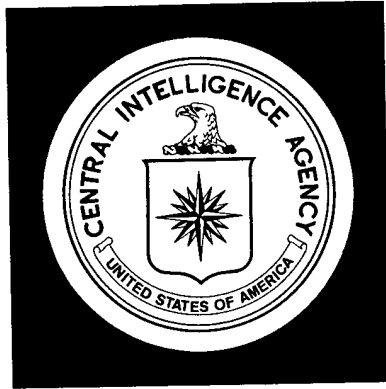


ORPA/ [REDACTED]

~~Top Secret~~

~~NOFORN NOSECRET PRACT-ORCON~~



EO 12958 1.6(d)(1)>10<25Yrs  
(C)

APPROVED FOR RELEASE  
DATE: FEB 2001

# Intelligence Memorandum

## *Soviet and Cuban Intervention in the Angolan Civil War*

EO 12958 6.1(c)>10<25Yrs  
(U)

~~Top Secret~~

~~Handle via COMINT Channels~~

MAR 1977

#2

Copy NO 30

~~Warning Notice~~  
Sensitive Intelligence Sources and Methods Involved  
(WNINTEL)

~~NATIONAL SECURITY INFORMATION~~  
Unauthorized Disclosure Subject to Criminal Sanctions

DISSEMINATION CONTROL ABBREVIATIONS

- NOFORN- Not Releasable to Foreign Nationals
- NOCONTRACT- Not Releasable to Contractors or Contractor/Consultants
- PROPIN- Caution-Proprietary Information Involved
- NFIBONLY- NFIB Departments Only
- ORCON- Dissemination and Extraction of Information Controlled by Originator
- REL . . . - This Information has been Authorized for Release to . . .

~~Classified by [redacted]  
Exempt from General Declassification Schedule  
of E.O. 11652, [redacted] category:  
6.5B(1) (2), (3), (4)  
Automatically declassified  
date impossible to determine~~

EO 12958 6.1(c)>10<25Yrs  
(U)

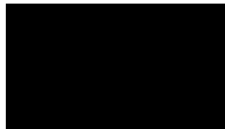
~~Top Secret UMBRA~~  
[REDACTED]  
~~NOFORN/NOCONTRACT/ORCON~~

EO 12958 1.6(d)(1)>10<25Yrs  
(C)

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY  
DIRECTORATE OF INTELLIGENCE

March 1977

SOVIET AND CUBAN INTERVENTION  
IN THE ANGOLAN CIVIL WAR



EO 12958 6.1(c)>25Yrs  
(U)

This memorandum was prepared by the Office of Regional and Political  
Analysis. [REDACTED]

EO 12958 6.1(c)>10<25Yrs  
(U)

Handle via COMINT Channels  
[REDACTED]

~~Top Secret~~

~~Top Secret COMBRA~~

EO 12958 1.6(d)(1)>10<25Yrs  
(C)

~~NOFORN/NOCONTRACT/ORCON~~

This memorandum is being disseminated outside the originating office to the following individuals only:

#### NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL

William Hyland, European Affairs  
Thomas Thorne and Robert Pastor, Latin American and African Affairs  
Col. William Odom  
Robert Hunter

#### STATE DEPARTMENT

William Schaufele, Assistant Secretary for African Affairs  
Harry Schlaudeman, Assistant Secretary for Inter-American Affairs  
Arthur Hartman, Assistant Secretary for European Affairs  
Leslie Gelb, Director, Politico-Military Affairs  
Paul Cook, Director, Bureau of Intelligence Research/Soviet Union and East Europe  
Harvey Summ, Director, Bureau of Intelligence Research/American Republics  
C. Thomas Thorne, Jr., Director, Bureau of Intelligence Research/Africa  
Anthony Lake, Director, Policy Planning Staff

#### DEFENSE DEPARTMENT

Charles W. Duncan, Deputy Secretary of Defense  
Maynard Glitman, Deputy Assistant Secretary for European and NATO Affairs, ISA  
Leslie Janka, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Near Eastern, African and South Asian Affairs, ISA  
Richard Cavazos, Director, Inter-American Region, ISA  
Dr. Lynn Davis, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Policy Plans and National Security Council Affairs, ISA, Attention: Ron Stivers

#### CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

E. H. Knoche, Acting Director  
Sayre Stevens, Deputy Director for Intelligence  
John Whitman, NIO for USSR and Eastern Europe  
William Parmenter, NIO for Africa  
Robert Hopkins, Acting NIO for Latin America

EO 12958 6.1(c)>10<25Yrs  
(U)

Handle through COMINT Channels  
[REDACTED]

ii  
~~Top Secret~~

## Preface

This Memorandum is a retrospective examination of Soviet behavior vis-a-vis Angola, [REDACTED]

EO 12958 1.6(d)(1)-10<25Yrs

(S)

[REDACTED] it seeks to provide a better understanding of how and why the USSR, in association with Cuba, intervened on a large scale in that country's civil war in 1975. For almost 14 years following the outbreak of the anti-Portuguese insurgency in Angola in 1961, Soviet, and later Cuban, involvement had been modest. That involvement increased gradually in the last quarter of 1974, rose steeply during the spring and summer of 1975, and reached massive proportions in the fall of that year, when Soviet arms and Cuban soldiers arrived in large numbers.

Why was the Kremlin willing to invest so much in its attempt to obtain a position of special influence in southern Africa through military intervention? This paper tries to answer that question by identifying the major decision points and by explaining the various interacting forces and factors behind Moscow's venture in Angola. It pays particular attention to the related question of whether the escalation of the Soviet-Cuban intervention in October-November 1975 was defensive or preemptive.

Handle via ~~COMINT~~ Channels  
[REDACTED]

iii  
~~Top Secret~~

EO 12958 6.1(c)-10<25Yrs  
(U)

10-33

~~Top Secret COMBRA~~

~~NOFORN/NOCONTRACT/ORCON~~

EO 12958  
1.6(d)(1)>10<25Yrs  
(C)

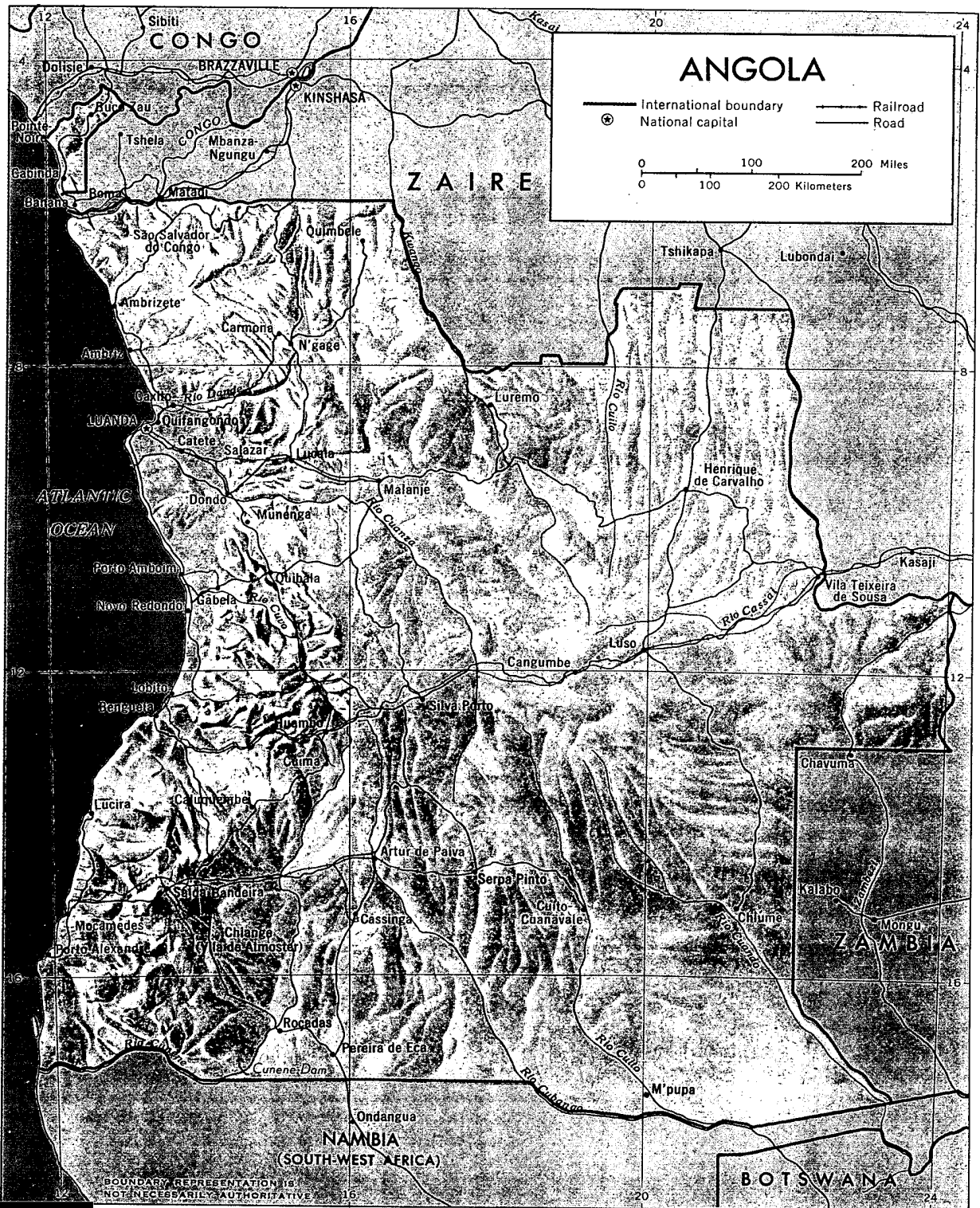
### Contents

	<i>Page</i>
Preface .....	iii
Summary .....	1
I. The Soviet Union and Angola, 1960-74 .....	6
A. Soviet Relations with the MPLA before 1974 .....	6
B. The Portuguese Revolution and Moscow's Initial Involvement in Angola .....	8
II. The Angolan Civil War .....	10
A. The Initial Soviet Build-Up: Spring 1975 .....	10
B. The Anti-MPLA Forces Rally: July 1975 .....	12
C. Soviet Cuban Decision-Making in the Summer of 1975 .	13
1. Timing of the Decision To Send Cuban Troops ...	13
2. Reasons for the Decision .....	15
3. The Soviet-Cuban Connection .....	18
D. The Cuban Intervention: September 1975 .....	21
E. The Soviet-Cuban Escalation: Late October/Early November 1975 .....	24
F. The Failure of Diplomacy: November 1975 to February 1976 .....	28
III. The Aftermath .....	33

EO 12958 6.1(c)>10<25Yrs  
(U)

~~Handle via COMINT Channels~~

~~Top Secret~~



EO 12958 1.6(d)(1)-10<25Yrs  
(C)





From March to mid-July 1975 a second major phase in Soviet involvement occurred. Moscow supplied large amounts of aid, including heavier armaments.<sup>2</sup> By mid-July 1975, shortly after full-scale civil war erupted, the MPLA, thanks to Soviet support, was able to drive the FNLA and UNITA, the third major liberation organization, out of Luanda. It advanced steadily against the positions held by the FNLA and UNITA, and threatened to eliminate them from the competition for power.

During this period, the Soviet Union was trying to capitalize on the unfolding situation in Angola both to secure a dominant position for the MPLA vis-a-vis the FNLA and to blunt China's bid to extend its influence in southern Africa. Moscow may well have believed that its prospects for success were greatly increased by the pro-Soviet and pro-MPLA attitude of the Goncalves government in Lisbon and the ascendancy of the Portuguese Communist Party within its ranks. Specifically, the Soviets may have believed that the Portuguese would scuttle elections called for in the Alvor Accord<sup>3</sup> and hand over all power to Neto's group.

The MPLA's gains during the early summer provoked a strong response from the US and China. As early as April, Zaire and Zambia had turned to the US for assistance in preventing Moscow from imposing a government of its own choice on Angola, but the first major US investment in Angola did not come until July 17, when \$14 million in arms aid for the FNLA was approved. (In January \$300,000 had been granted to the FNLA on an incremental basis, but no military supplies were provided.) The first American plane carrying arms for the FNLA arrived in Zaire on July 29, and a single shipload of military supplies departed August 28, more than five months after the Soviets began sending substantial quantities of arms by sea and air.

EO 12958  
1.6(d)(1)>10<25Yrs  
EO 12958  
1.6(d)(6)>10<25Yrs  
(T)

[REDACTED] The shot in the arm given the FNLA by the US, China, and Zaire enabled it to hold its own and then strike back at the MPLA. On July 23, FNLA troops took the town of Caxito, an important jumping-off point for an assault on Luanda, now the MPLA's main stronghold.

