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**Interagency
Intelligence
Memorandum**

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The Short-Term Outlook For Angola

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INTERAGENCY INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

THE SHORT-TERM OUTLOOK FOR ANGOLA*

NOTE

This paper assesses the likely trend of events in Angola between now and independence on November 11.

PRECIS

After almost 500 years of Portuguese rule, 13 years of anti-Portuguese insurgency, and more than six months of sluggish civil war, the territory of Angola is facing the unattractive prospect of independence on November 11 without having a formal successor-government to Portugal in place.

Portugal's leaders agree that the date of independence for the territory will not be postponed and that sovereignty will not be transferred to a single liberation group. Their only way out may be to transfer sovereignty to the "Angolan people" or to the territory's three warring liberation groups simultaneously and without formal ceremony.

In either event, the Soviet-backed Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola, if it has not unilaterally proclaimed Angola's "independence" under its own banner before Independence Day, will be ready to declare itself the territory's legal government. The Popular Movement is the only liberation group in place in the capital of Luanda and it has established a shadow government ready to assume responsibility for running the central government.

The Popular Movement's rivals -- the National Front for the Liberation of Angola and the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola -- excluded from political participation,

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will be forced to establish a rival regime and compete for international assistance and recognition. There are no foreseeable circumstances under which the three Liberation groups can be brought into a coalition until they have spent their military energies.

The Popular Movement, by virtue of its presence in Luanda and its well-established international contacts, particularly with Communist and third world countries, would most likely take the lead in the international recognition sweepstakes.

The current see-saw pattern of military operations is likely to continue well beyond November 11. All three liberation groups have their own battle plans designed to increase their territorial control, but none of them can hope to win a decisive military victory. Thus, the fighting is likely to continue as a war of attrition with the staying power of the three groups directly related to the level of external support they can obtain.

In order to prevent the Popular Movement from maintaining its control over the oil-producing enclave of Cabinda, from which a new Angolan government would derive significant financial benefits, Zairian President Mobutu apparently is prepared to force the Popular Movement out of the enclave using troops of a small Cabindan separatist group supported by Zairian forces.

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DISCUSSION

Portuguese Political Options

1. With about two weeks to go before independence, the Portuguese still have not been able to find a satisfactory formula for transferring sovereignty on November 11. Nevertheless, Lisbon is determined to grant Angola its independence on that date.
2. Portuguese officials now accept the fact that a coalition government consisting of Angola's three liberation groups is unattainable. The unyielding rivalry between the Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA) and the National Front for the Liberation of Angola (FNLA) precludes any sharing of political responsibility between them. Moreover, the FNLA's withdrawal from Luanda last July and its subsequent military setbacks have led Portuguese officials to believe that the FNLA is not a viable national political organization.
3. Thus, some elements of the Lisbon regime -- still hope to put together a coalition between the MPLA and the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA). Such a coalition would represent some 80 percent of Angola's population, as well as three quarters of the territory's land area and most of its important political, commercial, and industrial centers. It would be sufficiently representative to protect Portugal from charges of "selling out" the territory to a single liberation group. At one time, it appeared that UNITA was keeping open the option of a last-minute agreement with MPLA. The surprise attack by the MPLA on UNITA in Luanda in July, however, made Savimbi highly distrustful of MPLA intentions.
4. So far, however, the Portuguese have been unable to bring MPLA and UNITA together despite weeks of intense lobbying in Lisbon and in Angola with leaders of the two groups. At the present time the two groups are engaged in heavy military operations against each other. An MPLA-UNITA coalition is thus most unlikely unless (1) UNITA obtains enough territory before independence to signifi-

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cantly enhance its bargaining position vis-a-vis the MPLA, and (2) the MPLA is convinced that it needs broader domestic support and international acceptance than it can expect to obtain by itself and offers UNITA substantial incentives to join it.

5. In the absence of a coalition, Angola will reach independence day without a successor government in place. The Portuguese, however, are still trying to avoid a situation in which they will be forced to deed Angola to a single liberation group. They have raised the possibility of requesting the UN to assume jurisdiction over Angola if they cannot set up a government in time. It seems unlikely that the UN would accept the responsibility or could discharge it if it did accept. There would be heavy pressure from African and Third World members to keep the UN out of Angola. Moreover, the MPLA has threatened to seize power before November 11 if Portugal asks the UN to intervene.

6. Portuguese officials have made repeated avowals that they are opposed to a turnover of power to the MPLA alone. However, Lisbon will have only about 3,000 troops in the territory by November 1. All Portuguese troops will be withdrawn by November 11, leaving Lisbon unable to resist a seizure of power by the MPLA.

