



FACT SHEET

ANGOLA

Angola was under Portuguese control from its colonization in the 15th century until it achieved independence on November 11, 1975. Armed struggle for liberation began in earnest in March 1961. Nationalist movements emerged within Angola's three major ethnolinguistic groups: the National Front for the Liberation of Angola (FNLA) under the leadership of Holden Roberto (Bakongo); the Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA) led by Dr. Agostinho Neto (Mbundu); and the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA) headed by Jonas Savimbi.

In 1973, China became involved in the war as a supplier of the FNLA. The United States also began covert aid to the FNLA in July 1974. Shortly thereafter, the Soviet Union began sending small arms shipments to the MPLA. On January 15, 1975, all three liberation movements signed the Alvor Accord calling for Portuguese-supervised elections followed by independence on November 11. On January 26, in an attempt to strengthen the FNLA's position, the CIA sent \$300,000 to Roberto and encouraged the FNLA to attack the MPLA. In response to this treachery, the Soviet Union increased arms shipments to the MPLA, and Soviet and Cuban advisors were sent to Angola.

Over the next year, the CIA spent \$31.7 million in support of the FNLA and UNITA, recruited mercenary forces, and enlisted the aid of two Zairian battalions and a South African armored column—all in an unsuccessful endeavor to evict the MPLA from Luanda and prevent Neto from accepting the reins of government from the departing Portuguese. The besieged MPLA in turn solicited the support of Cuba, which began to land troops in Angola in October, 1975. In January, 1976, US Congress members, upon learning that they had been systematically deceived by the CIA about the nature and extent of US involvement, voted to block future funding for the Angola program (the "Clark Amendment", repealed 7/31/85). However, the US refused to recognize Angola's new government, and it remains the only country besides South Africa to fail to do so.

A War-Torn Economy

Although the MPLA government professes socialist principles, the constitution and government policy preserve a mixed economy with state, co-operative, and private sectors. Since 1979, the government has encouraged investment through a favorable foreign investment law. US investment presently exceeds \$500 million. According to David Rockefeller (in a recent letter to House Africa Subcommittee Chair Howard Wolpe), "Angola is trying to facilitate a larger Western role in its economy through policies promoting greater privatization and reliance on market mechanisms." As a result, Angola's economic ties are overwhelmingly with the west—in particular with the US, Angola's largest trading partner. Two-way annual trade between the US and Angola has grown to over \$1 billion during the Reagan Administration, a significant portion of which was backed by US Export-Import Bank credits. In October, 1985, the Ex-Im Bank joined with five other US banks to arrange \$350 million in new loans for the development of Angola's oil fields.

Nevertheless, years of warfare have taken their toll on the Angolan economy, laying waste much infrastructure and causing an exodus of vital Portuguese technical and managerial skills. In the south, the protracted struggle against UNITA and South African forces consumes valuable revenues, inhibits the development of Angola's rich natural resources, and prevents the rehabilitation of economically important installations, such as the cross-country Benguela railway (which earned \$100 million annually before the wars). In 1981, when GDP was \$7 million at current prices, it was still about 40% lower than in 1973.

UNITA: The Politics of Opportunism

Chameleon-like, UNITA's leader, Jonas Savimbi, changes his spots to please potential backers. As early as 1962, Savimbi wrote to American friends pleading for aid and promising to push communism out of Africa. Two years later, however, Savimbi broke with the FNLA on the grounds that it was deeply infiltrated by the CIA. "No progressive action is possible," he said, "with men who

serve American interests...the notorious agents of imperialism." In the early 1970s, when UNITA was courting Chinese support, UNITA's official organ, Kwacha-Angola, enthused: "Our struggle is the consecration of the thesis of the People's war, and the People's Army of the great Revolutionaries such as Mao Tse-Tung, General Giap, Ho Chi Minh, Che Guevera, and many others." At roughly the same time, UNITA was helping Portugal to smash the MPLA and the FNLA. Savimbi cooperated with Portuguese troops, provided Lisbon with reconnaissance on the other two movements, and attacked MPLA and FNLA camps in exchange for Portuguese military and material support and free movement in certain sectors.