EO 12958  
1.6(d)(1)>10<25Yrs  
(T)

Against this background, the first discussions between Moscow and Havana concerning the dispatch of Cuban troops to Angola [REDACTED] took place in late July or early August. [REDACTED] they jointly reached

<sup>2</sup> This paper is primarily concerned with establishing the chronology of Soviet actions, not the gross amount of aid. For the latter information see: [REDACTED]

EO 12958  
1.6(d)(1)>10<25Yrs  
(T)

<sup>3</sup> Article 40 of this Accord signed on 15 January 1975 by Portugal and the three Angolan nationalist organizations called for elections to a constituent assembly to be held within nine months from 31 January 1975.

EO 12958 6.1(c)>10<25Yrs  
(U)

~~Top Secret UMBRA~~

the final decision and fully coordinated their actions. Other data inferentially support this conclusion:

- Soviet and Cuban collaboration in Angola culminated a decade-long process of growing alignment between the two countries.
- Cuban personnel were matched with sophisticated Soviet weaponry which the MPLA cadre was incapable of operating.
- In January 1976, during the denouement of the civil war, Moscow provided Havana with long-range civil aircraft capable of flying non-stop across the Atlantic.
- Moscow picked up a large part of the Cuban tab by increasing military shipments to Havana to replace arms and equipment used in Angola.

A major consideration in the decision to send Cuban troops was probably the inability of MPLA troops to use sophisticated modern armaments effectively. The anti-MPLA forces also lacked training to use these weapons, and it was probably calculated that Cuban soldiers would therefore be the MPLA's trump card. Another factor in the decision to send the Cubans was an estimate that there would be no appreciable or effective intervention by the US, China, South Africa, or Zaire.

This was the first time that Cuba or any other Soviet ally had sent an expeditionary force abroad to intervene in another country's civil war. From Moscow's point of view, the use of Cuban troops had several distinct advantages. First, because the troops came from a developing country rather than a superpower, they were more ideologically and politically acceptable to African and other Third World opinion, and their presence in Angola was considerably less provocative to the West than if Soviet troops had been sent. Second, the other outside parties involved in Angola did not have at their disposal any suitable surrogate army, save the relatively ineffective Zairian troops and the South African forces, which proved to be a serious political liability. Third, the Cubans were familiar with and capable of operating the sophisticated weaponry supplied to the MPLA by the Soviets.

A major Soviet-Cuban build-up began in September and continued to gain momentum through October with the introduction of heavier Soviet armaments, larger numbers of Soviet technicians and advisers, and the first contingents of Cuban soldiers. The first Cuban troopship left Havana the first week of September and arrived in Africa on the 24th of the same month. On September 30, the Cubans began airlifting troops. By mid-October, there were at least 2,000 Cuban soldiers, and probably more, in Angola.

Political developments in Lisbon may explain the Soviet-Cuban push for an MPLA victory in September-October. Since mid-July, Communist influence in the ruling Junta—and, therefore, the chances of a Portuguese transfer of power to the MPLA—had been diminishing. Seeing the likelihood of a loss in Portugal and the possibility of one in Angola as well, the Soviets may have decided to pursue more vigorously an offsetting victory in Angola.

The momentum of events in October deepened the civil war and widened foreign intervention. In mid-October, FNLA and UNITA, stiffened by increased foreign support, launched a coordinated counter-offensive against Neto's forces. And by

3

~~Top Secret~~

EO 12958 6.1(c)>10<25Yrs  
(U)

~~Top Secret UMBRA~~

October 21, a South African armored column of some size (ultimately, South Africa committed about 2,000 men, and perhaps more) entered Angola and subsequently joined up with anti-MPLA forces to mount a rapid and successful drive up the southern coast of the country. The South African intervention posed a serious threat to the MPLA's military-political position on the eve of Angola's independence day.

Realizing that their Angolan policy might become quickly unraveled, Moscow and Havana rapidly and radically escalated their involvement in the civil war. On October 29, the USSR launched a major airlift; between that date and the end of January, [redacted] military transports delivered [redacted] ammunition, tanks, and other heavy equipment. On November 4, the Cubans put their troop airlift into high gear. Beginning in November, Cuban troops for the first time conducted their own autonomous combat operations, and by mid-December the Cubans were bearing the brunt of the fighting. The increased volume of heavier types of weapons delivered by the Soviets and the direct role of Cuban troops marked a shift from guerrilla to conventional war.

In this reaction to South Africa's intervention, however, the Soviets and Cubans were not trying to restore the *status quo ante*, but were delivering to Angola what in their estimate was required to overwhelm the potential of the South African-FNLA-UNITA alliance. As noted, a major Communist build-up had been underway as early as September, and by late October—before Pretoria's forces had entered the country in significant numbers—there were at least 2,000 and probably more Cuban soldiers in Angola. Furthermore, South Africa's intervention was itself essentially reactive. Pretoria had exercised a great deal of restraint until MPLA forces, backed and encouraged by Moscow and Havana, threatened to drive UNITA out of its traditional tribal area and destroy the buffer between the MPLA and the South West African border.

Moscow would undoubtedly have preferred to avoid such large-scale, overt involvement before November 11, the date the Portuguese had set for Angolan independence. The Soviets had undoubtedly hoped that by November 11 the MPLA would be able to declare itself the government of Angola, and request Soviet aid on an official state-to-state basis. But the November escalation shows the lengths to which the Soviets were willing to go and the risks they were willing to run to achieve their basic objective—imposition of the MPLA as the sole ruling group in Angola. As at several other stages in the crisis, Moscow was not confronted by a simple choice between military victory or defeat for its clients. A third option, which was preferred by the US, China, and many African states, was still available—a coalition government representing all three liberation movements.

Sino-Soviet competition was not a primary motive for the October-November escalation. China's decision to withdraw from the field, however, greatly increased the chances of an MPLA victory and an FNLA-UNITA defeat. Chinese aid to the anti-MPLA forces had all along been primarily defensive, and Peking had in fact fluctuated between providing material support to the anti-MPLA forces exclusively and political support to all three factions equally. By October, the imminent departure of the Chinese had been widely reported, and the last advisers were withdrawn by about November 1. Peking was never in a position materially or logistically to compete with Moscow.

EO 12958  
1.6(d)(1)>10<25Yrs  
(T)

EO 12958 6.1(c)>10<25Yrs  
(U)

4  
~~Top Secret~~

~~Top Secret UMBRA~~

US assistance to the anti-MPLA forces was limited in scope and purpose, and did not provide a major provocation for the Soviet-Cuban escalation. In all, the US during 1975 supplied 2,800 tons of military equipment valued at \$31.7 million to the anti-MPLA forces, compared to 20,000 tons valued at approximately \$200 million supplied to the MPLA by Moscow and Havana.

The primary US objectives were to create a stalemate on the battlefield, to provide leverage for diplomatic efforts to end all foreign intervention, and to seek a peaceful solution within the framework of the Organization of African Unity (OAU). Beginning in October, US officials [REDACTED] communicated these objectives to Moscow so that US intentions and actions would not be misread. Throughout the Angolan crisis, the Soviets apparently believed that the US, having only very recently extricated itself from the Vietnam war, was not likely to get involved in southern Africa on a large scale and certainly would not intervene directly as it had in Southeast Asia.

The weight of Soviet arms and advisers and the Cuban expeditionary force tipped the scale of battle in December, when most of the effective fighting for the MPLA was being done by the Cubans. It was clear that the USSR-Cuban-MPLA coalition hoped to achieve a decisive military victory on the eve of the OAU's extraordinary summit held in Addis Ababa, January 10-13, 1976. The anti-MPLA alliance, however, scored a temporary diplomatic success at this meeting when the MPLA failed to obtain enough votes for formal OAU recognition.

By this time, however, the possibility of diplomatic and/or military counteraction was being eliminated by another round of Soviet-Cuban escalation. The Soviet-Cuban sea and airlifts continued apace during January. The number of Cuban troops in Angola probably reached a high of 13,000 to 18,000. The USSR in late December and in January, moved in to consolidate its position [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] Meanwhile, Pretoria, dismayed by the lack of effective Western support, had by late January pulled most of its forces out of Angola. By the end of January, the FNLA had been defeated in the north, and UNITA forces in the south and central part of Angola had returned "to the bush" to carry on guerrilla warfare, thus ending the period of conventional war.

Beyond the immediate goal of an MPLA victory, several broader political, diplomatic, ideological, strategic, and economic objectives have figured in the Soviet decision to intervene in Angola. There is insufficient evidence to prove that all of these factors helped motivate Soviet policy, but they can all logically be imputed to Soviet thinking.

- At least during the initial stages of Soviet involvement, the desire to counter Chinese influence in Angola, southern Africa, and Africa as a whole probably played a large role in Soviet decision-making.
- Moscow was undoubtedly interested in reestablishing its revolutionary credentials among African radical nationalist and revolutionary groups and in demonstrating it was better able than Peking to aid anti-Western "national liberation" movements.
- Discouraged by a series of setbacks in Chile, Portugal, and the Middle East, the Soviet leadership may have wanted to demonstrate that Moscow was

EO 12958  
1.6(d)(6)>10<25Yrs  
(T)

EO 12958  
1.6(d)(1)>10<25Yrs  
(T)

5

~~Top Secret~~

EO 12958 6.1(c)>10<25Yrs  
(U)

unwilling to subordinate unilateral pursuit of its revolutionary interests to the exigencies of detente.

- Angola's location in the South Atlantic might provide the USSR with an opportunity to extend its maritime and air activities. That this may have played at least some role in Soviet thinking from the outset is suggested by Soviet behavior subsequent to the period discussed in this paper—

EO 12958 1.6(d)(1)>10<25Yrs  
(U)

In sum, the magnitude and character of the Soviet-Cuban intervention argue against the thesis that it was primarily a response to the involvement of other outside powers. The flow of weapons, advisers, and troops was disproportionate to the direct military support provided to anti-MPLA forces by Zaire and South Africa and to the indirect military assistance rendered by China and the US. Moscow and Havana brought overwhelming force to bear on their primary objective—the defeat of the FNLA-UNITA coalition and the creation of a government in Angola beholden to the Soviet Union.

## I. THE SOVIET UNION AND ANGOLA, 1960-74

### A. Soviet Relations with the MPLA Before 1974

At the height of the Angolan crisis, Soviet policymakers and propagandists alike contended that their government's intervention was only a continuation of a long-standing policy of support for Angolan liberation. Soviet statements, however, exaggerated the extent of Moscow's commitment to decolonization prior to 1975 and also made no distinction between assisting the Angolans to achieve self-determination and direct interference in an internal power struggle to decide who would rule Angola at a time when independence was already clearly in sight.

The Soviets first established links to the MPLA through the Portuguese Communist Party in the 1950s, but until the anti-Portuguese insurgency broke out in Angola in 1961, the MPLA had received little more than propaganda support from Moscow. Despite the MPLA's Communist origins,<sup>4</sup> the Soviets had initially—but unsuccessfully—attempted to establish ties to the organization responsible for fomenting the 1961 insurgency, the Angola People's Union (UPA), the forerunner of the National Front for the Liberation of Angola (FNLA) and, like it, led by Holden Roberto. Having been rebuffed by Roberto's group in late 1962 and early 1964,<sup>5</sup> the Soviets turned to the smaller, weaker MPLA in an effort to build it up as a political and military organization capable of challenging the UPA for leadership of the Angolan liberation movement.

<sup>4</sup> After World War II, a Communist Party existed briefly in Angola but was dissolved in favor of a group of nationalist organizations which amalgamated to form the MPLA in 1956.

<sup>5</sup> Roberto's organization was a much better bet than the MPLA to win the support of a majority of Angolans and foreign governments. In 1962, Roberto announced the formation of the FNLA and its Provisional Government in Exile (GRAE), which was recognized as the legitimate government of Angola by the OAU and several Middle Eastern countries from 1963 to 1971.

EO 12958  
1.6(d)(1)>10<25Yrs  
(U)

The Soviet Union's exclusive backing of the MPLA with arms, funds, and training dates only from mid-1964. Cuban aid also began during the mid-1960s, when Havana sent military instructors and advisers to the MPLA's training camps in Congo (Brazzaville) and sponsored MPLA trainees in Cuba as well. As a result of Soviet and Cuban efforts, by the late 1960s [REDACTED] were describing the MPLA as the best armed, trained, and disciplined of the Angolan liberation organizations. The MPLA's enhanced reputation paid off when the Organization of African Unity's Liberation Committee began to provide it, as well as Roberto's FNLA, with material support. In 1971, the OAU withdrew its recognition of the FNLA-dominated government-in-exile, reducing the FNLA to co-equal status with the MPLA.

