

ARTICLE APPEARED  
ON PAGE A-27

NEW YORK TIMES  
30 JUNE 1978

# Potential in Angola

By Tom Wicker

Ambassador Donald McHenry has returned from an unofficial mission to Angola that recognized efforts by the Angolan Government to seek an alternative to its dependence on Cuban and Soviet assistance. The mission thus represented a welcome affirmation of common-sense policy toward Africa and of Secretary of State Vance's low-key approach to Soviet and Cuban adventurism.

While Mr. McHenry was conferring in Luanda, Agostinho Neto, the Angolan President, was in Guinea-Bissau pursuing renewed contact with Portugal, formerly Angola's colonial master. That, too, is part of the Neto Government's efforts to broaden its associations and support. And some reports say Angolan officials told Mr. McHenry they would try to prevent another invasion by Katangese rebels of Zaire's Shaba province.

But Mr. McHenry's mission also raises questions about President Carter's real attitude — particularly in light of the puzzling approach of Director Stansfield Turner of the Central Intelligence Agency to Senator Dick Clark of Iowa a few weeks ago. Mr. Turner raised the possibility of secretly supplying American arms, through a third country, to guerrillas trying to bring down the Neto Government.

At his news conference this week, Mr. Carter said he "didn't have any idea" at the time that Mr. Turner had approached Mr. Clark with a proposal that the Senator took as indicating an

Administration desire to re-enter the Angolan civil war on the side of the rebels. He had never had such an intention, the President said, and his "impression" was that Mr. Turner was only exploring "what involvement would be possible in Angola."

But the fact is that Mr. Turner assured Senator Clark that he had been directed by the National Security Council to present the written proposal to the Senator — although he insisted Mr. Carter himself knew nothing of the plan.

The conflict between Mr. Carter's and Mr. Turner's statements leaves two possibilities. Either Mr. Carter in fact knew of the arms-to-Angola plan and is now ducking responsibility, which is bad enough; or else he doesn't know what his own National Security Council is proposing to high-ranking senators, which is downright scary.

Either way, Mr. McHenry's mission is evidence that Mr. Carter has at least temporarily rejected the notion — widely credited to Zbigniew Brzezinski — of bolstering the Angolan guerrillas to the point where they would "tie down" the 20,000 Cuban troops in that

country. Theoretically, that might prevent the Cubans from intervening elsewhere in Africa and probably provide them with "their own Vietnam"; but more likely it would only align the United States inevitably with South Africa against the Cubans and black Africans, with disastrous consequences in Rhodesia and Namibia as well as Angola.

The influential President Julius Nyerere of Tanzania, speaking earlier this week on ABC's "Issues and Answers," expressed himself as "very pleased" with the McHenry mission; and he went so far as to suggest that the Cubans would quickly withdraw from Angola if Namibia — which borders Angola — won its independence from South Africa, if the latter country ceased to threaten Angola, and if Zaire were no longer a base for border incursions into Angola.

Mr. Carter obviously doesn't accept that view; instead, he spoke at his news conference of persuading Angola and Cuba to cease threatening Zaire, as he maintains they did in the recent Shaba invasion. Reliable information is also available in Washington to suggest that the Cubans prop up Angola in more than the military sense; if they were to withdraw anytime soon, it's said, they would take with them virtually all the professional expertise in Angola — what little health care there is, for example, and the ability to operate port facilities.

The fact is that Zaire and Angola have been menacing each other; both need all the outside assistance they can get; and there lie the elements of an arrangement beneficial to all — unless the Carter Administration is blinded to its own advantage because the Angolan Government is "Marxist" and supported by the Cubans.

If better American-Angolan relations, including American aid, could be developed, Angola might be decisive in getting negotiations back on track between South Africa and S.W.A.P.O., the liberation organization in Namibia. Angola is its most vital supporter, and it was into Angola that South Africa launched the recent attack on S.W.A.P.O. guerrillas that broke up the negotiations.

A peaceful settlement in Namibia, in its turn, could have useful effect on the British-American effort to work out a genuine majority government in Rhodesia, one that would include black opposition forces now organized into the Patriotic Front. Information in Washington suggests that chances for such a government may be improving, for two reasons:

¶ The Front probably will control too much of Rhodesia for the interim government to be able to conduct its promised elections next December.

¶ By entering that interim government with the white Prime Minister, Ian Smith, Bishop Abel Muzorewa, once Rhodesia's most important black leader, has lost much of his support to the Front's Robert Mugabe.