African Reconciliation Efforts

7. Recent attempts by individual African leaders and the Organization of African Unity (OAU) to convince the Angolan liberation groups that they should establish a coalition government have had no effect. At this point, it is doubtful that any African leaders actually believe a coalition can be arranged. Their past involvement with the three liberation groups shows that they often place their own partisan support for a group over Angolan unity.

8. General Amin, the OAU's current chairman, is stepping up his efforts to play the intermediary in the Angolan conflict at the request of Portuguese President Costa Gomes. It is un-

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likely that the OAU, which acts only in an advisory capacity, can exert any influence on the liberation groups, however.

An MPLA Takeover

9. The MPLA is now hard at work setting up a shadow government that will be ready to assume responsibility for governing the territory when the Portuguese withdraw on November 11. MPLA officials who remained in their posts following the collapse of the transitional government last July go about their business as if the Portuguese had already left. The Movement also has access to the territory's finances, including substantial oil revenues from Gulf Oil in Cabinda, through its nationalization of the banks in Luanda last summer.

10. An MPLA takeover would force the FNLA and UNITA to establish a rival independent government in order to compete for international recognition and support.

International Support and Recognition

11. The MPLA enjoys a diplomatic advantage by virtue of its well-established international contacts, particularly with Communist and "progressive" countries. It is more widely recognized and supported than either of its rivals. Some African countries have been showing uneasiness over the MPLA's Soviet ties, but by and large the relationship with Moscow has not yet seriously eroded the MPLA's standing in Africa as a nationalist movement. The FNLA is regarded by many Africans as an instrument of Zairian and "imperialist" ambitions in Angola. For the time being at least, it seems likely that FNLA and UNITA would be more damaged by disclosure of Zairian and South African involvement on their behalf than would the MPLA by revelations of its dependence on Soviet aid.

12. The MPLA will also have a strong psychological advantage in controlling the capital, a factor which might well outweigh any losses the Movement may suffer in the countryside between now and independence. Its foreign supporters will take an ag-

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gressive role in promoting the MPLA's legitimacy, as they did at the recent Non-Aligned Conference (NAC) in Lima and at the Afro-Asian People's Solidarity Organization meeting in Mozambique in September.

13. The MPLA counts on gaining immediate recognition from between 30 and 40 Communist and "progressive" governments. This figure is probably too high, but in any case fewer governments probably would be inclined at this point to recognize a rival UNITA-FNLA regime headquartered outside Luanda. (The Africans especially would regard this as encouraging partition.) The MPLA strategy is to get a diplomatic bandwagon going, particularly among African countries, by getting the strong support of even a small number of countries. A major obstacle to the MPLA's plan will be the inclination of many countries not firmly committed to either side to delay a decision on the recognition issue pending the clarification of Angola's internal situation and an assessment of the international alignments. UNITA and FNLA lobbying efforts with African governments may also check MPLA support.

14. Until they feel confident of a large margin of support for recognition of the MPLA, the MPLA's foreign backers will attempt to keep Angola from becoming an issue in the United Nations. They probably can block any proposed UN action by either the General Assembly or the Security Council. If Angola is placed on the agenda, MPLA backers will use the occasion -- probably with considerable effect -- to promote the MPLA's legitimacy and to discredit its rivals.

Politico-Military Assessment

15. The MPLA controls large and significant areas of Angola, including

- the capital of Luanda and its immediate environs;
- the Cabinda enclave;
- much of the coast southward from Luanda; and

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-- large enclaves in eastern and central Angola.

The MPLA bases its claim to political power on its control of most of the territory's major cities.

16. Although the MPLA has considerable support among urban Angolans and by most of the one million Kimbundu who inhabit north-central Angola, it does not command widespread support among the territory's predominantly rural population. UNITA is favored by an estimated 2 million Ovimbundu and related tribes who inhabit the central highlands. The FNLA claims the support of roughly 700,000 Bakongo (including an estimated 100,000 Bakongo refugees recently returned from Zaire) but has virtually no popular appeal outside of Angola's two northern districts. Were it possible to hold reasonably free national elections among Angola's 6 million people, UNITA and the FNLA together could expect to poll a clear popular majority. Under present circumstances, however, this is unlikely to affect international perceptions of the MPLA as Angola's preeminent political force.

