PRESS RELEASE

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION: Damu Smith, Legislative Coordinator

PRESS CONFERENCE ANNOUNCEMENT

Thursday, October 31, 1985
11:30 am sharp

2359 Rayburn House Office Building

NATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS AND MEMBERS OF CONGRESS ANNOUNCE PLANS TO STOP U.S. INTERVENTION IN ANGOLA.

On Thursday, October 31st a national press conference will be convened by several national religious, trade union, human rights and anti-apartheid organizations. These organizations are calling upon the American people to act to stop a major effort by conservatives within the Reagan administration and Congress who are advocating U.S. military intervention in Angola. The groups are part of the Southern Africa Working Group, a Washington based network of national organizations working to change U.S. foreign policy towards southern Africa.

Speakers will include Gretchen Eick, co-chairperson, The Coalition for a New Foreign Military Policy, Congressman Walter Fauntroy (D-DC), Congressional Black Caucus, The Reverend Jesse L. Jackson, chairman, National Rainbow Coalition, Randall Robinson, Executive Director, TransAfrica, Dr. Jean Sindab, Executive Director, Washington Office on Africa, and Congressman Ted Weiss (D-NY), all of whom oppose aid in any form to the South African backed and financed contra group known as UNITA (National Union for the Total Independence of Angola).

Many of the national organizations who will be represented at the press conference are co-signers of a letter dated October 29th to all members of Congress which read in part:

To lend assistance, "humanitarian" or otherwise to UNITA would be to contradict our stated policy objectives in the region, which include moving South Africa away from apartheid, achieving Namibian independence, reducing cross-border violence in the region, encouraging peaceful negotiations and getting the Cuban troops out of Angola. Supporting UNITA would send a conflicting message to South Africa, which is UNITA's chief source of aid. If we [the U.S.] were to join with Pretoria in assisting UNITA, it would undermine the limited anti-apartheid action that the Reagan Administration has been forced to take.

The letter has been sent in response to a proliferation of bills recently introduced in Congress as well as major efforts underway within the administration which would have the United States apply economic sanctions against Angola and provide military or so-called "humanitarian" assistance to UNITA. South Africa and UNITA have been fighting together since 1975 to destabilize and topple the Angolan government.

At the press conference national organizations and congressmen will urge officials within the administration and Congress to vigorously oppose U.S. aid to UNITA, and outline plans to mobilize Congressmen and public opposition to any intervention in Angola's war.

A complete text of the letter is available upon request. A list of national co-signers of the letter is enclosed.
Dear Senator:

We, the undersigned national organizations, are writing to express our deep concern over U.S. foreign policy in southern Africa.

The United States is approaching a contradictory and dangerously inconsistent policy in the region. Specifically, there has been a recent move on the part of some elements within the Reagan Administration and some members of Congress to involve the United States in active support for the anti-government rebels in Angola known as UNITA. An article in The Washington Post, dated October 16, revealed that the Administration is seriously considering either covert or overt aid to the rebels as well as the possible imposition of a trade embargo against Angola. On October 1, Representative Claude Pepper (D-FL) introduced a bill, calling for $27 million in "humanitarian" aid to The National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA). We urge you to do everything in your power to prevent U.S. involvement in the Angolan war.

To lend assistance, "humanitarian" or otherwise, to UNITA would be to contradict our stated policy objectives in the region, which include moving South Africa away from apartheid, achieving Namibian independence, reducing cross-border violence in the region, encouraging peaceful negotiations and getting the Cuban troops out of Angola. Supporting UNITA would send a conflicting message to South Africa, which is UNITA's chief source of aid. If we were to join with Pretoria in assisting UNITA, it would undermine the limited anti-apartheid action that the Reagan Administration has been forced to take.

On May 21, members of the South African Defense Force were captured during an attempted raid on a Gulf Oil plant in Angola; it was later established, during an interview with one of the saboteurs, that the act would have been attributed to UNITA. Apartheid South Africa has subsequently launched several offensives against the government forces of Angola in an effort to destabilize and ultimately overthrow the Angolan government. Do we truly want to condone such tactics on the part of the South African Government and their dependants? To grant UNITA $27 million would be to join forces with the South Africans in interfering with and perpetuating Angola's internal conflict.
Such assistance to the rebels would also render our policy in the region hopelessly inconsistent. The administration has adopted a relatively conciliatory attitude towards Mozambique and has condemned South Africa's support for the anti-government forces in that country. Such a stance would make good sense in the Angolan context. The United States is Angola's largest trading partner and we benefit from receiving half of the oil drilled in that country. In the past month, a high-level delegation of Angolan officials visited Washington in order to establish still better economic relations. Nonetheless, we hear from some sources within the Administration and others in Congress that this Marxist government in Southern Africa is not in the interest of the United States and that we should contribute to its overthrow. The plain fact is that it is not in the interests of the United States nor of the people of southern Africa for us to involve ourselves in this conflict.

