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INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

Angola: UNITA's Situation and Prospects

Because of Jonas Savimbi's effective leadership, UNITA now can field a force of about 18,000 trained guerrillas and 5,000 irregulars (see table); the guerrillas move freely within and are supported by tribal kinsmen in an area of southern Angola comprising roughly one half of the country's territory. (See map, Disposition of UNITA Forces in Angola.) Although Cuban and Angolan troops still move about in much of the region in armed convoys, for the most part they have kept to the major towns which have remained under government control.

Since last summer, UNITA reportedly has expanded its operations into parts of northern and eastern Angola and along portions of the southwestern coast. UNITA claims to have small units operating along the Zairian border, in north central Angola around Nova Gaia, and to control a section of the coast north of Lobito. UNITA maintains that it enjoys the support of most of the people in these areas and that it has won over many of the traditional tribal leaders. We are unable to verify such claims, but they suggest that Savimbi is making a serious attempt to broaden the base of tribal and popular support for his movement.

Although previous large-scale operations have failed to dislodge Savimbi in the south, Angolan and Cuban forces early last month began yet another major offensive against UNITA forces in southeastern Cuando Cubango Province. The offensive probably had four objectives:

- to encircle and neutralize a large UNITA force that was preparing to attack several major towns in the region.
- to isolate UNITA headquarters and capture Savimbi.
- to deprive UNITA of airfields where it has recently received military supplies and equipment flown in from Zaire.
- to free some southern border areas for use by SWAPO guerrillas operating into northern Namibia.*

Savimbi claims this was the most difficult offensive UNITA had experienced and that Cuban and Angolan forces, supported by Cuban-piloted fighter aircraft and helicopters, almost accomplished the first two objectives. UNITA apparently avoided serious reverses, and it now appears that Cuban and Angolan forces have withdrawn to the larger towns in the region.

The recent offensive probably was the major factor behind Savimbi's departure for Kinshasa last week. He apparently hopes to expedite the delivery of already promised military assistance and possibly to secure new aid commitments. Since the Angolan civil war, UNITA has depended primarily on weapons and supplies that were cached during the fighting and equipment that was subsequently captured from Cuban and Angolan forces. The expansion this year of UNITA's area of operations and the marked increase in the number of trained guerrillas operating in the field, together with critical food shortages in many rural areas, have forced UNITA to look increasingly to foreign suppliers.

*UNITA's activities in southern Angola have prevented SWAPO guerrillas from operating across much of Angola's southern border with Namibia. In addition, UNITA ujits in northeastern Angola have impaired the activities of anti-Mobutu rebels operating into Zaire.

[redacted]

Savimbi is particularly anxious to acquire anti-aircraft weapons to counter the growing use of Cuban-piloted helicopters and fighter aircraft against his guerrilla forces. Although some guerrilla units in southern Angola recently acquired SA-7 anti-aircraft missiles, [redacted] they are inoperable due to mishandling.

If Savimbi acquires the anti-aircraft weaponry he is seeking, it will still take some time before his forces can be trained to use it effectively.

[redacted]

Savimbi hopes the anti-aircraft weapons will not only provide protection for his guerrillas but give them an important psychological advantage over the Cubans. Savimbi doubts his forces could withstand a concerted air and ground attack, but hopes that by downing several helicopters and fighter aircraft, Cuban pilots will become reluctant to engage his forces.

Savimbi knows he cannot defeat the Neto regime militarily so long as Cuba maintains its strong presence. For this reason, UNITA's prime objective is to inflict as many casualties on the Cuban forces as possible in the hope of undermining their morale and possibly creating pressures in Cuba to reassess its military commitment.

Savimbi has often toyed with the idea of capturing and holding several key towns in southern Angola. His African supporters have strongly argued against such action, however, because they see it as a step toward establishing a secessionist government. While they may be willing to provide [redacted] support to a guerrilla movement that claims to represent the Angolan people, they would have considerable difficulty justifying their support for a secessionist regime before

the OAU's longstanding position that all African borders are inviolable.

A decision to escalate the guerrilla struggle to the conventional level would cause similar problems for Savimbi's [redacted] backers. Such a decision would require a greater and more visible commitment from them which they probably would be reluctant to make.

An escalation of the fighting to the conventional level would also pose major risks to Savimbi. In effect, Savimbi would be attempting to beat the Cubans at their own game. In so doing, he would not only greatly increase his dependence on foreign supporters, but expose his forces to the possibility of a major battlefield defeat.

In Sum...

We foresee a prolonged guerrilla struggle in Angola. As long as Cuban maintains its substantial military presence in Angola, the conflict will remain basically stalemated.

Although it is conceivable that Neto and Savimbi might at some point be willing to discuss a political reconciliation, neither leader appears ready to accepting the other's conditions. Savimbi wants the withdrawal of all Cuban troops from Angola, and he is unlikely to favor an accommodation so long as his base of operations continues to expand and the Luanda government is beset by growing internal problems. Neto has long maintained that reconciliation with UNITA is possible, but that neither Savimbi nor his top military leaders are acceptable to the Luanda regime.

A substantial increase in Cuban troop levels, particularly if coupled with an enhanced air strike capability, could force Savimbi into an extremely defensive posture. Even if the Cubans doubled their forces, however, it is highly unlikely UNITA's guerrilla forces could be effectively neutralized.

Military Forces in Angola

Major Combatants	Acronym	Estimated Force Strength	Leader	Comments
Angolan Armed Forces.	FAPLA	30,000-50,000	Agostinho Neto	Formed from MPLA (Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola) cadre.
Cuban forces.		@19,000-20,000 plus 5,000 civilian advisers	Brig. Gen. Menendez	Mostly reservists.
National Union for the Total Independence of Angola.	UNITA	18,000 plus 5,000 recruits	Jonas Savimbi	Operate in southern and eastern Angola.
National Front for the Liberation of Angola.	FNLA	3,000-5,000	Holden Roberto	Operate in northern Angola.
Front for the Liberation of the Exclave of Cabinda.	FLEC	@500	N'Zita	Now strongly fragmented.
Other Liberation Forces in Angola:				
South-West Africa People's Organization.	SWAPO	2,000-3,000 plus 5,000 trainees	Sam Nujoma	Fighting for liberation of Namibia; other forces in Zambia and Namibia.
National Front for the Liberation of the Congo.	FNLC	@5,000	Nathaniel Mbumba	Fighting for the overthrow of Zairian President Mobutu.
Zimbabwe African People's Union.	ZAPU	@2,000	Joshua Nkomo	Fighting for the liberation of Rhodesia; other forces in Zambia.

