

13 December 1985

PROPOSED AID TO ANGOLAN REBELS REOPENS OLD DEBATE  
BY BARRY SCHWEID  
WASHINGTON

The Reagan administration's decision to ask Congress for \$15 million in secret military aid to rebels in Angola is reopening a quarter-century-old debate on the wisdom and morality of American involvement in the internal affairs of other nations.

Liberals are primed to fight U.S. covert aid as unwise and immoral, while Secretary of State George Shultz, traveling in Europe, has urged allied governments to drop their "tactical differences" with the United States and support the controversial policy.

The Angolan request is due to go to the Senate and House Intelligence committees during the Christmas recess. CIA officials and Chester Crocker, the assistant secretary of state for African affairs, already have begun briefing the committees in secret.

While the U.S. plan surfaced here, Shultz was in London, lecturing a British-American group Tuesday and, by extension, the West European allies on the correct mix of "power and diplomacy."

"Diplomacy does not depend on good will alone," Shultz said in an appeal for support. "It does not depend on good intentions alone. Sometimes it depends on single-mindedness and will."

Referring to U.S. diplomatic efforts to end the war in Angola, he said "diplomacy is unlikely to work unless there is effective resistance."

Translation: Ship arms to the anti-Marxist rebels there to give diplomacy a helping hand.

Back here at home, meanwhile, a senior State Department official defended U.S. covert aid as consistent with America's appeal to all sides in the southern African wars to negotiate instead of taking "the military option."

The official, who spoke only on condition of anonymity, explained: "We are not negotiating with Angola and with South Africa. We in the mediating position want to have the maximum amount of tools to work with."

In other words, the United States can provide weapons to one side since it is not really part of the conflict. Besides, the official said, the Soviet Union has sent 1,200 advisers and \$2 billion in military assistance to the Marxist government in Luanda over two years.

The U.S. strategy is to threaten to arm the anti-Communist National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA) in order to induce the Angolan government to accept a U.S.-backed plan for a phased withdrawal of some 35,000 Cuban troops from the African country.

Earlier this year, the Clark amendment, which had barred covert U.S. aid to Angolan rebels for a decade, was repealed. However, many members of Congress question the administration's strategy and may have a chance to put it to a test vote next year.

Continued