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MEMORANDUM FOR:

ORPA/USSR

Attached is our contribution to PRM-78: The Soviet Role in Southern Africa, which will be transmitted to Reginald Bartholomew, Acting Deputy NSC Staff. If you have further questions please contact

Office of Economic Research

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The Soviet Role in Southern AfricaKey Judgments

The USSR in recent weeks has clearly shifted its attention to the Rhodesian crisis in order to polarize the fluid settlement situation there and to maintain the momentum of recent Soviet successes on the Horn of Africa and in South Asia.

- The Soviets are seeking a more active military role against the transitional government in Rhodesia and are apparently pressuring President Kaunda to allow an increased Soviet and Cuban presence in Zambia.
- The Soviets also have become increasingly impatient with the low level of guerrilla activity against President Smith's interim government and are trying to spur military strikes against Rhodesia by the Zimbabwe African People's Union.

Recent emotional exchanges between high-ranking Soviet officials and Kaunda and Rhodesian nationalist leader Nkomo indicate that Moscow is extremely uncertain about the reliability of both African leaders.

- The Soviets were deeply suspicious of Kaunda's travels to Washington and London and did their best to prevent the visits.
- The Soviets are similarly disturbed with Nkomo's contacts with elements in the Salisbury government

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and with the West as well as his unwillingness to close the door to some future association with the internal agreement.

Soviet military assistance to the frontline states and the patriotic front has also increased in recent months and the Cubans have taken on greater advisory and support functions with the guerrillas.

Soviet arms transfers to sub-Saharan Africa reached an all time high last year with nearly \$600 million worth of arms delivered to 17 black African countries -- [

[The USSR is now the largest supplier of arms to the area. Only a few new Soviet arms agreements have surfaced thus far in 1978, [

[Moscow's greatest concern at the moment appears to be with Nkomo's unwillingness to use his military forces against Rhodesia and with Kaunda's travels to Washington and London. As a result, the Soviets launched an emotional propaganda exercise several weeks ago to convince both Kaunda and Nkomo to change their tactics and to demonstrate that the USSR -- and not the US -- can best serve their interests.

-- In early May, Soviet Ambassador Solodovnikov told Kaunda that the US intended to overthrow

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his government while he was out of the country. Solodovnikov's remarks were part of a heavy-handed Soviet offer to press Kaunda to cancel his trip.

The Soviets then told both Kaunda and Nkomo that the US was planning a coordinated series of military strikes against "progressive" forces in Africa -- particularly Southern Africa -- that would include a Rhodesian attack into Zambia to wipe out ZAPU bases. Other alleged US targets were Ethiopian positions in Eritrea, Katangan positions in Angola, and SWAPO bases in southern Angola.

Nkomo was told that the only way to force the Rhodesians to give up or at least postpone their plans was to launch his own full-scale offensive against Rhodesia as soon as possible. Moscow offered assistance in order to launch the necessary operations and agreed to arrange an immediate airlift to Zambia of 2,000 ZAPU guerrillas who recently finished Cuban training courses in Angola.

The chief of ZAPU's military wing was given the same message and he agreed to allow Cuban officers to lead the contingent upon their return from Angola.

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may also involve delivering the ZAPU guerrillas. Given ZAPU's poor military performance thus far, the Soviets would presumably want the ZAPU contingent to be preserved as a unit and would favor an immediate military campaign to ensure that the talents of this force were not wasted.

The Soviet fabrications of US intentions in southern Africa, which were highly emotional and paranoid in both tone and detail, strongly suggested that Moscow will make every effort to press Kaunda to accept increased Communist military involvement in Zambia and to convince Nkomo -- who arrived in Moscow on Tuesday -- to step up military pressure along the Rhodesian border.

- The Soviets presumably realize that, because of the patriotic front's poor military performance thus far, they will have to play a greater advisory and logistics role in order to provide a serious obstacle to the internal settlement.
- In addition to airlifting the ZAPU guerrillas, the military equipment on the AN-22s may include air-defense equipment, which is Zambia's most pressing need, or []

[] Additional Soviet

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military technicians will soon arrive in Lusaka, presumably to train Zambians and/or ZAPU forces on the use of the newly delivered equipment.

- Moscow would presumably favor active hostilities on the border with Rhodesia in order to make both Kaunda and Nkomo more dependent on Moscow for additional military assistance and to limit ZAPU's political options.

Moscow would certainly have Castro's support in any effort to enlarge the Soviet and Cuban role in the Rhodesian conflict.

- The Cubans have already taken up defensive positions along Mozambique's border with Rhodesia and are training FRELIMO forces. Some 800 Cubans are working with ZAPU guerrillas in Angola and others will presumably join the 65 to 70 who are already at ZAPU camps in Zambia. An unspecified number of Cubans are also training SWAPO forces at camps in Zambia and Angola.

We have no evidence to support Kaunda's contention that Castro is moving several thousand Cubans into Mozambique to man tanks, long-range artillery, and MIG fighters.

We do believe, however, that if the frontline states agreed, Havana would deploy additional forces to help defend them and that small numbers of Cuban cadres would be willing to accompany guerrilla units into Rhodesia from Zambia or Mozambique.

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As a result of Soviet military deliveries, the military capabilities of the frontline states have been significantly upgraded in recent months and increased amounts of equipment is now in place for any expanded Cuban presence.

-- Military deliveries to Angola have been high since late last year when the Soviets moved to resupply Angolan and Cuban forces for their joint offensive against UNITA forces. Angola is also becoming a major entrepot for military equipment destined for SWAPO bases in southern Angola and ZAPU bases in Zambia.

Deliveries to Tanzania are expected to escalate this year



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es Salaam is also the major offloading point for military equipment delivered to SWAPO and the patriotic front.

We have observed a noticeable increase in the size and activity at a number of Soviet/Cuban military training facilities in Mozambique this year. Soviet First Deputy Defense Minister Sokolov visited the camps last month. Recent deliveries include []

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- Zambia has signed [] aid agreements with the Soviets during the past year, prompted in part by Rhodesian raids on ZAPU bases inside Zambia. Recent deliveries have included []

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Recent Soviet commentary defending their interests in southern Africa has led to intensive criticism of US actions there, including the revival of personal attacks against the President which had not been evident over the past several months.

Both Pravda and Izvestia accused the President of blasphemy for attempting to thrust the American way of life on African countries even while racial incidents took place in his own backyard.

The central press blasted the Western military role in Shaba province with the US drawing the major share of Moscow's criticism despite the more obvious military role played by France and Belgium.

Compared to coverage of last year's events in Shaba, Soviet media are being orchestrated in a much higher and more authoritative key in

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order to seize the propaganda initiative and to register the depth of Moscow's anger with the President's charges.

The acceleration of Moscow's efforts to polarize the fluid Rhodesian settlement situation as well as to increase its own role in the crisis there indicates that the Soviets are casting about for still another opportunity to consolidate their influence in a precarious African situation. Soviet actions thus far do not indicate that Moscow is deterred by the more difficult situation that it faces in Eritrea, Angola, and now Rhodesia. Nor is it likely that the Soviets will be intimidated by US opposition to their actions. It is possible that the Soviets believe that there are compelling reasons for protecting their equities in Africa because of such recent setbacks in the Middle East as the Sadat trip to Jerusalem, the failure to consolidate "rejectionist" opposition to Egypt's policies, and the inability to exploit Israel's invasion of Lebanon.

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