The Clark Amendment on Angola
Should be Retained

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During the Angolan civil war in 1975-76, the Congress overwhelmingly voted to cut off funds for CIA covert operations in support of the UNITA forces in Angola and adopted the "Clark Amendment", which requires explicit Congressional approval for any future U.S. military or paramilitary aid to any group in Angola. The Reagan Administration has requested the repeal of this legislation in the Foreign Aid Authorization Act of 1982.

We believe that repeal of the Clark Amendment would be most unwise. It would have devastating consequences for U.S. relations with independent Africa, severely damage prospects for a settlement in Namibia, identify the United States with South African military aggression in the Southern Africa region, and unnecessarily alienate U.S. allies. The Administration's case for repeal is inconsistent and unconvincing.

Here we present in greater detail the reasons why we believe the Clark Amendment should be retained:

1 Repeal of the Clark Amendment will severely damage U.S. relations with independent Africa. African countries have responded quickly and vigorously to oppose the Reagan Administration's policy reversal on Angola. Representatives of African governments at the United Nations issued a statement on March 24, 1981 saying that repeal of the Clark Amendment would have "dangerous consequences". In a highly unusual move, United Nations Secretary General Kurt Waldheim communicated this view to U.S. Ambassador Jeane Kirkpatrick at the Africans' request. President Shehu Shagari of Nigeria, whose country is the second largest foreign supplier of oil to the United States, warned that "if the U.S. is willing to support rebels in a sovereign African nation, it would be extremely serious." The group of six Southern African Frontline states -- Tanzania, Zimbabwe, Zambia, Botswana, Mozambique and Angola -- reiterated this position during the first African trip by a Reagan Administration appointee, Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs-designate Chester Crocker. In a statement on April 15, 1981 they called repeal of the Clark Amendment "a flagrant interference" in Angola's internal affairs and a "clear affront and challenge to free Africa."

2 Lifting the ban on CIA activity in Angola would identify the United States with the apartheid South African government. In 1975 South Africa openly invaded Angola in support of the UNITA movement, and remained inside the
country for six months. The CIA shared intelligence with South Africa and collaborated with South Africa in its invasion. This open U.S. identification with South Africa was very damaging to U.S. relations with Africa at the time, and was one of the main reasons the Congress adopted the Clark Amendment.

During the last year, South Africa has significantly expanded its military activity in Angola. On June 13, 1980 South Africa Prime Minister P.W. Botha announced the largest South African attack on Angola in two years, which left more than 200 people dead. Jonathan Steele reported in the February 10, 1981 Washington Post after visiting Angola that "there can be no more doubt that the broad thrust of Angola's complaints that it is facing South African aggression is true, despite South African denials."

It would be impossible for the United States to intervene in Angola to aid UNITA without again collaborating with South Africa in the process, since South African and UNITA military actions are often virtually indistinguishable. A British former mercenary who had fought with a secret South Africa group in Angola called "32 Battalion" explained this collaboration to the Manchester Guardian on January 29, 1981:

While Battalion 32 was taking Savate, two representatives of UNITA were waiting at the tactical headquarters down the road -- one white intelligence officer and one black soldier. When the battle was over, they came up to claim the town for UNITA. The point is that UNITA hangs around in the Southeast where their tribe is and they can probably defend themselves, but they can't go out and take somewhere like Savate. We do it for them because it improves their bargaining position.

This report has since been confirmed by other sources.

Repealing the Clark Amendment could have serious negative repercussions for the negotiations for independence in Namibia. The issues of Angola and Namibia are intimately linked, and the United States cannot expect African cooperation on Namibia if it is seen to be intervening in Angola, the key Frontline state involved in the Namibia negotiations. To date, Angola has played a major constructive role in what progress has been made. In the summer of 1979 the late Angolan President Augustino Neto came forward with a new proposal for a demilitarized zone along the Angolan-Namibian border which broke a deadlock in the discussions on how to implement and monitor the ceasefire between the forces. SWAPO has agreed to participate in United Nations-supervised elections in Namibia, but South Africa has refused to implement the plan. Lifting the ban on CIA activity in Angola is certain to create a chill in relations with the Frontline states and SWAPO, dashing hopes of a negotiated settlement and extending the violence and destruction of the Namibia war.

