. And Pepper responded with an alacrity that suggests that avidity to retain office is a quality that does not diminish with the passing years.

Cosponsor Jack Kemp (R-N.Y.) denies any political motivation. He supports "freedom fighters" everywhere, he insists. Still, Angola offers him a wonderful chance to make up with the far-right of his party, which was outraged by his support of the South African sanctions. Conservatives cannot handle the idea that a Marxist government exists a world away.

The rabids went into orbit when Secretary of State George P. Shultz recently advocated holding off on aid until the United States could wear its mediator's hat a little longer. A State Department official met this week with a representative of the Angolan government to give him a last chance to settle with UNITA.

Rep. Matthew F. McHugh (D-N.Y.) rounded up 100 signatures on a letter to the president in which he said that either overt or covert aid "would damage our relations with governments throughout Africa."

The result in Congress is much in doubt. A Democrat, the late senator Frank Church, exposed the abuses of the CIA, which were, incidentally, being aired on Capitol Hill while the agency was pressing ahead with its Angolan intervention and William E. Colby, then the agency's director, was denying it. But today's Democrats have been thoroughly indoctrinated in the horrors of seeming wimpy on national security.

"Everyone is shopping around for freedom fighters to support," says Kirk O'Donnell, counsel to House Speaker Thomas P. (Tip) O'Neill Jr. (D-Mass.).

McHugh hopes that some who voted to repeal the Clark Amendment, which forbade aid to covert operations or training for any Angolan movement without authorization by Congress, will draw the line on money that will prolong Angola's civil war. The head of the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence, Rep. Lee H. Hamilton (D-Ind.), one who said yes to repeal—on grounds the president should not be specifically hampered in any area of the world—is saying no on aid.

Everyone knows that in Angola the Nicaraguan formula will be used. That is, we give enough help to keep the war going but not enough to win it.

How House members from farm states are going to explain why they gave \$27 million to help somebody in the African bush when their own farmers are being foreclosed is not something they are thinking about.

But the chances that we will do it again—squander millions of dollars, hear hundreds of lies and ruin countless lives—are 50-50. Too many officeholders these days, when faced with a problem, begin by asking themselves, "What would Rambo do?"