EO 12958  
1.6(d)(1)>10<25Yrs  
(U)

Soviet and Cuban assistance to the MPLA through the 1960s and early 1970s was kept at modest levels and served limited objectives. Enough funds and arms were provided to maintain a channel of influence and to develop a Soviet asset within the Angolan liberation movement. But not enough was given either in the form of weapons or effective guerrilla training to enable the MPLA to pose a serious threat to the Portuguese military forces in Angola. The bulk of Soviet military assistance consisted of small arms and light weapons, [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] Over the years hundreds, and perhaps thousands, of MPLA supporters received Soviet-sponsored training in Eastern Europe, Cuba, and radical African states. The decisive



FNLA leader, Holden Roberto.

EO 12958 6.1(c)>10<25Yrs  
(U)

role of Cuban soldiers in the Angolan conflict in 1975-76, however, testified to the absence of an effective MPLA fighting force.

Periodic disputes within the MPLA, stemming from personal, racial, and ideological differences, had a particularly deleterious effect on relations with Moscow. Internal divisions came to a head in 1973 with the formation of two splinter groups, both of which sought to democratize the organization and to replace Neto. From 1972 to mid-1974, Moscow cut back its aid to the MPLA as a result of this feuding and for a time abandoned Neto in favor of his main challenger, Daniel Chipenda. But when it became clear that Chipenda's challenge had failed, the Soviets reversed themselves and managed to retrieve something of their earlier relationship with Neto by inviting him to Moscow

[REDACTED]

EO 12958 1.6(d)(1)>10<25Yrs  
(U)

### B. The Portuguese Revolution and Moscow's Initial Involvement in Angola

It was the catalytic effect of a successful coup d'etat in southern Europe, rather than the final triumph of the national liberation struggle in southern Africa, that set in motion the chain of events leading up to Angola's independence. The radical officers of the Portuguese Armed Forces Movement (AFM) who overthrew Prime Minister Caetano's regime on April 25, 1974, were mostly concerned with extricating Portugal from the burden of its African colonial wars, which they believed was a major cause of the nation's backwardness. The symbiotic relationship between revolution in Portugal and decolonization in Angola was apparent then and at several other critical junctures during the spring and fall of 1974.

Under the leadership of President Antonio de Spínola, the post-coup ruling Junta formulated two different programs for decolonizing Portugal's African possessions, including Angola. Both programs called for a long, drawn-out disengagement that might have delayed Angola's independence for as long as three years and would have guaranteed the rights of the white minority.

Spínola's downfall on September 28, 1974, had profound implications for Angola and Soviet involvement there. First, it led to the installation of a government calling for immediate decolonization as the only way to cope with Portugal's national problems. Between October 1974 and January 1975, the Junta, the Provisional Government, and the newly established Decolonization Commission joined Zambia, Zaire, Tanzania, and Congo (Brazzaville) to bring the MPLA, FNLA, and UNITA into a common front for independence negotiations. The culmination was the Alvor Accord, signed on January 15, 1975, which set November 11, 1975, as the date for Angola's full independence. Second, the radicals and their Communist supporters in Lisbon were no longer restrained by Spínola's more moderate views from giving preferential treatment to Neto's faction of the MPLA. Spínola himself had refused to negotiate with Neto and had sought to keep him from participating in all talks on decolonization between Lisbon and the liberation movements. Spínola's successor, Costa Gomes, reversed that policy immediately upon taking office.

In the immediate aftermath of the Portuguese coup, Moscow adopted a wait-and-see attitude toward Angola. As the shift to the left gathered momentum in

~~Top Secret UMBRA~~

Lisbon, however, a change in Soviet policy began to take shape. During the late summer and early fall, the main thrust of Soviet media commentary was to discredit the FNLA and UNITA and to single out the MPLA as the only "genuinely representative national organization" and the "leading force" in the Angolan independence movement.

Information regarding the timing, nature, and extent of Soviet aid prior to March 1975 is sparse. On August 1, 1974, the Tanzanian press announced the arrival in Dar es Salaam of a Soviet plane carrying a \$6 million shipment of military supplies for African liberation movements.

EO 12958 1.6(d)(1)>10<25Yrs  
EO 12958  
1.6(d)(6)>10<25Yrs  
(T)

[REDACTED]

EO 12958  
1.6(d)(1)>10<25Yrs  
EO 12958  
1.6(d)(6)>10<25Yrs  
(T)

[REDACTED]

Sino-Soviet competition in Africa was probably a key factor in the initial Soviet decision to increase support of the MPLA. Over the previous few years, Chinese influence had been steadily increasing, whereas Soviet influence had been diminishing. In Angola there was a clear opportunity to demonstrate both to African states and to black nationalist movements the superiority of Soviet over Chinese aid and to refute Peking's charges of a lack of Soviet support for "wars of national liberation." China, moreover, had made an early bid for a major role in Angolan politics. Taking advantage of the divisions in the MPLA, Peking began to increase its aid to the FNLA immediately after the Portuguese coup.

EO 12958  
1.6(d)(1)>10<25Yrs  
EO 12958  
1.6(d)(6)>10<25Yrs  
(T)

[REDACTED]

In the fall of 1974, the FNLA was in a much better position both politically and militarily than the MPLA. In Luanda, the FNLA was gradually shedding its reputation as a band of terrorists, acquired during the long years of the anti-Portuguese insurgency, and it was gaining acceptance as a serious political organization that espoused a moderate program and was willing to accept

[REDACTED]



~~Top Secret~~ UMBRA  
[REDACTED]

compromises. The FNLA had also enhanced its prestige by demonstrating its acceptance of a white minority presence in Angola.<sup>6</sup> The MPLA was in a weaker position, controlling less population and territory and having less popular and tribal appeal than either the FNLA or UNITA.

Another element in Moscow's calculations was the perceptible rise in Neto's fortunes within the MPLA and in Portugal. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] the Soviet decision to give Neto additional backing was predicated on several factors, including: (1) Neto's stronger position within the MPLA leadership and the political defeat of his main competitor, Chipenda; and (2) the fact that Neto was the "most realistic partner" for Portugal and could command the support and sympathy of Lisbon. [REDACTED]

EO 12958  
1.6(d)(1)>10<25Yrs  
(T)

[REDACTED] Although the Junta was negotiating with all three liberation movements, in Neto's estimate it regarded the MPLA as the "main spokesman" for Angolan independence. Furthermore, the Portuguese Governor-General in Luanda, a member of the Junta, was openly friendly to the MPLA and helped its cause in various ways. [REDACTED] for example, the Portuguese agreed to let Neto's group open offices in Luanda, where it could more effectively compete politically with the FNLA. [REDACTED] Neto had secured an agreement from the Portuguese authorities to permit MPLA troops in Luanda. Clearly, the tide in Lisbon and Luanda, as well as in neighboring African states, was turning in favor of the Neto wing. This development was accurately perceived and acted upon by Moscow.

In sum, we have seen that as early as the fall and early winter of 1974-75 Soviet support for the MPLA was already being increased. This did not yet, however, represent a major intervention in the developing situation in Angola.

## II. THE ANGOLAN CIVIL WAR

### A. The Initial Soviet Build-up: Spring 1975

The Angolan civil war as such may be said to have begun in March 1975. That month saw the first major outbreak of hostilities between competing Angolan factions since the signing of the Alvor Accord. It was also in March that the Soviet Union first became involved in the Angolan conflict in a major way by sending substantial amounts of military aid to the faction it favored.

EO 12958 1.6(d)(1)>10<25Yrs  
(T)

[REDACTED] Soviet planes carrying war material to Brazzaville, a major transit point for Soviet shipments to Angola, [REDACTED] dramatically signaled this escalation. [REDACTED]

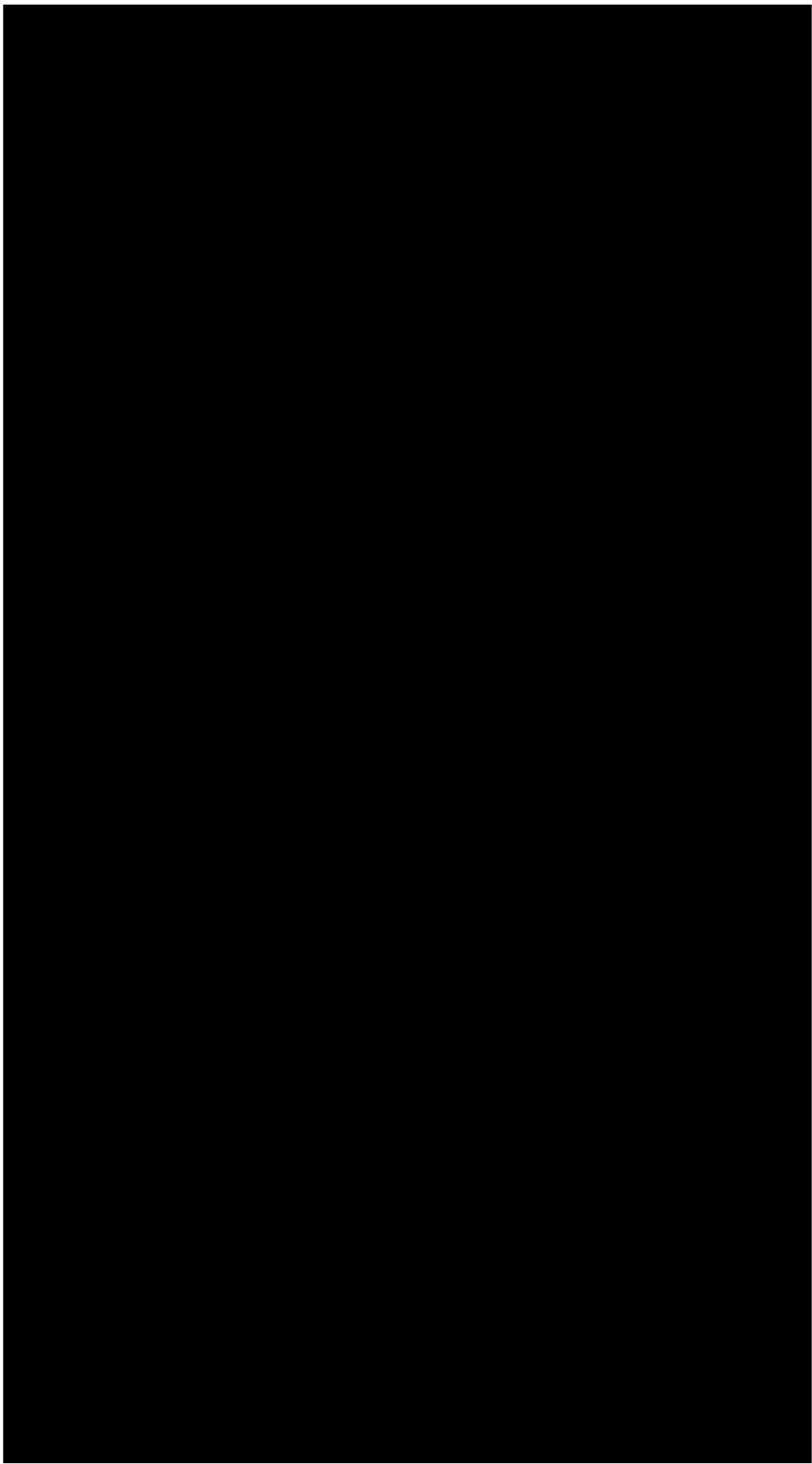
[REDACTED] Shortly afterwards, [REDACTED] the MPLA had announced that the Soviet Union had agreed to provide aid to the MPLA. During the spring of 1975 the character as well as

<sup>6</sup> At this juncture in the evolution of the Angolan situation, most observers agreed that the white population would play an important part in determining the future of the country.

10  
~~Top Secret~~

~~Top Secret UMBRA~~

EO 12958 1.6(d)(1)>10<25Yrs  
(C)



EO 12958  
1.6(d)(1)>10<25Yrs  
(T)



11  
~~Top Secret~~

EO 12958 6.1(c)>10<25Yrs  
(U)

the level of Soviet aid underwent a change. Not only did the number of Soviet shipments to Angola increase, but the Soviets also began—[redacted]—to supply tanks and large mortars.

