



The President's Daily Brief

February 12, 1976



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USSR-ANGOLA-US

Pravda on Wednesday published a long, authoritative "Observer" article on Angola designed in part to refute US criticism of Moscow's role there.

The article is Moscow's most complete and authoritative statement on Angola to date. It is confident about the situation in Angola itself, assertive regarding the rest of Africa, and almost pugnacious in rejecting the notion that the USSR has anything to apologize for in its Angola policy.

The text lashed out at Secretary Kissinger's speech in San Francisco last week. It said it was "obviously out of tune with the facts" and was an attempt to "whitewash" long-standing US "overt and covert interference" in Angola. "Observer" emphasized that detente does not signify "freedom of action for aggressors."

Moscow has also displayed considerable sensitivity to the Secretary's congressional testimony on Angola, but this is the first time that a high-level Soviet rebuttal has appeared.

Earlier Pravda articles had directly criticized you and Secretary Kissinger for allegedly "distorting" the Soviet and Cuban roles in Angola, but balanced these barbs with positive comments on the accomplishments of detente.

The article mentioned neither Cuban aid for the Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola nor the activities of the Soviet navy off West Africa. It did, however, admit openly that the USSR and its allies have given Angola "weapons."

Pravda's assertion that South African forces have no intention of withdrawing from Angola raises, by implication, the possibility that Soviet assistance and that of the Cubans will continue. This may also be the meaning behind the statement that the Angolan people should be "ensured conditions to complete the liberation."

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Revolutionary groups elsewhere in sub-Saharan Africa are offered strong encouragement. Pravda emphasizes that the consolidation of the Popular Movement's power in Angola will provide a "powerful stimulus" for the liberation struggle against Namibia, Rhodesia, and South Africa itself.

At the same time, however, Pravda attempted to balance its hard-hitting prose with a conciliatory gesture. While making no bones about Soviet assistance to the People's Republic of Angola as the "legitimate" government, "Observer" pointed out that Moscow by no means considers the "military way" as the only possibility of settling the Angolan issue.

ZAIRE-ANGOLA

The Popular Movement's successes in Angola and Zaire's mounting political and economic problems are forcing President Mobutu to reassess his policies.

Mobutu, who has supported the rival National Front for more than 10 years, reportedly is now anxious to put Angola "behind him" by arranging an accommodation with the Popular Movement.

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Last month Mobutu tried to get Mozambique President Machel to act as an intermediary in setting up such talks, but Machel refused. He told Mobutu's representative that he would not attempt to mediate between Zaire and the Popular Movement until both parties had made "conciliatory gestures."

Mobutu realized some time ago that the National Front was collapsing as an effective military contender in Angola. The poor showing made by Zairian forces sent to support the Front also raised serious doubts in his mind about his army's ability to deal with any significant internal disturbances. Mobutu is aware that exiled Zairian dissidents are seeking the Popular Movement's support for an attempt to mount an insurgency from Angola aimed at overthrowing him.

Early this month, Mobutu signaled his intention to break with past policies by carrying out a broad government reshuffle. He dropped his foreign minister and chief defense adviser, reallocated economic responsibilities within his cabinet, and tightened the structure of the official party's political bureau.

Changing foreign ministers gives the president some flexibility to move away from his hardline policy toward the Popular Movement. The change of defense advisers also may be a signal to Neto that Mobutu is prepared to forgo any further military adventures against the Popular Movement.

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In Angola, National Union forces in the south-central part of the country appear on the verge of collapse in the face of a major assault by Cuban-backed Popular Movement troops.

A National Union spokesman confirmed yesterday that the Popular Movement had captured Silva Porto, which the Union had established as its headquarters after the fall of Huambo last weekend.

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USSR-CUBA-ANGOLA

Following are the key points of an interagency memorandum on Soviet and Cuban aid to the Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola during January 1976 that was approved this week by the intelligence community. This memorandum supplements and brings up to date an earlier one on Soviet and Cuban aid to the Popular Movement from March through December 1975. It also updates preliminary figures for January which were printed in the Brief last Friday.

The amount of military support provided the Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola by the Soviet Union and Cuba increased markedly in January 1976.

--It is conservatively estimated that such military support delivered in January alone totaled at least \$105 million measured in US equivalent costs, raising the total military support provided to the MPLA since March 1975 to an estimated \$284 million. The January total is more than double the December 1975 level and is over half the \$179 million total outlays incurred from March through December 1975.

--The bulk of the increased outlays reflected Cuba's vastly expanded effort to support its troops in Angola. During January, as many as 4,500 additional Cubans were sent to Angola, raising the total number of Cuban troops sent there to an estimated 12,000.

--Soviet military shipments in January increased somewhat over the late 1975 level. Since January 1, we have confirmed for the first time in Angola such equipment as T-54 tanks, amphibious vehicles, and pontoon bridges.

