

171

January 26, 1976

INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: The Present Military Situation in Angola

1. The Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA), reinforced by about 11,000 Cuban troops and a continuing flow of Soviet military equipment, now holds a clear superiority of military power in Angola. The MPLA's military leaders are convinced that they can win a conventional military victory over their opponents in the very near future, perhaps within the next several weeks. We believe that this outcome is likely, although it will fall short of a total victory in that at least small-scale guerrilla and insurgent activity will probably continue.

2. MPLA and Cuban forces have already destroyed the National Front for the Liberation of Angola (FNLA) in the north; the Front is not likely to pose a significant conventional military threat to the MPLA in the near future, though it may fight on as a guerrilla movement.

3. The MPLA side is confident that it can win a similar victory over the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA) in central and southern Angola, and the MPLA and Cubans are now regrouping their forces for a concerted offensive against UNITA. This judgment of the MPLA is almost certainly correct. Although UNITA can be expected to put up stiff resistance, it does not have -- without the combat participation and heavy weapons of South African forces -- the ability to withstand the combined Cuban and MPLA forces. UNITA's military position has been seriously undermined by the withdrawal of more than 1,000 South African troops and advisors. Even a continuation of covert South African material assistance is not likely to shore up UNITA significantly as a conventional military force.

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4. Given the present situation, the remaining forces in Angola opposing the MPLA cannot expect to receive any significant increase of aid -- either materiel or manpower -- from Zaire, Zambia, South Africa or other nations. These nations are all in the process of rethinking their policies toward Angola and related questions. They are in every

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case more likely to make an accommodation to what they see as an emerging new situation in southern Africa, than they are to expand their support to the UNITA and FNLA in an effort to preserve what they now think is unpreservable.

5. In sum, as the situation now stands, there is little to prevent the MPLA side from winning a conventional military victory, and in fairly short order. There is every indication that Soviet and Cuban aid will continue to arrive in Angola in amounts regarded by Moscow and Havana as necessary to finish the job quickly. While the MPLA over the short term probably cannot totally eliminate guerrilla activity by its rivals, the MPLA and Cubans will be able to consolidate their military position throughout Angola. They will also succeed in tightening their administrative grip on Angola's major urban and economic centers and gaining control over the Benguela railroad. They will, at least initially, leave the rural population to fend for itself as the Portuguese did before. Finally, they will probably avoid a direct military confrontation with South Africa by not challenging, with conventional forces, the South African forces in the far south of Angola around the Cunene hydroelectric project.

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