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High U.S. Officials Discuss Arms Aid to Angola Rebels

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WASHINGTON—High Administration officials have discussed the possibility of resuming U.S. arms shipments to anti-Communist guerrillas in Angola, the White House said Wednesday.

Press Secretary Jody Powell said that President Carter has not yet made a decision on the matter.

Powell said that CIA Director Stansfield Turner and David Aaron, President Carter's deputy assistant for national security affairs, had discussed possible U.S. action in Angola with Sen. Dick Clark (D-Iowa), author of the 1975 law banning any direct or indirect U.S. military involvement there.

Neither Turner nor Aaron, meeting separately with Clark, attempted to promote any specific plan, Powell

said. Clark, at a press conference of his own, said Senate rules prohibited him from discussing matters told him in confidence by the Executive Branch.

However, a source familiar with the meetings told The Times that Turner in talking to Clark said the Administration would like to provide assistance to forces, led by Jonas Savimbi, that are opposing Angola's Marxist government.

The purpose of the aid, the source said, would be to occupy the estimated 20,000 Cuban troops stationed in Angola, preventing them from undertaking new adventures in Africa, particularly the possibility that they might enter the Rhodesian conflict.

By helping Savimbi, the source said, the Administration thinks it could "make it less attractive for the Cubans to involve themselves elsewhere."

The proposed U.S. aid to Savimbi would be channeled through a third country, probably France, the source said.

However, for any aid to Savimbi to be legal, repeal of the Clark amendment would be required, and Press Secretary Powell said the President had made no decision with regard to the provision.

Clark told his press conference that he would strongly oppose repeal but that he did not know what Congress would do if the President asked that the amendment be eliminated.

In an interview Tuesday, Clark had said that Carter's repeated criticisms of legislative restrictions on foreign policy had convinced him that the President had decided "to reinvolve the United States in the Angolan Civil war."

This was disputed Wednesday by Powell, who rejected suggestions "that the President has made some sort of decision to plunge us into the Angolan civil war."

"I can assure you that . . . it's not the case," Powell said.

Powell said Carter had no knowledge of the visits to Clark by Turner and Aaron. In fact, the press secretary called it "a reasonably routine thing" for an Administration official with a problem to confer with "a senator who is well known as an expert in this area and in addition had a particular interest in a particular matter."

Meanwhile, the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, of which Clark is a member, released a study challenging the impression generated by some Administration officials in the past week that the President's foreign policy flexibility is sharply limited by a host of congressional restrictions.

"Applicable statutory restrictions on military involvement have presented no obstacle to the achievement of publicly announced United States objectives in Africa," the study said.

It noted that the only African countries where U.S. military involvement is expressly barred by law are Angola and Ethiopia. There are, however, restrictions on economic assistance to some African nations, notably Angola, Mozambique and Uganda.