

CIA-SUPPLIED MERCENARIES FIGHT IN ANGOLA

Over the last month, the CIA has financed the recruitment of the highest number of mercenaries ever to fight in Angola. Reports of the number of men involved vary from 600 to 4000. Whatever the accurate figure, their introduction into the fighting at this time is key for several reasons. On the ground in Angola, UNITA and FNLA are clearly counting on a new infusion of mercenaries to reverse a series of MPLA victories. In the North, the MPLA has advanced to the Zairi border. In the South, MPLA has taken the former UNITA-FNLA capital of Huambo, the military headquarters of Silva Porto and the coastal towns of Lobito and Benguela. Now UNITA is hoping for military reinforcements, and they are willing to get them from anywhere they can, including soldiers of fortune and South African troops who are stationed in force along the Angola-Namibia border.

CIA financing of recruitment also demonstrates a complete disregard for the actions of Congress. The current reports came directly after the House joined the Senate's action against further U.S. covert activities in Angola.

The use of Western mercenaries in Angola is not new. In mid-December, 15 U.S. personnel were training UNITA forces at Capola, and five U.S. pilots were operating spotter planes in the war. In fact, all of these episodes harken back to the Congo crisis of 1960-64, when the CIA, the U.S. Air Force, and western mercenaries defeated the Lumumbaist forces in Zaire.

The currently stepped-up recruitment is going on in many American cities: Washington, D.C., Baltimore, Philadelphia, New York, Fayetteville and Ft. Bragg (N.C.), Miami, Detroit, Chicago and Los Angeles. Some of the recruiting is being done through right-wing Vietnam veterans like David Bufkin in California, who told the San Diego Evening Tribune that his recruits' airfare is being paid by the CIA. Bufkin told Africa News that money dried up after the Senate vote on the Tunney Amendment, but that business is now better than ever.

Another channel for recruitment, especially of unemployed Black Vietnam veterans, is the Congress of Racial Equality. CORE has placed classified ads in major East Coast papers, to which at least 1000 men have responded. CORE has variously called for "military-medical personnel", "good riflemen" and an Organization of African Unity-sponsored "peace-keeping force", although the OAU New York office called the CORE efforts "subversive" and "anti-African." CORE President Innis claims that he is receiving the funds from UNITA and medical equipment and drug companies. But Washington, D.C. recruiter Larry Mitchell said that he "wouldn't be surprised" if the operations were backed by the CIA: "Who else could afford something this large?" The recruitment in the black community has been opposed by the Black Forum on Foreign Policy, the Black Panther Party, and many local groups where the recruitment is underway.

Another center for recruitment is Ft. Bragg, North Carolina. Africa News reports that white and African recruiters are approaching Green Berets and are "operating freely on the base." "The men say they have been offered \$20,000 to resign their commission to go to Angola." Official denials of recruitment of U.S. troops appear to be only semantically correct.

The latest CIA-related recruitment stories come from Great Britain, where the Security Advisory Services has gathered at least 300 Britons, at least 128 of whom are already fighting in Angola. The SAS recruiters reportedly received money from a "white courier" of undisclosed nationality from Zaire, which now totals \$546,000, and worked with the assistant U.S. Army attache in London, Maj. James Leonard.

Recruitment efforts will probably soon face a set-back, as recruits discover that the UNITA forces with whom they are fighting are sustaining major defeats, and that the fighting conditions are not what they had been led to expect. Fourteen British mercenaries who made this discovery and wanted to return home were shot in early February on the orders of their own commander, and a "very considerable number" of British mercenaries have been killed in "warlike operations." Several Americans have been captured in the fighting, including two pilots.

Weak Administration denials have strengthened the charge that the CIA is involved. None have denied the main charge that the CIA is financing recruitment by private groups. Two examples demonstrate the point:
Secretary of State Kissinger: "It is of course possible that in a very indirect way ... that money that has been given to UNITA is then used by UNITA and not by the CIA to recruit people." January 29, 1976.
"Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld yesterday refused to deny British reports that more than \$20 million, mainly from the Central Intelligence Agency, is to be spent on mercenaries from Angola... When pressed... Rumsfeld said he 'wouldn't go into details'." Washington Post, February 2, 1976.

U.S. role in Angola grows

Skilled mercenaries and arms aid factions

despite denial

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New York

Despite congressional efforts to keep the United States out of the Angolan civil war, the covert American operation is increasing and becoming more organized.

This is the picture that emerges from contacts with senior mercenary officers familiar with the situation both in Angola and the United States.

According to these sources, who are close to the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency, the CIA is indirectly recruiting American ex-servicemen, training them, dispatching them to southern Africa, contributing toward their pay (via funds for Zaire and Angola's two pro-West factions), and providing them and the indigenous forces with light and heavy weaponry.

A CIA spokesman declined any discussion of the possibility of CIA involvement in Angola. A State Department spokesman, John Trattner, said that he had no information to support reports of Americans fighting in Angola and had only seen press reports about recruitment in this country. (It is illegal under Title 18 of the U.S. Code to recruit American citizens for service in a foreign army).

The overall situation, as described by the covert sources, however, is as follows:

- Some 300 Americans are already operating within Angola. They all left the U.S. within the past three months or so. A similar number is ready to go as soon as the CIA can obtain further funds.