This escalation of Soviet support does not appear to have been a response to actions of foreign governments supplying anti-MPLA forces in Angola. Neither the US nor the Chinese had taken the kind of action in Angola in preceding months to lead to major retaliation by the Soviets. While the US had decided in January 1975 to inject \$300,000 into the FNLA, this was not commensurate with what the Soviets had been doing, as we have seen, since the Lisbon coup. [redacted]

The Chinese had played a cautious game thus far. The Chinese press, carefully avoiding any direct attack on the Soviet role in Angola, had voiced support for all three factions, not excluding the MPLA. A UNITA delegation did travel to Peking in March, but only after the [redacted] Soviet planes [redacted] had given the Chinese evidence of a heightened Soviet involvement.

If the Soviet escalation cannot be explained as a counter to the actions of other great powers, neither can it be seen as a response to immediate battlefield needs of the MPLA. The increase began at a time of relative calm; the flight of the [redacted] Soviet aircraft had taken place *before* fighting broke out on March 23. Moreover, the increase of Soviet aid began at a time when a rough balance obtained between the MPLA and the FNLA, and when UNITA had yet to establish itself as a credible military force.

It is true that in January and February the FNLA had taken an early lead in building its position in Angola. Continued aid from Zaire, as well as the defection to the FNLA of Chipenda, Neto's chief rival within the MPLA, had strengthened Roberto's forces and his confidence. In March 1975, Roberto was probably spoiling for a fight. The evidence of a heavier Soviet build-up may have made Roberto eager to translate the FNLA's prevailing slight military edge into a quick victory before additional Soviet aid could tip the scales in the other direction. [redacted] it was the FNLA that initiated the hostilities which broke out on March 23—the most serious disorders since the Alvor Accord. When the Soviet escalation began, however, the FNLA had not achieved a clear military superiority. Plagued by serious problems of discipline, cadre motivation, logistics, and leadership, the FNLA had gained no decided advantage over the MPLA. In any case, the Soviet aid was not of the sort to redress a balance; instead, it destroyed the balance.

It appears, then, that the Soviet build-up in the spring of 1975 reflected a decision by the Soviets to try to give their faction in Angola the wherewithal to achieve military dominance, although it is not clear how far they were willing to go at this time to ensure such an outcome. Surveying the situation after January, the Soviets

<sup>7</sup> Roberto may, in fact, have used much of this US money for political rather than military purposes. During this period, for example, the FNLA purchased a TV station and the leading daily newspaper in Angola. [redacted]

EO 12958  
1.6(d)(1)>10<25Yrs  
(T)

EO 12958 1.6(d)(1)>10<25Yrs  
EO 12958 1.6(d)(6)>10<25Yrs  
(T)

EO 12958  
1.6(d)(1)>10<25Yrs  
(T)

EO 12958  
1.6(d)(1)>10<25Yrs  
(T)

EO 12958 1.6(d)(1)>10<25Yrs  
(T)

EO 12958 1.6(d)(1)>10<25Yrs  
EO 12958 1.6(d)(6)>10<25Yrs  
(T)



must have realized that the MPLA alone could not win a victory at the polls in November; a political settlement would necessitate the coalition of at least two of the three competing factions. Under these circumstances, the Soviets probably hoped that the government in Lisbon could be persuaded to scuttle the elections and turn power over to the MPLA directly. It may not have been entirely coincidental that leftist influence became dominant in the Portuguese government at precisely the same time that the Soviets began to increase substantially their aid to the MPLA. On March 12, 1975, the failure of a rightist coup in Lisbon significantly strengthened the position of Prime Minister Goncalves and other pro-MPLA leftists in the Armed Forces Movement. Moscow may have believed that if the MPLA achieved military superiority, pro-MPLA forces in the Portuguese Junta would be able to force a transfer of power to the MPLA. On the other hand, there is little evidence that at this stage the Soviets had made a full-scale commitment; rather, they seemed to be testing the waters.

The events of the summer of 1975 suggest that the MPLA was indeed bent on achieving military victory. From March until early June, while the MPLA forces were being built up by Soviet aid, no faction appeared to hold a military advantage. But during the first days of June the MPLA took the offensive and mounted a concerted, well-organized, and systematic effort to drive the FNLA forces out of the capital. At the same time, on June 6, MPLA forces attacked the Luanda headquarters of UNITA, which was trying hard to avoid being drawn into the fighting, and which had succeeded in doing so until now. By the middle of July, the MPLA had gained control of Luanda.

#### B. The Anti-MPLA Forces Rally: July 1975

The sharp upturn in the MPLA's military fortunes fed speculation that the basically pro-MPLA government in Lisbon might turn the government in Angola over to the MPLA even before November, and drew the three major supporters of the FNLA—Zaire, the US, and China—into deeper involvement after mid-July.

On July 17 the US decided to make its first major investment in Angola. The US, which in June had decided against aid for UNITA, authorized [REDACTED] aid to the FNLA and UNITA. [REDACTED]

On July 29 the first US plane carrying arms for Angola departed; six more planes were sent before the much more massive Soviet airlift began [REDACTED]

Initially, the Chinese reacted to increased Soviet intervention not by increasing aid to the FNLA, but by a show of sympathy toward all Angolan "freedom fighters." During the spring and early summer of 1975 the Chinese, who had never felt comfortable about choosing sides in Angola, evidently retreated somewhat from their support for the FNLA. The FNLA during this period reportedly expressed dissatisfaction with the quality of Chinese training, which emphasized political and ideological indoctrination to the neglect of military training. That the Chinese were trying to hedge their bets was apparent in the reception of an MPLA delegation that visited Peking in late May-early June. In protocol terms, the MPLA delegation was

EO 12958 1.6(d)(1)>10<25Yrs  
(T)

EO 12958 6.1(c)>10<25Yrs  
(U)

not accorded quite as much respect as the UNITA delegation that had visited China in March, or the FNLA delegation that would travel to Peking in July. The MPLA delegation met only with Vice Premier Chi Teng-kuei, while the UNITA and ~~MPLA~~ FNLA representatives were both received by the higher ranking Teng Hsiao-ping. But NCNA used the same formula—"cordial and friendly"—to describe all three meetings, [REDACTED] China was now aiding all three groups.

EO 12958  
1.6(d)(1)>10<25Yrs  
(T)

[REDACTED]

In mid-July the Chinese evidently changed course again. Finding themselves unable to compete effectively with the Soviet Union for MPLA favor and probably fearful in such circumstances of an imminent MPLA victory, China apparently decided to increase its aid to the FNLA again. An FNLA mission arrived in Peking on July 10 for a two-week visit; [REDACTED]

EO 12958  
1.6(d)(1)>10<25Yrs  
(T)

[REDACTED] Shortly afterwards, on July 23, Peking broke its silence on the armed fighting in Angola. Vice Premier Ku Mu, speaking at a banquet, blamed an unnamed "superpower" for trying to stir up "internal conflicts" in Angola for its own hegemonic ends. This was the first time Peking had reported that hostilities had broken out in Angola after the Alvor Accord. Even now, Peking did not say specifically which liberation group Moscow supported; in fact, throughout the war Peking never went so far as to criticize the MPLA by name. Clearly, however, the Chinese by mid-July had decided that the least unattractive of several unattractive courses was to increase limited aid to the FNLA to the exclusion of the MPLA.

EO 12958 1.6(d)(1)>10<25Yrs  
(T)

[REDACTED] in mid-July Zaire for the first time supplied the FNLA with relatively heavy armaments—armored cars and antitank weapons—and sent a commando company and an armored car squadron [REDACTED] into Angola to assist the FNLA. The battlefield fortunes of the FNLA soon reflected this shot in the arm. About July 17 the FNLA began a drive toward Luanda, and on July 23 the FNLA took the city of Caxito, strategically important as a jumping-off point for an assault on Luanda itself. As a result of this victory, momentum shifted temporarily to the FNLA. By early August there were reports that UNITA had decided to ally itself with the FNLA.

### C. Soviet-Cuban Decision-Making in the Summer of 1975

#### 1. Timing of the Decision To Send Cuban Troops

Although Cuban troops did not arrive in Angola until September, there were signs of increasing Cuban interest in Angola throughout the summer of 1975. Probably the first serious discussions about sending troops came after the revitalized

EO 12958 6.1(c)>10<25Yrs  
(U)

[REDACTED]

EO 12958 1.6(d)(1)>10<25Yrs  
(T)

FNLA began its drive in late July. [REDACTED]

As early as June 27 a Cuban Party official, [REDACTED] held talks with Neto [REDACTED]

EO 12958 1.6(d)(1)>10<25Yrs  
(T)

Cuban military personnel [REDACTED] arrived in Pointe Noire, Congo, to assist in assembling military equipment from the Soviet Union; this was the first firm indication of the presence of any Cuban personnel beyond the small Cuban advisory force that had been permanently stationed in Pointe Noire since the 1960s. At least by August, [REDACTED] a majority of foreign military advisers with the MPLA at the front lines were Cuban.

At the same time, the Soviets were also getting into the act in a bigger way. In July the Soviets for the first time sent a significant number of military advisers [REDACTED] to assist the MPLA. [REDACTED]

EO 12958 1.6(d)(1)>10<25Yrs  
(T)

[REDACTED] the Soviets appeared to "have made a decision to do whatever is necessary to insure that Neto takes power." Although the introduction of additional personnel, both Cuban and Soviet—even more than the increase in material aid—had serious implications for the broadening of the conflict, the numbers involved were as yet relatively small, and in and of themselves represented incremental escalation rather than a major new and qualitatively different commitment.

It was also in late July that Soviet press treatment of Angola began to suggest a hardening of the Soviet position. On July 20, 1975, *Pravda* openly blamed the FNLA for the latest outbreak of hostilities, and charged China with arming the FNLA and aiming at the "physical elimination" of the MPLA. This and other press articles published during the month deviated from previous Soviet media treatment of the Angola situation, which had merely blamed unidentified "opponents of independence" for the fighting.

EO 12958 1.6(d)(1)>10<25Yrs  
(T)

[REDACTED]

EO 12958 1.6(d)(1)>10<25Yrs  
(T)

[REDACTED] evidence provided by the Cuban press concerning the movement of seven top Cuban military officers in August and September. From mid-August on, there were indications that changes were taking place in the Cuban high command. And, in the September 6 issue of *Granma*, the official Cuban Communist Party newspaper, in an otherwise routine listing of top-ranking officers attending a military conference, a new name appeared in the position of Cuban first deputy armed forces minister and chief of staff. The former first deputy

EO 12958 6.1(c)>10<25Yrs  
(U)

[REDACTED]

minister, Senen Casas, had not been mentioned in the press since August 21. During this same period Cuban publications began to mention other new names in key military posts, including three other deputy armed forces ministers and all three of Cuba's regional military commanders.

EO 12958 1.6(d)(1)>10<25Yrs  
(T)

[redacted] Senen Casas was later [redacted] in Angola, presumably in charge of the Cuban expeditionary force, as were several of the other ranking officers who dropped from sight in August and September.<sup>8</sup>

Most likely, then, the Cuban decision to send troops came before September 6, by which time Casas was evidently given new duties related to planning and preparing for the Angolan expedition. Loading of the first Cuban military shipment, which reached Pointe Noire [redacted] September [redacted] would have had to have been undertaken more than three weeks before its departure—further evidence that the decision was made in August.

EO 12958  
1.6(d)(1)>10<25Yrs  
(T)

Determining the size of the intervention force planned by the Cubans and Soviets is more problematical. The fact that ranking members of the Cuban military high command were actively involved in the Angolan campaign from an early date seems to indicate that from the outset the Cubans envisioned a major expedition. A country does not send its military chief of staff to lead a minor military expedition; Cuba, in all its adventures into third world areas in support of insurgency, had never before sent its chief of staff to direct the operation.

At the same time, however, [redacted] neither Cuba nor the Soviet Union initially planned for the invasion to assume the massive proportions it did in November and December 1975.

EO 12958 1.6(d)(1)>10<25Yrs  
EO 12958 1.6(d)(6)>10<25Yrs  
(T)

[redacted] a Cuban delegation met with MPLA representatives in Brazzaville in [redacted] August and promised to increase the number of Cuban military advisers for the MPLA [redacted]

[redacted] Perhaps this number referred only to *advisers*, exclusive of combat troops.

*personnel*

## 2. Reasons for the Decision

By late July it was probably clear to the Soviets that if victory were to be attained before Angolan independence came in November, the introduction of troops was required. A key consideration in the Soviet decision may have been the realization that the availability of Cuban troops for service in Angola gave them an advantage which the US and China could not easily match.