Although UNITA's Secretary of Information claimed in 1974 that UNITA had been "created...within the Marxism/Leninism lines," Savimbi has since eschewed Marxism and adopted a conciliatory attitude toward the west. Not surprisingly, this reversal coincided with the upsurge in CIA and South African support for UNITA. In August, 1985, UNITA split as a result of dissatisfaction with Savimbi's leadership. In a letter to Britain's West Africa magazine, the dissidents accused Savimbi of waging a war of terror against those "who do not obey him unconditionally." The statement calls Savimbi another Idi Amin and claims that, as a result, support for UNITA has dropped.

The South Africa-UNITA Connection

Since 1975, UNITA and South Africa have maintained a mutually beneficial alliance. South Africa has launched at least seven major invasions of Angola and countless smaller ones. Ostensibly, South African strikes target SWAPO bases inside Angola. Increasingly, however, Pretoria's invasions are designed to destabilize the Angolan government. South Africa and UNITA have focused more and more on destroying Angola's infrastructure and terrorizing its population. South African and UNITA forces have bombed Angola's only oil refinery (11/30/81), vandalized Angola's agricultural research station (7/9/84), and repeatedly attacked portions of the Benguela railroad. The notorious "32 Battalion", made up primarily of ex-FNLA guerrillas under South African leadership, has attacked villages, indiscriminately killing residents and slaughtering livestock. UNITA has set off bombs at crowded independence day ceremonies, car-bombed an apartment complex housing Cuban and East European civilian technicians, and—in several instances—kidnapped foreign development workers and mined the paths used by villagers to walk to their fields.

It is often difficult to know to whom a specific incident should be attributed. South African troops frequently pose as UNITA guerrillas in order to obscure South African involvement and to exaggerate the apparent strength of UNITA forces. In the end, assignment of responsibility is largely an academic exercise for, as Jose Belmundo, a captured 32 Battalion soldier, admitted, "The 32nd and UNITA had different spheres of operation, but we had the same boss—South Africa."

South Africa reaps considerable benefit from Angola's misery. The war ensures Pretoria's continued control over Namibia and delays economic reconstruction in Angola, the southern African state least dependent on South Africa, thus frustrating the attempts of the frontline states to alter economic relations in the region. South Africa rewards UNITA for its devotion by providing material aid (weapons, ammunition, vehicles, radios, food, medicine, and uniforms) and funneling assistance to UNITA from abroad. It buys ivory and diamonds from UNITA to give the rebels valuable foreign exchange, makes rear bases available to UNITA in Namibia, and provides intelligence and air cover for UNITA operations. South African raids into Angola are often designed primarily to assist UNITA—through the establishment of hidden arms caches inside Angola, through advance-guard activities which allow UNITA to "capture" vanquished areas, or through direct reinforcement and defence of UNITA positions under attack by Angolan troops. All of this enhances the illusion of UNITA's strength and legitimacy, masks the true purpose of South Africa's involvement, and increases the pressure which the war of attrition places upon the Angolan government.

Regional Peace Initiatives

Angola has consistently struggled to reach an agreement which would end the war, establish an independent Namibia, and eliminate the need for Cuban and Soviet-bloc assistance (most of which Angola must pay for). According to the Rockefeller Foundation report (among others), Angola has been a constructive force in the search for a negotiated regional settlement. In 1979, the Angolan government broke a negotiating deadlock by proposing a 60-mile Demilitarized Zone on the Angola-Namibia border. The MPLA was instrumental in persuading SWAPO to accept a settlement plan proposed in 1980 by the Western Contact Group (US, Canada, UK, France, and West Germany). In early 1984, talks between Angola and South Africa produced the Lusaka Accord, which Pretoria subsequently altogether ignored. Most recently (November 1984), Angolan President Dos Santos again proposed a timetable for the phased withdrawal of South African and Cuban troops from the region and the implementation of UN Resolution 435 on Namibian independence. South Africa and the United States, however, have continued to obstruct such initiatives by insisting upon the complete withdrawal of Cuban troops from Angola prior to any action on Namibia.

Action in Washington during 1985 has further complicated the regional situation. The repeal of the Clark Amendment in July drew a sharp rebuke from the Organization of African Unity at its 21st Summit: "Any American covert or overt involvement in the internal affairs of the People's Republic of Angola, directly or through third parties, will be considered a hostile act against the OAU." On November 4, 1985, in response to Reagan Administration intimations that a UNITA covert aid plan is under consideration, the OAU issued a further statement pointing out that such aid would constitute direct support for South Africa.