17. The MPLA not only will find it difficult to make additional military gains between now and November 11, but may lose more of the territory it now occupies. Both the FNLA and UNITA have been stepping up their military pressure on the MPLA in the wake of increased assistance from Zaire and, more recently, South Africa. The MPLA now appears overextended in central and southern Angola, despite the substantial Soviet support it has been receiving, and has suffered significant setbacks in recent weeks. Moreover, it is beginning to show signs of weakening morale, particularly in Luanda. Continued military strains could weaken morale even further, but it is difficult to forecast a "breaking point."

18. The FNLA appeared to be on the verge of collapse following the MPLA's momentary victory at Caxito in early September. President Mobutu's decision to commit two battalions of Zairian troops and the FNLA's increasing reliance upon white Portuguese ex-officers enabled the FNLA to recapture the town and mount an offensive toward Luanda. As of late October, however, that of-

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fensive had become stalled -- at least for the time being -- because of a lack of supplies and MPLA defenses. Since it was forced to withdraw from Luanda last June, the FNLA's plan has been to try to discredit the MPLA's claim to control the capital area by mounting a siege of the city rather than by fighting its way back in. It may have once again changed its plans, however. The FNLA's prospects appear to be good in the sparsely populated northeast, where MPLA garrisons are more isolated and vulnerable.

19. In southern Angola, UNITA appears to have blunted, at least temporarily, the MPLA's multi-pronged drive against Nova Lisboa, Angola's second largest city and UNITA's political headquarters. Now that the refugee evacuation from Nova Lisboa has been terminated, UNITA hopes to turn the airport into a major logistics base to support its planned offensive to recapture the coastal towns of Lobito and Benguela. UNITA's forces have been joined in that offensive by a large contingent of FNLA troops trained by South African advisers in southeastern Angola. With the capture of the port city of Mocemedes on October 28, UNITA and FNLA now have a major resupply point to support their advance on Lobito.

20. Despite the recent improved performances of UNITA and FNLA forces in southern Angola, it is still uncertain whether they can achieve their military objectives by independence. The MPLA has had ample time to consolidate its hold on the coast. It still has access to four major ports in southern Angola with the capacity for accommodating ocean-going vessels. The MPLA will redouble its efforts to take Nova Lisboa before UNITA and FNLA have time to complete their own offensive. It is by no means certain that the two groups could withstand a concerted MPLA campaign.

21. The current seesaw pattern is likely to continue with each movement making some modest gains at the expense of its rivals. The fighting will continue well past independence and the staying power of the three groups will be in large measure determined by the amount of external assistance they obtain. The MPLA

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will remain in control of Luanda and presumably much of the coast, as well as of significant areas in the interior, thus maintaining a decided political advantage over its rivals in gaining outside recognition and support. No matter how much territory any one group claims to control, the eventual political outcome in Angola will not be decided until one group or a pair of groups wins uncontested military victory over its opposition, or, as is equally likely, the three groups fight themselves to exhaustion and agree to a political solution.

External Support

Zaire

22. President Mobutu attaches great importance to preventing a takeover of Angola, particularly Cabinda, by the Soviet-backed MPLA. Substantial Zairian support was needed for the FNLA to recapture Caxito. In order to sustain an effective military campaign against the MPLA during the dwindling days of Portuguese sovereignty, or to continue it after November 11, the FNLA -- and UNITA -- will need continued Zairian support. Mobutu is ready to give that support and already has some 800-1,000 troops in place in Angola.

23. Mobutu apparently intends to intervene in Cabinda, using the Cabindan Liberation Front (FLEC) as a cover and as many of his own troops as needed. The Zairian Army is currently training FLEC soldiers for such an operation. As many as 600 of these troops have infiltrated into northwestern Cabinda but have not yet undertaken any military operations. An outbreak of fighting in Cabinda would force the MPLA to fight on a third front. Mobutu could not hope for military success there without committing a good number of his own troops to bolster the Cabindan forces, most of whom are completely inexperienced and at best only partially trained.

24. The presence of Zairian troops in Angola in large numbers, particularly if they were heavily involved in an attack on

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Luanda or Cabinda would bring widespread criticism of Mobutu in Africa. Many African states would regard Mobutu as a spoiler and would probably apply public and private pressure to get him to withdraw his troops. In light of his past disregard of African criticism of his Angolan policies, however, Mobutu is probably prepared to accept African censure in defense of what he considers his vital interests. He may also believe that he can successfully defend his actions as the only reasonable response to Soviet imperialism in Angola.

