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THE DIRECTOR OF CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE

WASHINGTON, D. C. 20505

National Intelligence Officers

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15 January 1982

MEMORANDUM FOR: Director of Central Intelligence

FROM: L. Gray Cowan
National Intelligence Officer for Africa

SUBJECT: The Prospect for Africa, 1982

Africa will continue to suffer in 1982 and, for that matter, in the years beyond, from the twin problems that are endemic to the Third World, economic scarcity and political instability. Food shortages and the crushing burden of energy costs weaken the economies of every country except South Africa. Together they preclude the raising of living standards which in turn leads to political unrest. The extreme fragility of national political institutions facilitates the overthrow of representative government where it has begun to take root and paves the way for its replacement with authoritarian leadership. Even such relatively secure regimes as those in Nigeria or Kenya are not immune to the virus of military takeover.

The combination of economic and political weakness will continue to provide ideal opportunities for Soviet intervention throughout the continent. However, Soviet domestic economic stringencies may possibly change the character of this intervention in the immediate future, not only in Africa but throughout the Third World. The Soviets have never been able (or willing) to meet African needs for development aid; instead they have substituted arms assistance both to established regimes and to guerrilla movements. Indeed, they have been more than amenable to Western economic aid to their client states, provided political control remains solidly in the hands of a pro-Soviet leadership. In 1982 and beyond the Soviets will be increasingly emphasizing less costly forms of intervention in their attempts to block US interests and initiatives. This is not to say, of course, that the Soviets are incapable of mounting another massive effort to secure another client if a suitable opportunity were to present itself or to save an existing one.

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We can look forward to more aid to insurgent groups, and greater diplomatic activity designed to destabilize pro-Western regimes and to frustrate US goals. Diplomatic interference and supply of arms to insurgents are relatively cheap forms of fostering Soviet goals compared to the massive effort required in an Angola or a Cuba. We may expect to see more intensive disinformation campaigns, more widespread support for terrorist activities, especially in Southern Africa, more clandestine activity aimed at political destabilization and more overt diplomatic moves to counter American initiatives wherever they occur. In carrying out these policies the Soviets will rely even more heavily on their surrogates than in the past, particularly Libya, so long as Qaddafi is able to substitute Libyan funds for what would otherwise be Soviet expenditures. Such economic and technical aid as the Soviets are disposed to provide will come from Eastern European sources except for Soviet technical advisers in the military and security fields essential to preserve Soviet dominance in Ethiopia, Angola and Mozambique.

During 1982 I expect to be paying particular attention to the following countries and areas where I judge the situation to be most precarious.

Sudan

The reporting on the internal situation grows constantly more pessimistic; the continued deterioration of the economy will give rise to growing political agitation that will further undermine Nimeiri's position. There is increasing reason to believe that military support for him is declining. Without it he cannot hope to remain in power. The US has a very substantial stake in the Sudan both for itself and because of its regional importance. The Soviets will undoubtedly take advantage of any opportunity here, aided by the Libyans; if they succeed Egypt is endangered, as is, to a lesser degree, Kenya. In the event of Nimeiri's removal we must be prepared to exert our influence to ensure a smooth transition to a successor who will continue to take a pro-Western position.

Somalia and the Horn

Siad's position is far from secure, despite his ability in political manipulation. It is in the combined interests of the Soviets and Ethiopians to replace his regime with one more receptive to their concerns and, given the sorry state of the Somali armed forces, an overthrow by invasion or assassination is always just over the horizon. While Somalia may not be the kingpin of US Indian Ocean policy, it plays an important role in it. The presence of a pro-Soviet regime in Somalia would have serious consequences for our relations with Kenya.

Angola

Internal dissension within the MPLA may lead the Soviets to decide to replace Dos Santos, particularly if they feel that he is leaning too far in the direction of seeking assistance from the West. There is community agreement that Cuban troops have been increased since the September South African raids.

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In the negotiations on a Namibian settlement, we should be aware that the Angolans could well offer some draw down of Cuban forces without, in fact, any real reduction below the level of September 1981. The recent gradual hardening of the South African attitude on Cuban troop withdrawal would perhaps be reduced if the Angolans were to make such an offer.

Zaire

There is general agreement that the danger of an outbreak of hostilities in Shaba is greater than at any time over the past three years. Although reporting is sketchy at best, it would appear that Soviet support for FLNC has been offered. Given the present low state of organization within the FLNC, a full scale invasion in the coming months seems unlikely but a coordinated campaign of sabotage perpetrated by FLNC infiltrators into the province would create severe economic dislocation and the departure of white technicians. In view of the precarious economic situation in Zaire, Mobutu's position would be seriously weakened by unrest in Shaba and we must be prepared for further requests for aid, both military and economic.

With the exception of the Horn and Southern Africa, the continent will not be at the top of the priority list of US policy concerns in 1982. But we will continue to have substantial interests in Africa which could be seriously harmed by Soviet actions. We cannot afford to allow the Soviets to assume preponderant influence in the Third World by default while we are preoccupied with counting missiles in Geneva.

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