By this time, Soviet aid to the MPLA had probably greatly exceeded military aid to the FNLA from all sources. Yet the MPLA had not attained the quick and cheap victory the Soviets may have hoped for when they increased their aid in March. In

<sup>8</sup> In the summer of 1976, when these officers were one by one reinstated in their old jobs, it became clear that they had been relieved only temporarily to enable them to participate in the Angolan war. By August 1976 all of them were again listed in their old commands by the Cuban press.

EO 12958  
6.1(c)>10<25Yrs  
(U)

[redacted]

fact, the FNLA had regained the initiative in Angola, probably because, beyond a certain point, equipment itself—without the trained men to use it—became ineffectual.

EO 12958  
1.6(d)(1)>10<25Yrs  
(T)

Although the MPLA's worsening position in July may have been the main factor touching off the discussion that ultimately led to the Soviet-Cuban decision, by the time the final decision was made in mid-August, the MPLA position had improved. It was probably in early August that the Katangans, numbering some 2,000 soldiers, had been recruited by the MPLA; and on August 11, 1975, they reportedly entered combat on the side of the MPLA for the first time. Moreover, while the FNLA continued to hold its own and make some advances in the north, the longtime base of FNLA power, its drive on Luanda had bogged down. Between August 8-12 the MPLA finally succeeded in driving the last FNLA forces out of Luanda, leaving the MPLA in control of the capital city. In view of these developments, it would appear that the objectives of the Soviets and Cubans when they intervened in the fall were more ambitious than merely to counter the aid reaching anti-MPLA forces from China and the US during the summer months.

In weighing the pros and cons of sending Cuban troops, the Soviets may have believed that the introduction of troops from Cuba, a developing country, would be politically acceptable to African and third world opinion. More important, they probably believed that they would be able to carry out this intervention without provoking an effective military response from the US or China. Given Cuban troop intervention, only the equivalent introduction of trained men on the side of the anti-MPLA forces could stave off an MPLA military victory. The Soviets probably felt quite confident that neither the US nor China would send combat troops of their own to Angola, nor that they could find comparable surrogates.

The Soviets probably had a general idea of the level of US involvement in Angola in mid-August. By that time US shipments approved in July had begun to arrive in Angola. As noted, the first US plane carrying military aid left the US on July 29, although the first (and only) US ship carrying military aid did not depart until August 28. Presumably, the Soviets were unaware of the US decision in August to send [redacted] more in aid, to add to the [redacted] approved in July. Since the Soviets had probably concluded that weapons alone could not win the war, the amount of US aid was probably of interest to them mainly for its relevance to the question of whether the US attached sufficient importance to Angola to send troops.

EO 12958  
1.6(d)(1)>10<25Yrs  
(T)

EO 12958  
1.6(d)(1)>10<25Yrs  
(T)

[redacted] the Soviets' explanation for refusing to send troops of their own was that if they intervened in Angola in a combat capacity, this would almost certainly provoke the US to intervene also. They may have believed, on the other hand, that indirect involvement—through the use of a client state's troops—would produce minimal risks. The Soviets probably believed that, after Vietnam, the

EO 12958 6.1(c)>10<25Yrs  
(U)



EO 12958  
1.6(d)(6)>10<25Yrs  
(T)

US level of tolerance for Soviet activities in the third world had risen. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] the Soviets probably thought it unlikely that the US would intervene in an area in which it had no "historic interest." After all, the US had not intervened in Portugal, a fact which had surprised the Soviets since, as Brezhnev put it, Portugal "belonged" to the West.

EO 12958 1.6(d)(1)>10<25Yrs  
(T)

The Soviets probably also had evidence of renewed Chinese involvement in July, and by mid-August they probably had learned that the Chinese were sending a large shipment of military supplies intended for UNITA to Dar es Salaam [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] But the Chinese aid to the FNLA throughout the conflict had a defensive character; the Chinese, fluctuating between giving verbal support to all factions simultaneously and providing military aid to the anti-MPLA forces exclusively, clearly were not attempting to intensify the Angolan civil war. They had limited resources to invest in Angola, and the Soviets probably believed that the introduction of Cuban troops would cause the Chinese to withdraw from the game altogether rather than to raise their ante.

EO 12958 1.6(d)(1)>10<25Yrs  
(T)

Aside from the US and China, the only other feasible sources for external troops were Zaire and South Africa. [REDACTED] the Cubans and the MPLA considered South African intervention unlikely; the only external threat they perceived came from Zaire.

The Soviets may have believed that South Africa would be reluctant to intervene in Angola without strong and open Western support. By intervening with military force, South Africa would place in jeopardy the peaceful cooperation with neighboring black African states which the South African government had painstakingly worked for years to build up. Detente with its neighbors had been a goal of South Africa for some years, and the Soviets probably thought that Prime Minister Vorster would not intervene in Angola to the detriment of that policy, unless he perceived a grave threat to the security of his country.

If South Africa would be loath to intervene without US backing, the US would be even more reluctant to offer support to this pariah of nations. Association with South Africa would create enormous difficulties for US diplomacy in black Africa and for the US administration at home. In any event, the Soviets undoubtedly viewed the contingency of large-scale South African intervention with mixed feelings—considering the fact that the military losses a South African invasion would cost the MPLA would be at least partially offset by the political advantages it offered them in terms of winning international support and of making the US appear to be in the same camp with South Africa. Indeed, the possibility that the Soviets actually welcomed South African intervention cannot be dismissed.

Whatever the Soviet calculations, in mid-August there were no indications that South Africa would intervene militarily in the Angolan civil war. South African involvement at that time was limited to defending the South African-financed hydroelectric installations along the Cunene River, which forms the border between Angola and South African controlled South West Africa, and which serves as a major source of water and power for South West Africa. When these installations were originally built, the Portuguese colonial government in Angola had charged the South Africans with the defense and control of the Cunene area. After the coup in Portugal,

[REDACTED]

EO 12958 6.1(c)>10<25Yrs  
(U)

~~Top Secret - SOMBRA~~

the status of the Cunene area became confused, but the South Africans took the view that until Angolan independence was declared their continued presence in this border area was legitimate. As the fighting in Angola moved farther southward in August, South Africa strengthened its forces in the Cunene area to perhaps 200 men. During the first two weeks of August 1975, these South African troops became involved in limited fighting in the dam area, but acted only to protect the hydroelectric installations. In mid-August, the South African government had given no signs that it was planning to send its forces deeper into Angola. In sum, the very limited South African presence could be used for propaganda purposes by the MPLA, but in no way did it represent a South African decision to intervene militarily in the Angolan civil war. Even in the Cunene area itself, South African forces engaged in no significant combat inside Angola until [REDACTED] probably after the Soviet-Cuban decision to send in Cuban troops had been made.

EO 12958  
1.6(d)(1)>10<25Yrs  
(T)

Zaire, on the other hand, had already provided large quantities of material aid to the FNLA and, perhaps more important, in early August had sent two paratroop companies into Angola. This was only a token detachment, but indicated Mobutu's willingness to throw his own men into the conflict, [REDACTED]

EO 12958  
1.6(d)(1)>10<25Yrs  
(T)

[REDACTED] The Soviets probably realized, however, that Mobutu's troops—unlike those of South Africa—would be no match for the Cubans. Thus, [REDACTED] both Zaire and South Africa had serious deficiencies—South Africa because of the political problems its intervention would entail; Zaire because of the relative ineffectiveness of its troops. For this reason, insofar as the Soviets thought in terms of assessing the chances for a military victory in Angola rather than in larger terms of the implications of this victory for the structure of detente, the Soviets probably viewed the evidence of US and Chinese material aid to the anti-MPLA forces with a considerable degree of equanimity.

A final factor in the Soviets' thinking may have been their perception of the direction of events in Portugal. From about July 11, when anti-Communist riots broke out in northern Portugal, Communist strength in Portugal was on the decline, and [REDACTED] the Soviets' reappraisal of the Portuguese scene led them to conclude that the Communists would probably lose out in the power struggle there.<sup>9</sup> This perception may well have had the effect of increasing their impulse to seek an MPLA victory in Angola—to serve as a counter to the "loss" of Portugal, and to show that, even after Portugal, the Soviets in an era of detente had not altogether abandoned revolutionary struggle. Even more important, realization that Leftists in the Portuguese government would not be able to impose a political solution in Angola favorable to the MPLA may have given impetus to the drive to achieve a military victory.

EO 12958  
1.6(d)(1)>10<25Yrs  
(T)

### 3. The Soviet-Cuban Connection

EO 12958 1.6(d)(1)>10<25Yrs  
(T)

[REDACTED] the Soviets were initially somewhat more inclined than the Cubans toward sending Cuban troops, but

EO 12958 1.6(d)(1)>10<25Yrs  
(T)

[REDACTED]

19

~~Top Secret~~

EO 12958 6.1(c) 10<25Yrs  
(U)

that once the decision was taken, the Cubans never wavered. In the final analysis, however, the convergence of Cuban and Soviet interests in Angola was probably a more important factor than the pressure the superpower may have put on its client at the outset. On the eve of the Angolan civil war the Soviet-Cuban relationship had become closer than at any time since the early 1960s. The collaboration of the two countries in Angola culminated a decade-long process of growing alignment.<sup>10</sup>

EO 12958 1.6(d)(1)>10<25Yrs  
(T)

Regardless of which party was the "prime mover," in the end the decision had to be joint for the simple reason that Moscow was unwilling to commit combat forces of its own in Angola, while Cuba was probably both unwilling and unable to finance a major intervention.

It is almost certain that the Cubans would not have undertaken an expedition of such magnitude had Moscow not agreed to finance it. The cost of the intervention would have placed a severe strain on the Cuban economy, which was already suffering from the decline of world sugar prices. Even the initial deployments would probably not have been made had Cuba, which is almost completely dependent on the Soviet Union for military equipment, not been assured that its supplies would be replenished.

EO 12958 1.6(d)(1)>10<25Yrs  
(T)

<sup>10</sup> Since about 1970 a fundamental shift in Cuban external and internal policy became apparent, reflecting Castro's decision to bring Cuban institutions and policies more closely in line with the Soviet model. This shift took place for two major reasons. First, in the realm of foreign policy, Cuba's instigation of violent revolution in Latin America had failed, a failure dramatized by the death of Che Guevara in 1967. Guevara's death, which followed a general disintegration of the Latin American revolutionary movement, caused Castro to reassess his "adventurist" policy in Latin America. Since 1970, Cuba has virtually abandoned sponsorship of violent revolution in Latin America, and has worked to improve relations with Latin American Communist Parties, relations which had been strained in the 1960s by Cuba's support of guerrilla movements often opposed by the bureaucratic, conservative, Moscow-backed Communist Parties. At the same time, Cuba began to look outside the hemisphere, and particularly to Africa—an old interest of Castro's—for areas more suitable for immediate political exploitation, in part because non-hemispheric revolutionary movements were thought less likely to provoke a vigorous US reaction.