Proponents of Representative Pepper's bill argue that we have to counter the Cuban presence in Angola and guard against Soviet expansionism in southern Africa. The Cubans have been in Angola since 1975 when they were invited by the Angolan government to help defend the newly independent country from an attack waged by both UNITA and South Africa. The troops have remained there to defend Angola against recurring South African offensives. The problem for the Angolans, therefore, is not the expansion of Communism in the area but rather the aggressive regional policy of apartheid.

We, the undersigned religious groups, trade unions, and other national organizations believe strongly that peace will only come to southern Africa after apartheid has been eliminated and the sovereign governments of the region are free of external interference. We also believe that Congressman Pepper's legislation is based on a dangerous misinterpretation of the problems in the region; we should not be shaping our policy towards southern Africa on Cold War principles and we certainly should not be collaborating with the South Africans against the nation of Angola. We, therefore, urge you to do everything in your power to defeat Representative Pepper's bill and prevent the U.S. from growing embroiled in Angola's war.

Sincerely yours,
William Patterson (International Representative)
Amalgamated Clothing and Textile
Workers Union

Jennifer Davis (Executive Director)
The American Committee on Africa

Asia Bennett (Exec. Secretary)
The American Friends Service Committee

Peter Henriot (Director)
Center of Concern

Sylvia Talbot, Ed. D. (President)
Church Women United

Richard Healey (Director)
Coalition for a New Foreign and Military Policy

Dorothy Healey (Vice-Chair)
Democratic Socialists of America

Patricia Scharf (Director)
Episcopal Peace Fellowship

Edward Snyder (Exec. Secretary)
Friends Committee on National Legislation

Raymond Nathan
The American Ethical Union

William Goodfellow (Director)
Center for International Policy

John Humbert (General Minister and President)
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)

Sr. Barbara Lupo, M.M.
Rev. John Collins (Co-Directors)
Clergy and Laity Concerned

Sr. Francis Bernard, C.S.C.
(Superior General)
Congregation of the Sisters of the Holy Cross

William Johnston (Director)
Episcopal Churchpeople for a Free Southern Africa

James Antal (Exec. Secretary)
The Fellowship of Reconciliation

Timothy McGloin
(National Coordinator)
Friends of the Filipino People
Joseph Collins and Frances Moore Lappé (Co-founders)
Institute for Food and Development Policy

Edward Killackey, M.M. (Director)
Maryknoll Fathers and Brothers, Office of Justice and Peace

Marjorie Tuite, O.P. (Director)
National Assembly of Religious Women

Marsha Abrams (Director)
The National Gray Panthers

James Henderson (Executive Director)
National Office for Black Catholics

Nancy Sylvester, I.H.N. (National Coordinator)
NETWORK--A Catholic Social Justice Lobby

Sr. Mary Lou Kownacki, O.S.B.
(National Coordinator)
Pax Christi

Rev. Jesse Jackson (Chairman)
The Rainbow Coalition

Rev. Charles V. Bergstrom (Director)
Office of Governmental Affairs, Lutheran Council, USA

Delton Franz (Director)
Mennonite Central Committee U.S. Peace Section, Washington Office

Esther Herst (Legislative Representative)
National Committee Against Repressive Legislation

James H. Hamilton (Director)
National Council of Churches, Washington Office

Joseph R. Hacala, S.J. (Director)
The National Office of Jesuit Social Ministries

John C. Hammock (Director)
OXFAM AMERICA

William R. Callahan, S.J.
Maureen Fiedler, S.L.
(Co-Coordinators)
Quixote Center

David Cortright (Director)
SANE
Sr. Helen Amos (president)
Srs. of Mercy of the Union

Randall Robinson (Executive Director)
TRANSAFRICA

Thomas Swan (President)
United States Student Association

Jean Sindab, Phd. (Executive Director)
Washington Office on Africa

William Weiler (Director)
Washington Office of the Episcopal Church

Edith Villastrigo (National Legislative Coordinator)
Women Strike for Peace

William Price (Director)
World Peacemakers

Sr. Margaret Byrne, C.S.J.P.
(Superior General)
Sisters of St. Joseph of Peace

Robert Z. Alpern (Director)
Unitarian Universalist Association, Washington Office

David McReynolds
War Resisters League

Leland Wilson (Director)
Washington Office, Church of the Brethren

George Chauncey (Director)
Washington Office of the Presbyterian Church, USA

Anne Ivey (President)
Women's International League for Peace and Freedom

Glendora M. Putnam (President)
Gwendolyn C. Baker (Executive Director)
Young Women's Christian Association of the USA,
National Board