--We have continued to receive reports that MIG-type jet fighters are in Angola. There is still a division of views within the US

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intelligence community, however, as to whether MIGs are actually present in-country. Press photography received since the publication of this memorandum purports to show one MIG-17 at Luanda.

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MOROCCO - ALGERIA - SPANISH SAHARA

Moroccan military forces are apparently moving on the Spanish Saharan town of Mahbes, stronghold of the Algerian-supported Polisario insurgents.

Moroccan officials first told the US embassy the town had been occupied on Tuesday night without opposition, but were unsure by late yesterday that their troops had in fact entered the town. This uncertainty suggests the Moroccan column either is deliberately moving slowly or is encountering resistance from Polisario or Algerian forces.

Rabat's initial assumption that its troops had met no opposition may indicate that it has reason to believe the Algerians have pulled back or are in the process of doing so.

An Algerian withdrawal would, of course, reduce the chances of a direct clash between Moroccan and Algerian forces. Algeria will almost certainly continue, however, to support Polisario guerrilla attacks against Moroccan and Mauritanian forces in Spanish Sahara.

Algeria is continuing its diplomatic push for self-determination for the people of Spanish Sahara. Algiers sent a lengthy memorandum to UN Secretary General Waldheim last Friday calling once again for a "free and genuine" referendum.

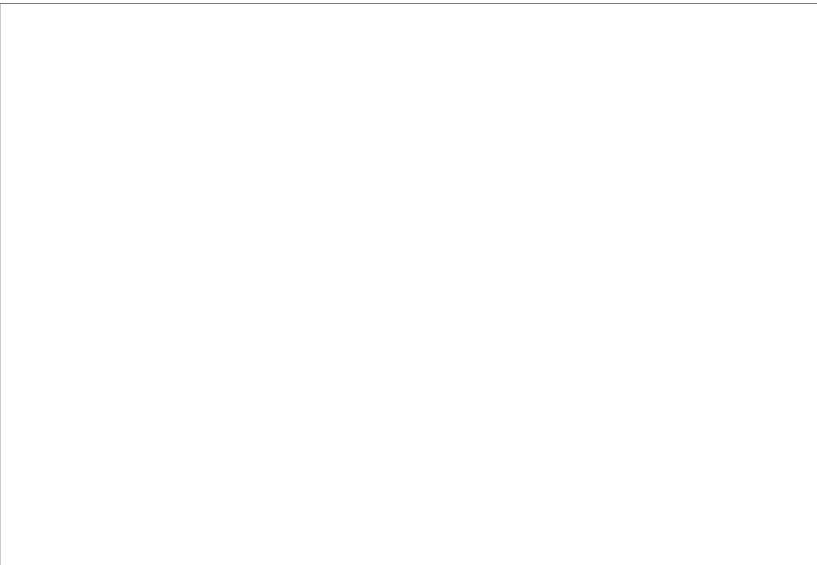
The Algerian memorandum may be a prelude to an appeal to the UN Security Council to discuss the matter. Given the inconclusive outcome of the General Assembly debate on Spanish Sahara last December--two contradictory resolutions were passed--an appeal to the Council that the Sahara issue is a threat to international security is Algeria's only likely move at the UN now.

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CUBA

The US SR-71 reconnaissance flight over Cuba [redacted] drew considerable attention from the Cuban air defense system, but there was no indication of any intention to fire at the aircraft.

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[redacted] A reading of photography acquired by the SR-71 confirmed that no missiles had been fired from the site.

NOTES

Italian Christian Democratic leader Aldo Moro yesterday presented his new single-party cabinet list to President Leone, who accepted it immediately.

The new government will be sworn in today. At best, it is a stop-gap, likely to last only several months--long enough to take emergency economic measures and permit some parties to sort out political options at their congresses next month.

* * *

The debate on the budget bill beginning later this week in the Turkish National Assembly will set the stage for a vote that will determine the future of Prime Minister Demirel's shaky, four-party coalition government.

The debate and vote will mark the end of a six-week long campaign by parliamentary opposition leader and former prime minister Ecevit to unseat Demirel. Earlier this year Ecevit had been optimistic about prospects for toppling the government, but in the past two weeks he has begun to express doubts about the success of his tactics. During this same period government supporters have become more optimistic; one supporter told our embassy recently that the budget should pass easily.

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The new round of Cypriot intercommunal talks will begin in Vienna next Tuesday chaired by UN Secretary General Waldheim.

Late last year the Greek and Turkish foreign ministers agreed to hold these discussions to determine the broad outlines of a settlement. An impasse on the issues to be included was ended when the Turkish Cypriots agreed to discuss the territorial question. Although prospects for a major breakthrough toward a settlement remain poor, both governments want talks to continue. The Turks wish to give at least the appearance of progress to deflect international criticism while the Greeks realize that, if they are to recoup any of their losses, they must keep channels open to Ankara.

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