April 1, 1993

ANGOLA ACTION ALERT

Dear Friends,

For the first time since the beginning of the Reagan/Bush era, the U.S. Senate and House have agreed on a concurrent resolution on Africa calling for the immediate recognition of the government of Angola. Congress is acting with urgency because more than 15,000 people have died in UNITA's new war on the Angolan people.

In the seventeen years since Angola gained independence from Portugal, the CIA and the South African regime financed and participated in a brutal war in Angola fought by Jonas Savimbi and his UNITA renegades against the Angolan people. The U.S. logic for its support of Savimbi was framed in cold war terms. It argued that the MPLA-government had not held internationally recognized elections and was too close to Cuba and the former Soviet Union.

In May 1991 the Angolan government signed a peace agreement providing for a cease-fire, demilitarization of the two armies and multiparty elections under United Nations supervision. In the September 1992 balloting, the MPLA and other smaller parties won 129 seats in the legislature to UNITA's 70. In the presidential elections on the same day, the MPLA candidate won 49.57% of the vote, less than one percentage short of the simple majority needed to avoid a runoff election. Jonas Savimbi won 40.07%. The U.N., the U.S. and most international observers certified those elections as free and fair and a runoff election was planned. Savimbi said elections would be free and fair only if he won.

Now UNITA has gone back to war. Savimbi is trying to win on the battlefield what he couldn't win at the ballot box. The MPLA led government has attended peace talks several times, but each time UNITA has not attended. The U.N. observer force, limited by budget restrictions, has been unable to stop the fighting.

Many in Congress have called on President Clinton to recognize the democratically elected government of Angola. The U.S. refusal to recognize the government that won the elections last September is fueling the war. Although U.S. recognition will not stop the war, it will send a strong signal that the elections must be respected. It could also force South Africa and Zaire to stop arms shipments. The conservatives in Congress who have long backed UNITA are trying very hard to prevent the recognition of the government of Angola. But unlike the past 12 years, there is growing support in Congress for the people of Angola.

Supporting African freedom and independence since 1953 • Established The Africa Fund, 1966
Please solidify support for the democratically elected government of Angola by using this time while Congress is in recess to call the local office of your elected officials. Ask your Congressional representative to vote for resolution HR 75. Ask your Senator to vote for resolution SR RES 70.

If we delay, more Angolans will die. If an election loser like Savimbi is allowed to hold Angolan freedom hostage, this will send a dangerous message to elements who will be unhappy in South Africa when the democratic movement finally wins!

Thank you for your support.

Peace,

Dumisani S. Kumalo
Projects Director
U.S. Policy Toward Angola Languishes
As Appointee Waits for Confirmation

WASHINGTON

INSIGHT

By ROBERT S. GREENBERGER
Staff Reporter of THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

WASHINGTON — U.S. policy toward Angola offers a textbook example of what happens when a new administration fails to put its own appointees in place quickly: It can’t adapt to changing circumstances.

President Clinton announced Jan. 24 that he would nominate George Moose, a foreign service officer, to be assistant secretary of state for African affairs. But because of paperwork paralysis, Mr. Moose’s name still hasn’t been forwarded to the Senate for confirmation. So U.S. policy is being managed by Herman Cohen, who held the job during the Bush administration.

The changeover has been delayed so long that the Africa bureau already has held Mr. Cohen’s going-away party. “We had picked the date, naively thinking the administration would have a certain view,” says an official. “But now it’s over.”

No one is claiming that Mr. Cohen and his team have hijacked U.S. policy. But because they are holdover officials, there is a natural inclination toward inertia. It’s a tendency Secretary of State Warren Christopher and other top officials can’t overcome because they are preoccupied with crises in Russia and Bosnia.

Meanwhile, renewed civil war in Angola claims thousands of lives, and congressional Democrats are complaining. “I don’t think [the new administration] is devoting the attention to this they should,” says Rep. Harry Johnston of Florida, chairman of the House Foreign Affairs subcommittee on Africa. Mr. Johnston and his Senate counterpart, Paul Simon of Illinois, are expected this week to offer a congressional resolution calling for policy changes.

Commercial Opportunities

Why should the U.S. care about far-away Angola? One reason is that Angola is groping toward democracy, and the Clinton administration says supporting democracy is one of its major foreign policy goals. Angola, which has shucked its Marxist past, also offers the U.S. considerable commercial opportunities. It has an estimated 2.1 billion barrels of proven oil reserves, large diamond deposits and vast timber resources.

To exploit the potential democratic opening in Angola, the U.S. would have to take a fresh look at its ties to Jonas Savimbi, whose Angolan rebel group, Unita, fought Angola’s former, Marxist government. The Bush and Reagan administrations made Angola a battleground of the Cold War by lavishing aid and arms on Mr. Savimbi, but he now has become the biggest impediment to democracy there.

Last September, Mr. Savimbi narrowly lost the first round of an election to his onetime Marxist foe, Jose Eduardo dos Santos. The United Nations and U.S. observers deemed the voting to be free and fair. Yet Mr. Savimbi refuses to participate in a runoff election and has been largely responsible for the renewed violence. Recently, Mr. Savimbi threatened Angolan oil facilities, some of which are operated by U.S. companies.

Diplomatic Recognition

The focus of the current policy debate is whether to extend diplomatic recognition to Angola. Last year, the U.S. promised such a move once Angola held a fair election. Now, ironically, the administration is holding back on that commitment because Mr. Savimbi, Washington’s erstwhile ally, has disrupted the election process. Mr. Cohen and his colleague claim there isn’t yet a government to recognize. U.S. officials also claim that holding off on recognition allows them to maintain leverage with Mr. Savimbi.

Rep. Johnston disagrees. “The best way to get Savimbi’s attention is to recognize the government of Angola,” he says. But meanwhile, he says he isn’t certain what the Clinton administration’s view is because Mr. Moose declines to discuss policy issues until after he is confirmed.

The congressional resolution that Mr. Johnston is co-sponsoring is expected to recommend that the U.S. consider recognizing Angola, appoint a special U.S. envoy to work with the U.N. and consider imposing sanctions on any party that doesn’t comply with the earlier agreement to hold elections.

Angolan officials say there is a new government to recognize; they note that a new legislature was formed as part of last year’s election process. Alfredo Salvaterra, an Angolan observer at the Organization of American States in Washington, says his government has written to President Clinton, Mr. Christopher and other top officials to make their case. “They say the policy is under review and they are considering our point of view,” he says.

But meanwhile, Mr. Salvaterra suspects that the U.S. still sides with Mr. Savimbi. “They’re trying to protect Unita,” he says. “It’s the same policy they used during the Cold War. But the Cold War is over.”