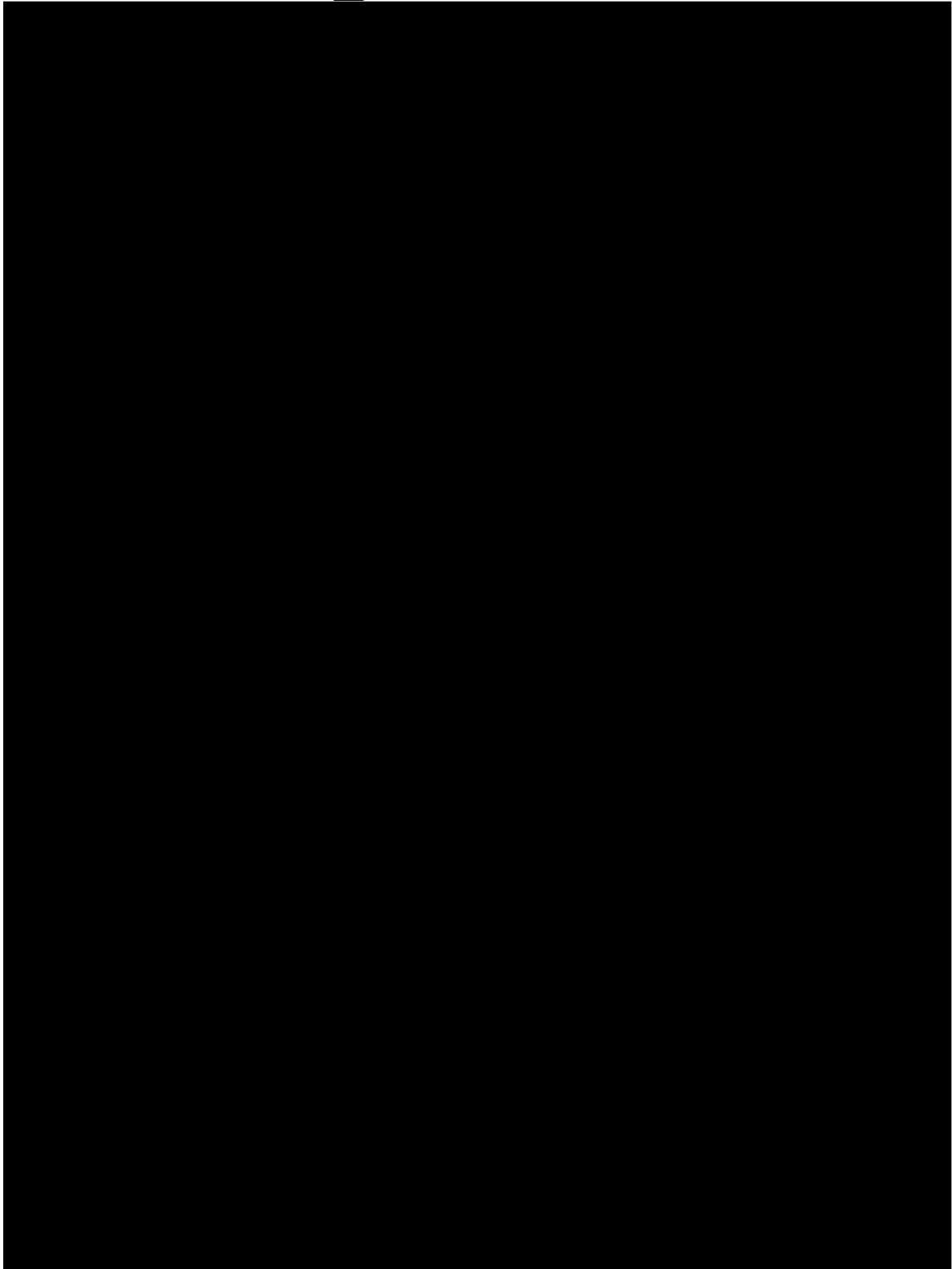
In domestic policy, the turning point came with the shortfall in the Cuban sugar harvest of 1970. After diversification of the Cuban economy had failed, Castro had staked much on a big drive to harvest ten million tons of sugar in 1970. When the harvest fell short of this goal, Castro decided on a basic reform of the economic and political structure.

In both foreign and domestic policy, Castro had probably responded to Soviet demands. The Soviets evidently made clear to him that they were unwilling to bankroll a losing proposition, and made their continued support contingent on Castro's taking steps to rationalize and institutionalize the economy and government, decreasing personal and arbitrary elements. Accordingly, during the 1970s Castro reorganized the national government, the Party, and local government. In doing this, he took steps he had earlier been loath to take, since they diminished his own personal, freewheeling authority. He also rehabilitated old pre-revolutionary Communist Party members who had been spurned earlier; Cuba joined CEMA; a constitution was written and in February 1976 it was approved in a national referendum; in December 1975 Cuba held its first Party Congress; and in February 1976 Castro for the first time attended the Soviet Party Congress. Castro's growing tendency to bring his foreign and domestic policies in line with Moscow's wishes provides a backdrop for Cuba's Angola involvement.

EO 12958 1.6(d)(1)>10<25Yrs  
(T)

EO 12958 6.1(c)>10<25Yrs  
(U)

EO 12958  
1.6(d)(1)>10<25Yrs  
(T)



EO 12958  
6.1(c)>10<25Yrs  
(U)



EO 12958 1.6(d)(1)>10<25Yrs  
(T)

#### D. The Cuban Intervention: September 1975

Although the decision to intervene with troops probably came in mid-August, the first Cuban troops did not actually leave Cuba—by ship—until [redacted] September, landing at Pointe Noire [redacted] Cuban ships with men and/or military equipment for Angola crossed the Atlantic in September and October. On September 30, 1975, the Cuban airlift to Angola began, with [redacted] Cuban planes carrying men and/or arms for Angola crossing the Atlantic before November. By the end of October there were probably at least 2,000 and probably more Cuban troops in Angola.

EO 12958 1.6(d)(1)>10<25Yrs  
(T)

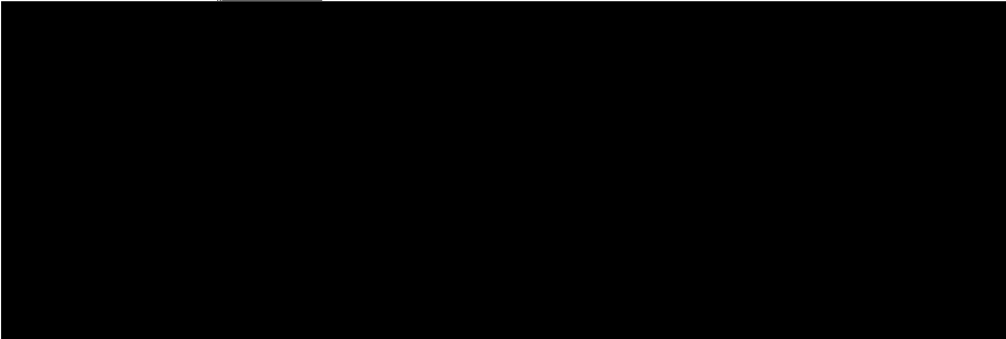
The Cuban dispatch of troops in September took place in the absence of any equivalent intervention by external powers hostile to the MPLA. Even the Cuban airlift began before South African troops intervened except in the border area, and probably before evidence surfaced of South Africa's limited material aid to anti-MPLA forces in late September. At this point, however, there was no urgency to the airlift, and the Cubans clearly were depending on ships to carry the bulk of the military personnel. Moreover, only [redacted] Cuban ships were involved, and Havana was making no effort to prepare more ships for a continuous sealift.

In Angola, the only significant development between the Cuban decision of mid-August and the departure of the first Cuban troops from Havana in early September was the involvement of South African forces in the Cunene area in a somewhat larger encounter with the MPLA forces than had previously taken place. About August 27, South African and MPLA forces clashed at Pereira d'Eca. The MPLA billed this incident as major intervention by South Africa, and even the Portuguese High Commissioner in Angola said that such incidents had "possible international implications." Pereira d'Eca is in extreme southern Angola, only about 25 miles from the South West African border, so the South Africans had still not advanced out of the confined area in which their presence had previously been considered legitimate by the Portuguese. But for the first time South African forces had gone beyond defending the hydroelectric installations to take the offensive against the MPLA. The Pereira d'Eca incident, however, did not yet signal a concerted South African advance.

[redacted] South African forces attacked the MPLA-held town in a retaliatory raid after the MPLA had shot down a South African military helicopter on a reconnaissance mission in the area. [redacted] during September the size of the South African force in the border area meanwhile grew to as many as 800 to 1,000 men.

EO 12958  
1.6(d)(1)>10<25Yrs  
(T)

EO 12958 1.6(d)(1)>10<25Yrs  
EO 12958 1.6(d)(6)>10<25Yrs  
(T)



EO 12958 6.1(c)>10<25Yrs  
(U)

~~Top Secret~~ UMBRA

Not until mid-September did the South African government take the further step of aiding the anti-MPLA forces. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] disturbed by the heightened activity of SWAPO insurgents along the Angola-South West Africa border, and increasingly alarmed by the advance of the MPLA forces into southern Angola—which they had hoped would remain under UNITA control—the South African government now decided to provide instructors and limited military aid to UNITA and FNLA. Initially, the South African intention was reportedly to drive the MPLA forces out of southern Angola, not to pursue them northward.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] South Africa agreed to send arms but wanted them to be used only in the border area. Because Savimbi's main objectives were north of the area South African officials had in mind, no final decision



UNITA leader, Jonas Savimbi.

23

~~Top Secret~~

EO 12958 1.6(d)(1)>10<25Yrs  
(T)

EO 12958 1.6(d)(1)>10<25Yrs  
(T)

EO 12958 6.1(c)>10<25Yrs  
(U)

EO 12958 1.6(d)(1)>10<25Yrs  
(T)

about arms was made; but on September 23, in an engagement [redacted] in southern Angola, [redacted] the South Africans contributed a few men and [redacted] missile launchers to help UNITA repel an MPLA attack. And on September 29, 1975, an airplane from South Africa arrived [redacted] in central Angola with arms for UNITA. The South African government later acknowledged that a group of 18 infantry instructors were also sent to Silva Porto about this time. Although the South African involvement in September was still minor and almost entirely limited to the border area, the South Africans were now acting in collaboration with the FNLA and UNITA.

EO 12958 1.6(d)(1)>10<25Yrs  
(T)

This South African aid to the anti-MPLA forces began after the first Cuban troopships left Cuba for Angola, but before the Cuban airlift began. It is conceivable that the Cuban decision to begin the airlift was a response to knowledge of South African assistance to FNLA and UNITA, but it seems unlikely that the Cubans had this information. The South African involvement was not only still quite limited geographically and in an inaccessible region, but both UNITA and the South African government made a major effort to keep the South African operation secret. The Soviets may have picked up the South African flight [redacted]

[redacted] But the preparations for the Cuban flight, [redacted] were certainly made before the Cubans learned about the South African flight. If the Cuban airlift was a response to changed circumstances in Angola, it was probably not the South African presence to which the Cubans were reacting.

EO 12958 1.6(d)(1)>10<25Yrs  
(T)

The Chinese factor, however important as an underlying motive in Soviet intervention, in terms of immediate causation probably did not play a large role by this time. By the end of September there were further indications that the Chinese—unable to compete on the scale of the Soviets, perhaps fearful of being embarrassed by seeming to be in the same camp as South Africa, [redacted]

[redacted]—were pulling out. In Peking on September 13, 1975, PRC Vice-Premier Li Hsien-nien explicitly stated that the Chinese supported all three Angolan factions equally. In the past, Peking had used a fuzzy formula, referring to support for “the just struggle of the Angolan people”; the mention of all three factions indicated that Peking was once again moving away from backing only the anti-MPLA forces. In the UN on September 26, the PRC Foreign Minister publicly signaled Peking’s intention to disengage from Angola. While denouncing the Soviet role in Angola, he said that Peking had stopped giving “new military aid” to Angola factions after the Alvor Accord. In fact, the Chinese military instructors remained another month, and the PRC continued to send some supplies that had already been promised. “New aid” to Angola, however, was probably terminated at or about this date. If the Soviets ever had reason to believe the Chinese would attempt to provide effective military support to the anti-MPLA forces, by the end of September there was no longer any basis for such an expectation. In fact, knowledge of the Chinese intention to withdraw may have encouraged the Cubans and Soviets to increase their aid. From this point, China was not a factor in the equation.

By the end of September, then, when the Cubans presumably made a final decision to go ahead with their airlift, they probably had no evidence yet that South

EO 12958 6.1(c)>10<25Yrs  
(U)

Africa had decided to aid anti-MPLA forces in southern Angola, and they knew that Peking was indicating its intention to withdraw from the conflict altogether. On the other hand, the Cubans could also observe US aid becoming more visible in September. On September 12, the US ship with military equipment arrived in Zaire. On the 23d, Secretary Kissinger, speaking at a Washington dinner for African diplomats, issued the first public warning to the Soviet Union on its policy toward Angola. Nevertheless, controversy over the US role in Angola was already beginning to emerge in the United States, creating new reasons to doubt that this role could be long sustained.

In the meantime, the battlefield situation in Angola had become critical for the MPLA, largely due to the injection—for the first time—of large numbers of Zairian troops. [REDACTED]

EO 12958 1.6(d)(1)>10<25Yrs  
(T)

[REDACTED] This support from Zaire enabled the FNLA to begin a counter-offensive which turned the situation around almost immediately. On September 19, Caxito changed hands again. Thus, in late September the Cubans had more incentive to increase their aid hurriedly via an airlift, and saw few deterrents to doing so.

A final consideration could have been the further decline of Communist influence in the Portuguese government after the fall of Goncalves on September 5, 1975. This event may have further increased the Soviet desire for a compensatory victory in Angola.

#### E. The Soviet-Cuban Escalation: Late October/Early November 1975

On October 29, a month after the Cuban airlift began, the Soviets inaugurated an airlift of their own; in the next month [REDACTED] Soviet planes, [REDACTED] [REDACTED]—carried military supplies to Angola. Before the end of January, [REDACTED] military transports delivered [REDACTED] [REDACTED] military equipment to Angola.

