

DDI #04588-85  
3 October 1985

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MEMORANDUM FOR: Director, SOVA  
Director, ALA  
Director, NESA  
Director, OEA

FROM : Deputy Director for Intelligence

SUBJECT : Shift in Soviet Activity in Third World  
Insurgencies

1. I believe we have been neglectful in identifying a more aggressive Soviet approach over the past months in fighting insurgencies in their client states. Now that we are looking, there seems to be evidence not only of a more active Soviet role over the past several months in advising and even engaging in combat operations in Angola but also in Mozambique and Cambodia. Beyond this, we have seen over the past year or so a new Soviet aggressiveness in Afghanistan and a much more active and direct involvement of Cubans in combat operations in Nicaragua. [redacted]

25X1

2. In Angola, it seems to me a good case can be made that a decision was made a couple of years ago that more aggressive action would have to be taken to prevent its fall to UNITA and that the subsequent \$1.5 billion worth of arms shipped over the last two years or so was intended to prevent a UNITA victory and turn the tide. The Soviets may have hoped that the Cubans and Angolans themselves could make effective use of this equipment but following the failure of the fall offensive last year, the Soviets realized that they would have to take a more direct role themselves. Thus the increased involvement in directing combat operations, devising new tactics, and perhaps even direct engagement seen in recent months. [redacted]

25X1

3. It seems to me that a case also can be made that, either during the last few months of Chernenko's rule or early in Gorbachev's, there was a decision to resist more aggressively the insurgencies in the Soviet client states as well. [redacted]

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4. I have reviewed our publications since January and find that while we have reported on Soviet activities in each country,

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[redacted]

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no one appears to have looked more broadly to see if there were any connections or patterns to this greater direct Soviet role and to identify a possible policy decision months ago to alter Soviet tactics in these conflicts. [redacted]

25X1

5. Now, I realize we may not be able to prove all of this, but it makes a logical and persuasive story and, at minimum, should have been advanced as a possibility. Instead, we have tended to discount Soviet willingness to do precisely what they are doing in places like Angola and have continued to judge that for them to make any appreciable difference in the outcome of these conflicts would require substantial reinforcement and use of their own forces. In Angola, this judgment has been shown to be wrong -- the Angolans have in fact not only stabilized their own situation but for now have made a little headway against UNITA. [redacted]

25X1

6. I would appreciate your getting together to consider this subject and giving me your views on a priority basis (by COB Tuesday). The NIC Threat Outlook will probably be out within the next week tying these diverse developments together. I am disappointed that the Directorate was not out in front in identifying this change in Soviet strategy or approach even as a possibility. [redacted]

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7. We still seem incapable of looking at trends across regions and offices -- or even across continents in the same office. With all the concerns about accounts being sliced too narrowly, why can't each office, on an ad hoc basis, ask two or three good, imaginative people every so often to take time to test different hypotheses or ideas on important problems like this? Why are we so weak at looking for and testing trends and patterns? [redacted]

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Robert M. Gates

cc: ADDI  
D/CPAS  
D/MPS  
C/MPS/PES

DDI #04588-95  
3 October 1985

**SUBJECT: Shift in Soviet Activity in Third World Insurgencies**

DDI/RMGates,

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