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DEPARTMENT OF STATE
ACTION MEMORANDUM

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TO: The Secretary

FROM: AF - Nathaniel Davis *FD*

Status of Our Consulate General in Luanda

The Problem

The security situation in Luanda is deteriorating and will get worse after the Portuguese withdraw from Angola on November 11 leaving Luanda and a considerable hinterland under MPLA control. Added pressure on MPLA is likely to develop if FNLA and UNITA are able to follow up on recent military gains. There is a definite and increasing potential threat to the safety of official Americans in Luanda. The immediate problem we face is whether or not to maintain our Consulate General there. A subsequent paper will address the problem of recognition of a successor regime in Angola.

Background/Analysis

One element in our policy toward maintaining our post in Luanda has been the expectation that it might prove possible to continue to maintain a presence there even after the Portuguese withdrawal.

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It was also in our minds when we agreed to requests from the UK and Canada to represent their interests in Angola. This expectation no longer appears valid.

In the months following the outbreak of open hostilities between the MPLA and its rivals last April, the MPLA has taken control of Luanda and of about 30 percent of Angola's territory and population. It has rejected

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any idea of political accommodation with FNLA and UNITA and will very probably lay claim to complete sovereignty once the Portuguese depart. These two movements are giving consideration to forming a rival government to that of MPLA outside of Luanda. Last minute efforts may be developed by the Portuguese to bring the three movements together, and an OAU initiative to achieve this has also been undertaken; but we expect these efforts to fail.

The shaky military equilibrium that followed MPLA successes in July and August has collapsed in recent weeks as FNLA and UNITA forces have advanced into previously-held MPLA territory. FNLA and UNITA may lack the capability (or even the intention) to reoccupy Luanda in the immediate future, but they do intend to besiege the city and keep it under pressure. The security situation in Luanda is going to deteriorate further when the Portuguese withdraw and as MPLA comes under further military attack.

Under these circumstances our Consulate General's position needs to be reassessed. After the Portuguese leave it will have no legal basis and would survive at the sufferance of MPLA. If, as seems likely, the MPLA experiences further reverses, and particularly if FLEC or Zaire moves into Cabinda, MPLA will very likely blame the United States (i.e., CIA) and focus its hostility on our post and its personnel. There would be nothing to preclude MPLA from harrasing or arresting Consulate General personnel or making a surprise off-hour raid on the Consulate. It has no Marine guards and sensitive material there would be very vulnerable to seizure.

Consul General Killoran has stressed in a recent telegram the increasing risks to personnel security that appear to lie immediately ahead, and he urges that he be authorized to close the post and evacuate all personnel, preferably on the last flight of our airlift leaving Luanda on November 3. We have reason to believe that closing our post would spark the departure of most of the remaining Americans, British and Canadians resident in Angola.

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It would be difficult to maintain an official presence in Luanda after November 11 without having official contact with the MPLA's illegitimate minority regime. It is likely that the MPLA would try to parlay such contacts into implied recognition. Even if we made clear that maintenance of our Consulate in no way implies recognition, its very presence could serve to attribute a degree of legitimacy to an MPLA regime and thereby have a negative impact on the political aspirations of the FNLA and UNITA and any rival regime(s) they might establish. 25X1

If we close the post we would wish to inform certain interested governments in advance, e.g., Portugal, UK, and Canada. Our decision as to what government should be asked to assume protective powers would have to wait until we determine what countries intend to retain representation in Luanda following independence.

Some countries-UK, South Africa and Zaire-have already closed their consulates. Countries currently maintaining consulates, though with reduced staffs, are Italy, Germany, Brazil, Belgium and France. We do not know the plans of these countries, but we understand that the Group of Nine plans to discuss a common policy on Angola in a meeting on October 30.

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We have weighed the pros and cons of issuing a statement explaining our departure in terms of just the security situation or in terms of our unwillingness to lend authority to an illegitimate minority MPLA regime by our continued presence in Luanda. We believe on balance that a departure statement without a political message would probably suffice to underscore for other governments the significance of our leaving. By not attacking the MPLA as we leave, we would lessen possible future difficulties if we later decide to establish an embassy in an Angola in which the MPLA has managed to remain a significant force.

The Options

1. Close down our Consulate General, preferably prior to November 11.

Advantages

- Would avoid exposing our personnel and sensitive material to risks posed by MPLA rule.
- Would underscore our opposition to an MPLA minority government.
- Would be favorably viewed by the other two movements, by Mobutu, and perhaps by Kaunda and other moderate African leaders.
- Might serve to discourage some other governments from recognizing an MPLA regime.
- If we depart before MPLA takeover, we would be able to explain our departure in neutral terms that might pave the way for our return to Luanda even if MPLA eventually emerges from the war in a strong position.

Disadvantages

- Would curtail our ability to communicate with the MPLA.

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-- Would preclude protection of the few remaining American citizens (about 80 are there now) and investments (\$250,000,000).

-- Might induce the MPLA to retaliate against US citizens or investments.

2. Maintain the Consulate General

Advantages



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-- We would continue to be in a position to maintain some contact with the MPLA without necessarily recognizing it formally.

-- We would be in a position to exert efforts to protect American lives and property.

Disadvantages

-- Would expose our personnel and sensitive material to risks posed by MPLA rule.

-- Could be interpreted by some as tacit US consent to an MPLA assumption of power, thereby encouraging some governments to recognize MPLA regime and weakening the position of FNLA and UNITA.

Bureau Views

AF believes that the greatly increased risks to the safety of official US personnel outweigh the advantages which would accrue by keeping them there, and that we should therefore make preparations now to close the Consulate.

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Recommendation:

That you approve the closing of our post in Luanda and the evacuation of its personnel prior to November 11 (Option 1).

Approve _____ Disapprove _____

If you approve of the above, that you approve our informing the Governments of Portugal, Canada and the UK beforehand.

Approve _____ Disapprove _____

ALTERNATIVELY, that we maintain the Consulate General and request Consul General Killoran's views as to how best to diminish the risks to personnel safety that seem to lie ahead.

Approve _____ Disapprove _____

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