



The President's Daily Brief

February 3, 1976

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FOR THE PRESIDENT ONLY

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EGYPT-USSR

Our embassy in Cairo reports that President Sadat recently received a terse note from Moscow saying that the Soviets would no longer overhaul Egypt's MIG-21 engines. Some 50 Egyptian MIG engines reportedly have been in Moscow for repair since early last year, but no work has been done on them.

Moscow's decision to stop overhauling engines is not expected to ground Egypt's 14 squadrons of MIG-21s immediately, but it will seriously erode the combat capability of the air force within a matter of months. The decision undoubtedly will spur Cairo to seek alternative sources of parts and maintenance, and a limited capability to manufacture some parts in order to keep its 210 MIG-21s airborne.

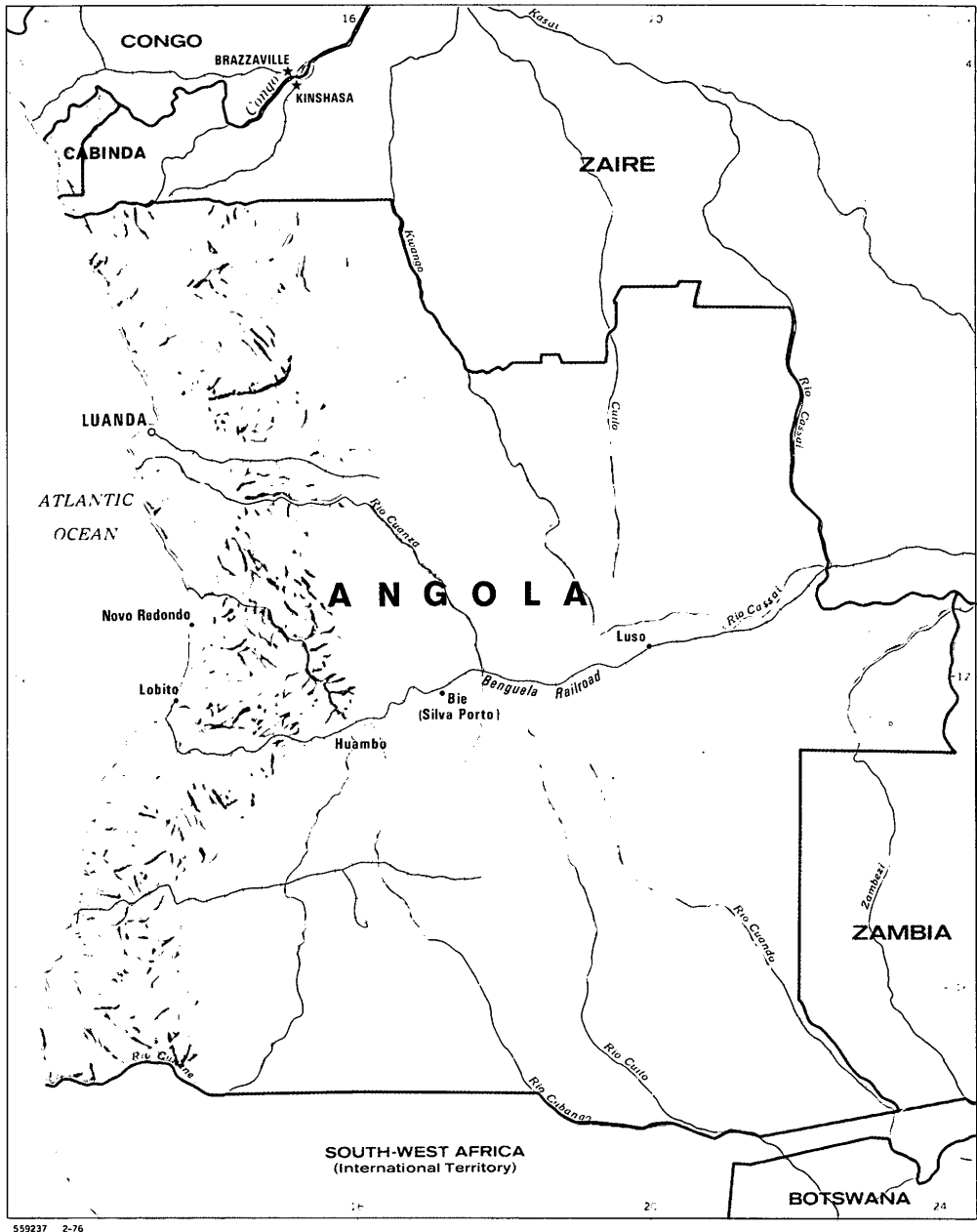
The decision also may force Cairo to attempt to speed up its conversion from Soviet to Western arms. Egypt has plans to replace its MIG-21s with French Mirage fighters, probably the F-1. This aircraft, which is to be produced locally under license, will not be available, however, until about 1980 at the earliest.