EO 12958 1.6(d)(1)>10<25Yrs  
(T)

If a point can be determined at which the Soviets made a full commitment to secure an MPLA victory and abandoned restraint in their efforts to that end, it is the beginning of this airlift. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] the decision to begin an airlift was probably taken in response to urgent battlefield needs of the MPLA, and most probably in response to urging from the Cubans, whose troops in Angola gave them a greater stake in an MPLA victory. The Soviets probably acted after they learned of South African troop intervention, but the Soviet and Cuban aid during the fall so far outstripped South African aid as to suggest that the Soviets were continuing to think in terms of military victory rather than military stabilization or political compromise.

EO 12958 1.6(d)(1)>10<25Yrs  
(T)

The airlift was significant in two ways. First, it symbolized the Soviets' seriousness of purpose. Never before had the Soviet Union undertaken a military airlift over such long distances; the only comparable airlift, [REDACTED] was to the Middle East in 1973, but the distances then were not as great. Second, beyond the increase in volume of material sent to Angola, the airplanes were able to—and

EO 12958 1.6(d)(1)>10<25Yrs  
(T)

[REDACTED]  
EO 12958 6.1(c)>10<25Yrs  
(U)



EO 12958 1.6(d)(1)>10<25Yrs  
(C)

~~Top Secret UMBRA~~

did—transport a different type of material (heavy weapons, including MIG-21s).<sup>12</sup> The airlift marked a change in quality as well as quantity of aid, and represented—if it did not cause—a shift from guerrilla to conventional war in Angola. Also in early November, as the airlift got underway, the Soviets reportedly increased their contingent of military advisers with the MPLA to roughly 400 men, more than double the previous number.

The conclusion that the beginning of the Soviet airlift not only signified a greater Soviet determination to achieve victory but also reflected a coordinated Soviet-Cuban decision, is buttressed by the fact that, as the Soviet airlift got under way, the nature and volume of Cuban involvement also began to change. [REDACTED] less than a week after the Soviet airlift began, the Cuban airlift went into high gear. [REDACTED]

EO 12958 1.6(d)(1)>10<25Yrs  
(T)

[REDACTED] In November, also, it first became evident that Cuban units were conducting their own autonomous combat operations, rather than merely providing leadership and support to the MPLA forces.

The use of the airlift raises the possibility that the decision to intervene on a grand scale may have been made fairly late. Cost considerations make shipping the preferred means of transport unless speed is of the essence. The time factor favors planes, both because of the shorter time spent in transit and because airports are better able than seaports to accommodate heavy traffic without congestion.

The Soviets did have the technical ability to begin an airlift within a few days after a decision to that effect had been made. [REDACTED]

EO 12958 1.6(d)(1)>10<25Yrs  
(T)

EO 12958 1.6(d)(1)>10<25Yrs  
(T)

[REDACTED] necessary arrangements could probably have been made in a week. The airlift was probably not the result of a *single* decision; [REDACTED]

EO 12958 1.6(d)(1)>10<25Yrs  
(T)

26  
~~Top Secret~~

EO 12958 6.1(c)>10<25Yrs  
(U)

By October, the initiative on this question of reinforcement and resupply may well have shifted from the Soviets to the Cubans. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] such a shift occurred at some point in the fall. Once their troops arrived in Angola, the Cubans had a greater interest than the Soviets in assuring that they fared well. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] the Cubans suffered heavy losses in the early stage of the war because the Soviets did not send them sufficient arms and supplies. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] this shortage of arms occurred because the Cubans sent more soldiers than the Soviets had expected. [REDACTED] when the first Cuban forces found themselves in danger of being overwhelmed by drives from the north and from the south, Castro was faced with the choice of withdrawal or increasing the force already committed. He chose the latter course. Although Moscow reportedly at first feared that this acceleration—which amounted to a quantum jump in Soviet and Cuban intervention—might disturb the general context of detente, the Cubans finally won the Soviets over to their position. In the end, Castro allegedly asked for, and received, a guarantee from the Soviet Union that there would be no repetition of the “October crisis” of 1962, thus guaranteeing there would be no agreement on Angola between the superpowers which could place the Cuban government in a difficult situation.

[REDACTED] MPLA forces were under seige both in the north and in the south, and it was clear for the first time that the South Africans were embarking on a major intervention with their own regulars.

In northern Angola, the FNLA had recaptured Caxito in late September and by mid-October had advanced to within a few miles of Luanda. In late October this FNLA counter-offensive was stalled at a town a few kilometers from the capital, but the FNLA presence so close to the capital still posed a serious threat to the MPLA.

The situation in southern Angola was even more hazardous for the MPLA. In early October, South African forces [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] on some occasions joined in direct combat support. By October 9 a few South African soldiers were reportedly fighting alongside the FNLA as far north as Lobito. By October 21 a South African force of some size (ultimately, South Africa probably committed about 2,000 troops and perhaps more) formed an armored column and began marching northward. Two days later this armored column captured the town of Sa da Bandeira. On October 28, UNITA-FNLA, presumably with South African support, captured the southern port of Mocamedes, Angola's third largest port. This victory gave the UNITA-FNLA an important base of operations, which could serve as a channel for South African aid and could support their advance on Lobito, the most important port in southern Angola.

By this time, at least, the Soviets knew of the South African involvement. On October 23, Moscow media reported the MPLA charge that South African troops were advancing on Sa da Bandeira. October 23 was also the date given by both the Cuban and the Chinese media as marking the beginning of the South African

EO 12958 1.6(d)(1)>10<25Yrs  
(T)

EO 12958 1.6(d)(1)>10<25Yrs  
EO 12958 1.6(d)(6)>10<25Yrs  
(T)

EO 12958 1.6(d)(1)>10<25Yrs  
(T)

EO 12958 6.1(c)>10<25Yrs  
(U)

EO 12958 1.6(d)(1)>10<25Yrs  
(T)

invasion. The close timing of the South African intervention and the beginning of the Soviet airlift is suggestive of some causal link. [REDACTED] the Soviets needed about a week to get the airlift in operation; six days elapsed between the South African attack on Sa da Bandeira and the departure of the first Soviet airplane.

On November 4 the MPLA lost Lobito; it was during this battle that the first major clash of Cuban and South African troops took place. Castro later gave November 5 as the date on which the Cubans decided to send combat troops. In fact, at that time Cuban troops in Angola, already numbered at least 2,000 and probably more, but it may be that the loss of Lobito increased the impetus to send more men and to send them rapidly by plane.

The Soviets had probably hoped to avoid dispatching aid on such a large and highly visible scale before November 11, the scheduled date of Angolan independence. Thereafter, by recognizing the MPLA as the official Angolan government, the USSR could represent its assistance to the MPLA as state-to-state aid rather than intervention in a civil war. But control of the capital city was essential; otherwise, it would be difficult to win international acceptance of the MPLA as the legitimate government, especially in view of the fact that it occupied probably no more than 30 percent of Angola's total territory. This consideration, as well as knowledge of the South African movement northward, probably strongly influenced the Soviets to proceed with the airlift in coordination with the Cuban troop airlift in late October and early November. And it seems likely that without this increased aid the MPLA would have lost Luanda by November 11. In the event, Luanda was virtually the only important city the MPLA held when the Portuguese withdrew.

Thus, the Soviet-Cuban escalation in November can be seen as a rescue operation; MPLA military defeat was a distinct possibility had aid not been stepped up. As at other points in the escalation, however, in making their decision the Soviets were not faced with an either/or situation. The choice was not merely between military defeat or military victory. A third option—a political settlement based on the formation of a coalition government—was available to them. Both of the two other great powers involved in the Angolan conflict—China and the US—would have accepted this compromise.

By October, the imminent extrication of the Chinese from the Angolan conflict had been widely reported. The last Chinese advisers left Zaire about November 1, [REDACTED]

EO 12958 1.6(d)(1)>10<25Yrs  
(T)

[REDACTED] It is, of course, possible that the Soviets had doubts about the Chinese intention to withdraw. [REDACTED]

although Moscow media went on charging the Chinese with malevolent scheming in Angola, even Soviet propaganda claimed there were only 112 Chinese advisers to the FNLA, hardly enough to account for the Soviet airlift.

EO 12958 1.6(d)(1)>10<25Yrs  
(T)

[REDACTED] a government of "national unity." [REDACTED]

~~Top Secret UMBRA~~

clearly had the backing of the OAU; the Chinese were in the process of trying to cut their losses by aligning their position with the OAU policy of supporting coalition government (thus, China on November 11 would extend "warm congratulations" to all Angola factions); Zaire was impotent to give significant aid [REDACTED] and South Africa, having entered the fray with the greatest reluctance, would doubtless have been more than willing to withdraw in exchange for Soviet/Cuban withdrawal.

#### F. The Failure of Diplomacy: November 1975 to February 1976

The period from late October/early November, when the Soviets decided to go for broke in Angola, to early February 1976, by which time the MPLA had essentially won the conventional war, is the period for which we have the most information, but the least need for it. This period basically constitutes an epilogue to our investigation of the origins of Soviet/Cuban intervention in Angola. It is difficult to escape the conclusion that by November the crucial decision had already been made. Consequently, this period appears as a succession of Cuban/MPLA battlefield successes against a backdrop of intense US diplomatic activity aimed at reaching some sort of compromise in Angola.

The record during these months is worth reviewing, however, because several events took place which tested the Soviet resolve, and by doing so indicated the lengths to which the Soviets were prepared to go in order to achieve their goal in Angola. Clearly, by late October, the Soviets had decided to bring about an MPLA victory in Angola. But decisions can be unmade, if situations change or pressures against a given policy mount, as happened, for example, during the Cuban missile crisis. After making the decision to put the MPLA in power in Luanda, the Soviets doubtless made a series of later decisions to adhere to this original commitment.

Two things happened during this period which the Soviets may not have expected. First, the US administration responded vigorously, even though there was some delay, to Soviet/Cuban intervention—at first by trying to win Congressional approval for increased military aid to the anti-MPLA forces; and, when this failed, by strenuous diplomacy aimed at rallying opposition to Soviet machinations among black African and European states, and at convincing the Soviets themselves of the grave consequences for bilateral relations which could ensue from Soviet implacability in Angola. Second, black African nations proved to be little enamored of Soviet meddling in their affairs. Because of the distaste with which many African leaders regarded Soviet intervention, the OAU, meeting in January, decided not to censure South African intervention in Angola.

These two developments may have given the Soviets pause and occasion to reassess their commitment to the MPLA. By late January, however, it became clear that the Soviets had no intention of backing off. Until January, the Soviets had sometimes defined their goals in Angola in vague language, perhaps designed to leave them an "out" should circumstances cause them to modify their policy. Only in January did Soviet propaganda unequivocally indicate that compromise was out of the question.

It was in November that the US began to accelerate its diplomatic offensive against Soviet/Cuban involvement. While a US administration request for more

EO 12958 1.6(d)(1)>10<25Yrs  
EO 12958 1.6(d)(6)>10<25Yrs  
(U)

29

~~Top Secret~~

[REDACTED]  
EO 12958 6.1(c)>10<25Yrs  
(U)

~~Top Secret~~ ~~AMBRA~~

military aid to Zaire was pending in Congress, Secretary Kissinger made clear at a press conference on November 10 that the US regarded the Soviet intervention as "a serious matter not compatible with the relaxation of tensions."

EO 12958 1.6(d)(6)>10<25Yrs

(T)

And, on November 24, the Secretary made a major speech in Detroit in which he stressed that the Angola situation threatened US-Soviet relations. Meanwhile, during November the OAU had reinforced the pressures for Soviet restraint by issuing an appeal that all foreign forces be withdrawn and all countries refrain from extending diplomatic recognition to any Angolan government until a settlement could be negotiated.

Soviet rigidity persisted in the face of these pressures. The Soviet response to the US direct complaints was apparently negative. As for the OAU appeal for noninterference, the Soviets, far from complying with it, moved to break relations with Uganda when Idi Amin, OAU President, refused to bow to Soviet pressure to recognize the MPLA government.

Soviet inflexibility in late November was doubtless related to the fact that by then the position of the MPLA had improved both politically and militarily. By this time the MPLA had been recognized by 20 states, including 15 African states, in spite of the fact that the OAU had resisted recognition. Nigeria—whose support was important because of its size and strength—had reportedly decided to reverse its policy and recognize the MPLA government, reportedly because of the South African role in Angola. The Soviets probably expected other African states to follow suit in order to put distance between themselves and South Africa.