This latter group includes 15 South Vietnamese as well as American officers and men either on "indefinite leave" from their special forces units in this country and the Panama Canal Zone or recently discharged under the "RIF" (reduction in force) program.

Just over 150 of these men spent last week undergoing a refresher course at Ft. Benning, Georgia, including weapons training, interrogation techniques, and the Portuguese language.

- The majority of the Americans now in Angola are working with the southern Angolan liberation movement UNITA (National Union for the Total Independence of Angola). Also stiffening the 2,000-strong UNITA forces are some 3,000 South African troops — about 500 white and 2,500 black.

However, one group of Americans is operating with UNITA's northern ally, the FNLA (National Front for the Liberation of Angola) in the form of a special force "B-team" under the command of a Belgian-born American with combat experience both in Indo-China and the Belgian Congo (now Zaire).

This B-team consists of a headquarters staff of ten, plus six "A-teams" of 14 men apiece. Each A-team has specialists in weapons, explosives, medicine, and radio and can either provide leadership for local forces or can train other indigenous troops for combat. Working half and half in combat and training, a full B-team can prepare some 10,000 local recruits for combat in about six months.

- Among the Americans poised to leave this country for Angola is another 94-man "B-team," this one led by a French-born American, also a veteran of Indo-China and the Belgian Congo.

Each member of the team has a "double" to replace him if he is wounded or killed, and every man has more than one skill — making them all, in effect, interchangeable. The 15 South Vietnamese are this team's radio operators; it will be difficult for the other side to understand any intercepted messages.

In addition, recruiting is now under way in the United States for just over 150 helicopter pilots and mechanics. They will handle a squadron of 13 helicopter gunships equipped with heat-seeking missiles, now en route from France to Angola via South Africa.

- Each of these B-teams costs about \$1 million for the first six months, half in salaries (\$1,000 to \$1,500 per person per month) and half in light weapons and ammunition. Heavy weapons and sophisticated items such as helicopters add vastly to this basic cost.

The B-team now in operation with the FNLA is being financed half by the CIA and half by the Chinese Communists. Peking's once open involvement on the side of the FNLA has been cut back; but the Chinese Communists still provide financial support and, through a North Korean military mission in Zaire, some training.

The second B-team intended for UNITA is awaiting new CIA funds, perhaps including loans from Western concerns with interests in Angola. All these Americans are given a \$20,000 life insurance policy when they sign their final contract in southern Africa.

- Once both B-teams and the other mercenaries are in position, the overall strategy is to conduct a classic pincer operation leading to stalemate and possible negotiations.

In the north, the 21,000-strong forces of the FNLA supported by one B-team, by mercenaries, and by Zairian units with French and Belgian officers will use guerrilla tactics against the Soviet-backed MPLA (Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola). Currently most of the final forces have withdrawn into Zaire.

In the south, the UNITA forces, supported by the other B-teams, by more mercenaries, and by South Africans, will engage in more direct combat against the MPLA. Right now the battle in the south is being fought over a wide, fairly static front, along the Benguela-to-Zambia railway line.

There have been heavy casualties in the south. The field hospital outside the UNITA-FNLA capital of Huambo contains some 240 white troops, mainly South African regulars plus some mercenaries, many seriously wounded.

- The MPLA, which is based in the Angolan capital of Luanda, can field some 27,000 regular troops and 12,000 part-time guerrilla tribesmen.

They are fortified by massive infusions of arms supplies from the Soviet Union. Some 2,000 Soviet advisers also are now at work on the MPLA side, together with 8,170 Cuban soldiers.

In addition, 50 to 60 Portuguese Army officers and men and five pilots last week are said to have seized a plane in Portugal and flown it to Luanda to join the MPLA.

The MPLA has been recognized as the government of Angola by more than 30 countries including at least 16 nations of black Africa. The Congo (Brazzaville) has provided practical support for the MPLA by allowing Soviet supplies to be funneled into the Luanda and Cabinda areas via its ports and air fields.

- Zaire and Zambia are the main black African backers of the FNLA and UNITA, respectively. FNLA chief Holden Roberto, who is held in low esteem by most mercenaries who know him, is a brother-in-law of Zaire's President Mobutu.

UNITA leader Jonas Savimbi has been given quiet assistance by Zambian President Kaunda, including office facilities in Lusaka. Dr. Savimbi is respected as a fine intellectual, though less so as a military strategist, by experienced mercenaries.

The edgy alliance of necessity between Mr. Roberto and Dr. Savimbi (who was once Mr. Roberto's Foreign Minister) is not expected to last should the pair eventually prove victorious over the MPLA. Hence the American mercenaries tend to adhere to Dr. Savimbi's UNITA it is assumed "the second round" will be against the FNLA and they do not wish to end up fighting each other.

Meanwhile, base camps for the American and other mercenary forces have been set up in both Zaire and Zambia stocked with weapons shipped from the United States and elsewhere by the Zaire Government according to CIA-mercenary specifications. (A popular mercenary weapon is the Chinese AK-47). Similar base camps also exist in South-West Africa and inside Angola itself.

- American mercenaries heading for Angola are carefully checked out in the United States before departure. Virtually all have had several years of combat experience and are highly skilled in at least one military specialty. They have come from all across the states, brought together in their CIA-sponsored enterprise by an assortment of people and organizations.

They are united by a fierce opposition to communism, a desire for excitement or money, and a marketable commodity — their military experience. Together they are the CIA's undercover "army."