25. The possible domestic repercussions of deeper Zairian involvement in Angola -- especially if it proves costly or unsuccessful -- are more serious. Mobutu's prestige in Zaire already has been seriously undermined by widespread discontent over his mishandling of the national economy. Within the military there is a general sense of unrest stemming from economic grievances and the ongoing purge of personnel suspected of disloyalty to Mobutu. At the present time, however, it appears unlikely that Mobutu's involvement will become so great that it will spark resistance to his Angolan policy on the part of the Zairian Army.

South Africa

26. In the context of its "outward" policy, South Africa hopes to establish cooperative political and economic relations with the neighboring black African states. Its concern at the prospect of an MPLA-dominated Angola -- heightened by MPLA's military inroads into UNITA's southwestern territory near the Namibian border -- has caused Pretoria to reconsider its earlier non-involvement policy.

27. In August South African troops crossed the border to protect two installations of the Cunene River hydroelectric power project jointly financed by Portugal and South Africa. The troops are still there.

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28. South Africa now appears to have decided to risk covert assistance to the MPLA's rival movements by:

- Agreeing to supply petroleum and arms to UNITA and the FNLA.
- Permitting military advisers to go along on operations in central Angola in a rear-echelon support capacity. Some of these advisers reportedly have been killed while engaged in fighting.
- Providing military advisers at a newly created base in southeastern Angola near the border.

29. Beyond trying to protect Namibia's borders by supporting opposition to MPLA incursions into the south, South Africa may not yet have decided how much further to go.

30. Exposure of direct South African intervention will jeopardize South African efforts to achieve detente with black Africa and damage UNITA and FNLA in efforts to gain African support. We expect, therefore, that South Africa will continue its material assistance but will not increase the number of South African personnel in Angola and would hope to withdraw its advisers now there as soon as UNITA and FNLA begin to show momentum.

Portugal

31. The liberation groups are also acquiring large amounts of supplies and equipment being abandoned by the Portuguese as they withdraw. This equipment has been grabbed up by whichever liberation group is nearby.

32. In a recent withdrawal from Nova Lisboa, the Portuguese officers there turned over to the FNLA and UNITA sizable quantities of arms and ammunition, fuel, and vehicles. Many individual army commanders apparently have siphoned off supplies to whichever liberation group they favor, although most military officials

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currently in Angola appear to favor UNITA, and apparently hope that by continuing to divert supplies to it they will help its chances to increase military pressure on the MPLA.

USSR

33. Moscow has cast its lot firmly with the MPLA in anticipation that the latter will dominate whatever government emerges from the present conflict. The flow of Soviet arms clearly has been an important factor in the MPLA's military successes. In Soviet terms the magnitude probably is not great, but for the MPLA it is of major significance. The MPLA has received a variety of infantry weapons and equipment, and recently has received heavier equipment (armor and artillery) of Soviet origin.

34. The Soviet Union, Cuba and other communist countries have also provided political and military training for MPLA cadres since 1961. They are also providing advisers to the MPLA in Congo. Cuba has advisers in Angola as well. Several hundred Cuban "volunteers" recently arrived at an MPLA-controlled port, and will probably be used in support and advisory roles. They probably have orders to avoid combat. In addition, several hundred Cubans are providing rear echelon support for MPLA forces in Cabinda from the Congo-Cabinda border.

35. A friendly or pro-Soviet regime in post-independent Angola could offer some political advantages to Moscow. The Soviets may hope through such a government to exert a major influence on the liberation drive in southern Africa. Support for Angolan liberation also contributes to Soviet credibility and influence with other clients in the region. As always, Moscow has a particular interest in Chinese and US influence in Angola and other adjacent areas of Africa.

36. The Soviets would gain considerably prestige on the Africa and world scenes by showing how they could successfully contribute to installing a minority liberation group in power through force of arms. They could further enhance this prestige by the establishment of a military base in Angola as they did in Somalia. From a strategic military point of view such a base would not be of great value; but politically, a Soviet presence with clear military symbols would be seen by them as most desirable in this area of the world where Soviet influence has been minimal.

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37. The Soviets are likely to become more deeply involved with the MPLA the longer the issue of ultimate control of Angola is unresolved. During a protracted post-independence war, the Soviets will be faced with an increasingly costly aid role if they are to underwrite an MPLA-dominated regime in the future. For its part, even if it tries, MPLA will find it difficult to avoid dependence on Moscow.

38. Soviet aid has been vital to the MPLA's present military dominance and has also encouraged the MPLA to maintain the firm stand it has taken regarding its assumption of political power in Luanda on November 11. The expectation of continued substantial Soviet and other Communist assistance will encourage the MPLA to take a hard line and to seek to crush its opponents and establish its own regime in Angola.

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