Furthermore, the anti-MPLA forces, which had made battlefield gains in early November, suffered serious losses later in the month. About November 23, the FNLA lost a major battle at Quifangando, on the outskirts of Luanda, and had fallen back in disorder to Caxito; the following day, FNLA forces abandoned Caxito itself, retreating pell-mell northward. In the south, the MPLA/Cuban forces had stopped the northward drive of South Africa/UNITA forces by November 25, and losses of the anti-MPLA forces were reportedly high. On the same day, an MPLA spokesman claimed that the conduct of the war had "totally changed," since the MPLA had repelled attack in the north and south and had mounted a counterattack. This claim was not without substance. By the end of November, the tide had turned in favor of the MPLA on all fronts.

By November, it was clear that the Chinese game in Angola was up. The Chinese evidently had decided to take the long view. They were to sit out the rest of the war, taking care to maintain a formal neutrality by withholding diplomatic recognition from the MPLA as well as the other two groups, condemning Soviet imperialism in ever harsher terms, in the hope, perhaps, that after the war the victors would turn to the PRC as a less domineering patron than the Soviet Union. Thus, on November 5, a Chinese People's Daily commentator attacked Soviet policy in Angola in stronger terms than previously seen in Chinese media, for the first time explicitly condemning the Soviet Union by name for its role in Angola and doing so "in the name of the Chinese people." Typically, this article carefully avoided stigmatizing the MPLA by not specifying which faction Moscow supported.

30

~~Top Secret~~

EO 12958 6.1(c)>10<25Yrs

(U)

During December the US administration's protests against the Soviet role in Angola mounted. On December 8, Secretary Kissinger told reporters the African situation would affect the SALT talks, [REDACTED]

EO 12958 1.6(d)(6)>10<25Yrs  
(T)

[REDACTED] At the same time, in early December US Ambassador Moynihan delivered a strong attack on the Soviet Union in the UN, accusing the Soviets of a drive to colonize all of Africa. The US administration had some success at this point in winning diplomatic support—primarily in Europe, but to some extent in Africa as well—for its stand against Soviet intervention. On December 11 the UN decided not to single out South Africa's intervention in Angola for censure.

[REDACTED] On December 19, however, these efforts came to an end as the decision was made in the United States to ban further covert aid to any Angolan faction.

Meanwhile, the Soviets sharply increased their aid to the MPLA in late December and January, [REDACTED]

EO 12958 1.6(d)(1)>10<25Yrs  
(T)

[REDACTED] Moscow appeared to be trying to reinforce the impression that its commitment to MPLA victory was firm. [REDACTED]

As for Cuba, in January it almost doubled the size of its expeditionary force in Angola. (Ultimately, the Cuban troops presence in Angola probably reached a peak of between 13,000 to 18,000 soldiers before February 1976.)

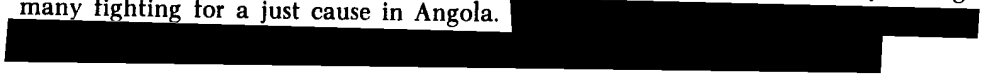
EO 12958 1.6(d)(1)>10<25Yrs  
(T)



*Neto samples a daiquiri with Cuban Prime Minister Fidel Castro.*


It was also in late December, at the Cuban Party Congress, that Castro for the first time publicly pledged Cuban support for the MPLA. In mid-January he acknowledged directly the presence of Cuban soldiers in Angola. And in a January 29 press conference for foreign newsmen, according to a Mexican press agency, Castro went so far as to claim that "Cuba has hundreds of thousands of volunteers ready to fight in Angola." At the same time, Castro adopted a very uncompromising stand regarding the future of Cuban-US relations, by going out of his way to reiterate his insistence that unconditional lifting of the US economic blockade was a prerequisite to the opening of negotiations.

The Soviet resolve to continue their aid may have been related to the decision of Nigeria in mid-December to provide military help to the MPLA. Throughout the conflict the Soviets had been anxious to give their intervention an "international" flavor, reminiscent of Soviet intervention in the Spanish civil war. They evidently wanted to create the impression that the Soviet Union was only one country among many fighting for a just cause in Angola.



Soviet perseverance may also have been related to the December 19 announcement that the OAU would hold an emergency summit on Angola on January 10. The Soviets may have hoped to clinch military victory before this meeting in order to secure the politically desirable recognition of the MPLA by the OAU. Militarily, the MPLA's advance had slowed down in December. While the MPLA and the Cubans were still making progress in the north, anti-MPLA forces made gains in central Angola until December 24. In December, however, there was also growing friction and even some fighting between UNITA and the FNLA. Had the Soviets wished to reach an agreement with Savimbi, and thus to explore the option of coalition government, the time was ripe. Instead, the Soviets continued to opt for a military solution.

And yet, even in early January, the Soviets continued to drop vague hints that a negotiated settlement might yet be possible. While Soviet media continued to denounce the FNLA and UNITA as "puppet organizations," they also continued to call for an end to "foreign armed intervention," and to charge that it was the anti-MPLA forces which had earlier wrecked the chances for coalition government. The unstated implication was that the Soviets might still accept such a government.



A January trip by Secretary Kissinger to Moscow, however, did not appear to produce any softening of Soviet policy. Perhaps the very fact of the trip made the Soviets believe the US-Soviet relationship would not suffer irreparable damage from Angola. In late January the Soviets let it be known that they had no intention of allowing anti-MPLA groups to play any significant role in the Angolan government.

EO 12958 1.6(d)(1)>10<25Yrs  
(T)

EO 12958 1.6(d)(1)>10<25Yrs  
(T)

EO 12958 6.1(c)>10<25Yrs  
(U)

On January 18, *Pravda's* International Week said that "no realistic basis" for a government of national unity existed.

EO 12958  
1.6(d)(1)>10<25Yrs  
(T)

[REDACTED]

On January 26, an *Izvestia* editorial, the first authoritative article since Secretary Kissinger's visit, reiterated that the idea of a coalition government had no "realistic basis," and explained that this was because of the "anti-nationalist" policies of the two leaders of "splittist groups" in Angola. A more authoritative *Izvestia* Observer article on January 29 said that the Soviet Union welcomed the "consolidation in Angola of all the patriotic forces working for genuine independence," but since Roberto and Savimbi had been branded "anti-nationalist," they were presumably excluded from any such "consolidation." The article went on to distinguish between the "real interference" of South Africa and its "imperialist" patrons, and the "disinterested aid" of the Soviet Union.<sup>15</sup>

By late January, then, it had become clear that tantalizing statements calling for an end to "foreign intervention" in Angola and a "consolidation of patriotic forces" there were merely serving as a smoke screen for continued Soviet intervention. Whether these ambiguous phrases had earlier reflected an actual ambiguity in Soviet intentions, or whether they were used as part of a sand-throwing exercise from the outset, we do not know. It may be that the Soviets were attempting to conceal their desires until after the OAU conference, which met in mid-January, in the hope of gaining OAU recognition of the MPLA government and censure of South African intervention. After the OAU conference, which ended in a stalemate, the Soviets may have perceived no advantage in continuing to hide their hand.

EO 12958 1.6(d)(1)>10<25Yrs  
(T)

[REDACTED]

The large-scale Soviet/Cuban intervention in January, and the Soviet rejection of all plans for compromise, took place in spite of the fact that the Soviets could no longer have had any illusions about the importance the US administration placed on the Angola issue. Throughout January, the US engaged in intense diplomatic activity to bolster support of anti-MPLA forces.

EO 12958 1.6(d)(1)>10<25Yrs  
(T)

[REDACTED]

Finally, after the OAU meeting of mid-January,

EO 12958 1.6(d)(1)>10<25Yrs  
(T)

[REDACTED]

EO 12958 6.1(c)>10<25Yrs  
(U)

[REDACTED]



~~Top Secret UMBRA~~

Secretary Kissinger announced that he was planning a trip to Africa in March or April.

These diplomatic efforts also proved futile. At this stage, the Soviets were probably less influenced by diplomatic pressures—whether emanating from the US, Western Europe, or Africa—than by the actions of the one outside power opposing the MPLA that had an army in the field—South Africa. After the US decision to cut off aid to anti-MPLA forces, the South African government made clear that South Africa had no intention of carrying on a lone struggle by fighting “to the last man” in Angola. South Africa in January occupied a holding position, ready to pull out of Angola unless US diplomatic activity produced a slowdown of Soviet aid. The South Africans evidently considered withdrawing before the OAU summit. They were dissuaded for the moment [redacted] but by mid-January South African troops had begun a phased withdrawal. By the end of January, South African intervention had effectively ended. By this time, the FNLA had been completely defeated in the north, and UNITA was losing in the south. The South African withdrawal clearly presaged the end of the conventional war in Angola and the reversion by UNITA to guerrilla tactics, as Savimbi vowed to continue the struggle by going “back to the bush.”

With diminishing opposition on the battlefield, the Soviets evidently decided that the reward so clearly within their grasp in Angola was worth the price of creating some strain on relations with the US. Some Soviet officials may have minimized the damage to bilateral relations, believing that the US furor over Angola would die down in time. [redacted]

[redacted] many Soviets had by now come to a greater appreciation of the threat to bilateral relations, especially with regard to SALT. Whatever the earlier Soviet perception of how the US would react to Soviet intervention, by January the Soviets could not have been altogether unaware that the US considered Soviet policy toward Angola a serious matter, not in keeping with the spirit of detente. In the final analysis, Soviet actions there, at least in the last stage of the conflict, must be seen as taking place not in ignorance of the damage to detente, but in spite of the damage.

### III. THE AFTERMATH

Since the MPLA victory in the civil war, the Soviets have worked to consolidate their position in an independent Angola. They probably value Angola chiefly as a base from which to operate and to exert influence, both militarily and politically, in other areas of southern Africa.

Naval and air facilities in Angola are not essential for Soviet purposes, but they would enhance the USSR's strategic position. [redacted]

[redacted] the final communique signed by the two sides only alluded to “certain unspecified measures aimed at giving

~~Top Secret~~

EO 12958 1.6(d)(1)>10<25Yrs  
(T)

EO 12958 1.6(d)(1)>10<25Yrs  
(T)

EO 12958 1.6(d)(1)>10<25Yrs  
(T)

EO 12958 6.1(c)>10<25Yrs  
(U)

~~Top Secret~~ UMBRA

Angola assistance in consolidating its defense capability." But the presence of several high level Soviet military officials, including air force and naval officers, at the signing ceremonies suggests that some measure of agreement was reached. Any such agreements while probably falling short of granting the Soviets permanent base rights, could pave the way for eventual Soviet use of Angolan facilities for long-range naval and air operations.

During his October state visit to the USSR, Neto signed a 20-year Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation which states, in part, that both countries "will continue to develop cooperation in the military sphere." Unlike a similar treaty with Somalia, the Soviet-Angolan agreement does not spell out the details of such military cooperation, saying only that it will take place "in corresponding agreements." It is conceivable that the Soviets could use these agreements to increase the number of military technicians and advisers in Angola and thereby enhance Soviet influence there.

Over the last year Moscow has moved further toward formalizing its ties to Angola into a genuine alliance relationship. A visit by the Angolan Prime Minister in late May and one by Neto himself in early October were used to sign a series of comprehensive agreements. During Neto's visit—in an unprecedented development in Soviet relations with sub-Saharan African states—the 20-year Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation already noted and a party-to-party agreement between the MPLA and CPSU were signed.

Article 6 of the friendship treaty is particularly important because it calls for consultations between Angola and the USSR not only on questions of bilateral relations but also on international issues that are the subject of multilateral conferences. This latter provision is probably aimed at facilitating continuing Soviet efforts to retain Angola's support for Moscow's foreign policies, particularly those relating to southern Africa.

Angola is particularly important to the USSR in southern Africa because it has now joined the ranks of the "front-line" countries whose cooperation is essential to any negotiated settlement in Rhodesia and South West Africa. The Soviets have reportedly asked for, and received, Angola's support for their attack on Anglo-American proposals for black majority rule in Rhodesia and for strong support for other nationalist struggles, in particular in South West Africa.

Offsetting these signs of closer Soviet-Angolan cooperation is Neto's reputation as a pragmatic leader, whose previous relations with the Soviets have been checkered. A dedicated Marxist, Neto is also a radical nationalist who has proclaimed his commitment to nonalignment in foreign policy even while signing treaties with the Russians. Angola under MPLA rule has become one of the few black African states with which the Soviet Union has close ties, but the strength of those ties remains largely untested.

~~Top Secret~~



~~Top Secret~~