UNITA is not a viable party deserving of United States military backing. If the U.S. intervenes on UNITA's behalf, it will be pulled into a quagmire from which it will be difficult to escape -- backing a group which can only destabilize the country. Angolan support for Jonas Savimbi's UNITA movement
has declined sharply during the last year. Respected British expert on Angola Basil Davidson reported last April that UNITA's claim to control one half of the country is grossly exaggerated: "Their 'control' in cold facts applies to mountainous pockets of two provinces out of sixteen, and even there they were hard-pressed." Evidence of UNITA's dwindling popular support came from a London Times report of July 26, 1980: "Hundreds of thousands of former UNITA supporters are returning from the bush to areas of government control. They are emaciated, diseased and in rags. It is clear UNITA can no longer provide basic supplies for them."

5 Renewing CIA operations in Angola will not decrease the influence of Cuba or the Soviet Union in Angola; it will have the opposite effect. The Angolan government requested assistance from Cuban troops in 1975 after South Africa invaded the country, as was confirmed by CIA sources at the time. MPLA Secretary Lucio Lara told the New York Times of January 23, 1981, "The problem of the Cubans is the problem of South Africa... Every day they kill our people. We experienced an invasion and we still suffer. We do not feel safe." Angolan Foreign Minister Paulo Jorge has publicly pledged to reduce the Cuban military presence in Angola: "When the threat from South Africa disappears -- and we believe it will with the independence of Namibia -- then we won't need the Cuban presence here."

Angola has also been hesitant to enter into economic and military agreements with the Soviet Union. Angola has turned down Soviet requests to use its ports as Soviet naval bases, has cancelled a Soviet fishing agreement, and has refused to join COMECON, the economic group including the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. Angola has made numerous diplomatic overtures to the United States; rejecting them will force Angola into closer relations with the Soviet Union.

6 Corporations with experience in Angola oppose repeal of the Clark Amendment. Testifying before the House Foreign Affairs Committee's Subcommittee on Africa on April 1, 1981, Melvin Hill, President of Gulf Oil Exploration and Production Company, said that repeal of the Clark Amendment would have an "extremely negative effect." "It would almost certainly be interpreted as a decision by the United States to abandon black Africa and align itself with South Africa." The lead article in the March 27, 1981 Wall Street Journal reported that "several major U.S. companies, mostly oil producers, have quietly been urging Washington ... not to help the rebels who are trying to overthrow Angola's government."

7 Intervening in Angola would isolate the United States from its NATO allies. All of our European allies have recognized the Angolan government and many of them are seeking to expand private investment and trade. For example, the French Foreign Minister visited Angola in January 1981 to expand commercial ties between the two countries. In early meetings with representatives of the Reagan Administration, government officials from France and Great Britain expressed concern about the possible repeal of the Clark Amendment. The only countries which have not recognized Angola are the United States, China and Senegal.
Reagan Administration officials' claim that repeal of the Clark Amendment is being requested as a matter of principle to eliminate restrictions on Executive control over foreign policy is not credible. While the Administration has requested the repeal of several other Congressionally-imposed restrictions contained in the foreign aid bill, there are numerous restrictions which it has not asked the Congress to lift. These include the ban on military aid to Chile and the restriction on economic aid to Cuba, Vietnam and Kampuchea. Therefore, the lifting of the ban on CIA activity in Angola must be judged on its own merits, taking into account the various negative consequences for America's Africa policy.

A vote on the Clark Amendment will be the only opportunity for the Congress to express its objection to renewed covert intervention in Angola. Reagan Administration officials refuse to discuss publicly whether they intend to renew CIA backing for UNITA, saying that Southern Africa policy is still under review. Currently, the Clark Amendment requires the Administration to come before the Congress to request any such military action and to defend its rationale. If the Clark Amendment is lifted, the Administration will surely not announce its intention to intervene covertly.

There is every indication that, if the Clark Amendment is lifted, the Reagan Administration will intervene again in Angola. President Reagan stated in a May 6, 1980 interview in the Wall Street Journal that he favors providing weapons to UNITA. Secretary of State Haig, too, believes that the United States should not have cut off its support for UNITA in 1975.