The Soviets' decision is part of a campaign of Soviet harassment that has been under way for almost two years. Moscow has refused to replace Egypt's losses from the October war and has cut back the supply of spare parts for Soviet equipment in the Egyptian inventory.

Moscow's indication that it will reduce the flow of spare parts already has had a serious effect on Egypt's forces. The problem was focused sharply last June when [redacted] because of the lack of spare parts, Egypt would either have to go to war before the end of the year or wait several years until major re-equipment from Western countries could be absorbed by the armed forces.

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USSR-ANGOLA

National Union forces in southern Angola seem to be holding their own. The most recent phase of the Soviet military airlift for the Popular Movement appears to be ending.

The Popular Movement has made little progress in its advances on three towns held by the National Union--Huambo, Silva Porto, and Luso. On the coast, Popular Movement forces have not yet mounted an effective offensive southward from Novo Redondo to the railroad at Lobito.

No new Soviet transports have arrived in Africa since Saturday, and none is en route. The Soviets have made a total of 66 flights to West Africa since the airlift began in late October.

No MIG fighter aircraft were detected in recent satellite photography of five airfields in Angola, Cabinda, and the Congo. Some of the airfields, however, have a number of large hangers in which fighter aircraft could be assembled and concealed.

The Kresta-II guided missile cruiser and the Alligator-class landing ship that have been operating together in the Gulf of Guinea separated on January 30. The landing ship is now en route to Conakry and should arrive there tomorrow. The Kresta-II is moving slowly to the southeast and yesterday afternoon was located some 500 miles west of Pointe Noire, Congo.

NOTES

Cuban Prime Minister Castro has canceled a long-planned visit to Mexico in March, probably because of recent criticism by President Echeverria of Cuba's Angola policy.

Castro told the Mexicans that the press of African affairs at home and his attendance at the Communist party congress in Moscow in late February would keep him fully occupied. Echeverria is said to be pleased with Castro's decision. The Mexican President said recently that he believes Cuba's intervention in Angola is turning world opinion against Cuba

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Cuba may be shipping arms to the Polisario Front, an independence movement in Spanish Sahara

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On January 14, a Cuban cargo ship was near the Saharan coast, apparently taking part in the Cuban military sealift to Angola. Another Cuban ship, employed in the same sealift, had sailed by the coast of Spanish Sahara in late December. Both were far north of the usual route followed by ships taking men and arms to Angola. We are unable to confirm that either ship unloaded arms, but the circuitous route suggests that Cuba is supplying the Front with Soviet arms.

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The semi-official Al-Ahram reported over the weekend that 12,000 people had been arrested in Egypt during the preceding week.

Although the arrests were allegedly for criminal offenses, the coincidence of increased student and religious agitation suggests that at least some of the detentions were for political reasons. Two recent student demonstrations at the University of Cairo probably were motivated by the rising cost of living. A third involved rightist students demanding greater application of Islamic law in Egypt's legal system.

Foreign Minister Fahmi claims that young Muslim fanatics have begun to establish contacts with leftists. An alliance between right and left extremists has long been a particular fear of the government.

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