

TRANSAFRICA

The Black American Lobby for Africa and the Caribbean

LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

A SUMMARY OF LEGISLATIVE INITIATIVES

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HAMILTON BILL TO BAR COVERT AID TO UNITA

On February 28, Rep. Lee H. Hamilton (D-IN), chairman of the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence, along with seven Democratic colleagues on the Intelligence Committee, introduced legislation that would prohibit covert assistance to UNITA -- the South African backed rebel group attempting to overthrow the government of Angola. The bill (H.R. 4276) allows for assistance to the rebel group led by Jonas Savimbi, only if such aid is overt and is ratified by a joint resolution of Congress.

If passed, H.R. 4276 would undermine the Reagan Administration's plans to provide Savimbi with a fifteen million dollar covert package which includes sophisticated Stinger anti-aircraft launchers, and TOW anti-tank weapons. Furthermore, the bill would force Congress, once and for all, to seriously address the issue of increased U.S. involvement in the Angolan civil war. Past efforts to either provide or block overt aid to Savimbi have not attracted considerable attention in Congress. The overt aid debate has largely been subordinated to the Administration's initiatives to supply UNITA covertly.

The House Committee on Intelligence approved H.R. 4276 on March 18. Ten votes were cast in favor of the bill, with six against. The bill is expected to be brought before the House Foreign Affairs Committee for consideration sometime in April.

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NEW SOUTH AFRICA SANCTIONS BILL

Senator Paul Simon (D-IL) introduced a South Africa sanctions bill on March 7. The bill (S. 2157) would prohibit the importation into the U.S. of steel, coal, and flourspar that is mined or produced in South Africa. The bill has been referred to the Senate Committee on Finance.

In 1985, the United States imported approximately 411,000 tons of steel, and more than 600,000 tons of coal from South Africa. Annually, the United States imports about twenty-nine percent of its flourspar from South Africa.

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HOUSE DELEGATION VISITS HAITI

On March 30, a six-member delegation representing the new Congressional Task Force on Haiti, departed for the island nation on a fact finding mission. The purpose of the delegation, led by task force chairman Rep. Walter E. Fauntroy (D-DC), was to evaluate the current difficulties facing the Haitian people and the nascent National Council of Government which has replaced the infamous dictatorship of the Duvalier family.

The Congressional Task Force on Haiti, is a recent transformation of the Congressional Black Caucus (CBC) Task Force on Haiti which, since its inception in 1979, had been in the forefront in calling for a change in U.S. policies that supported the corrupt and bloodthirsty Duvalier regime. The CBC task force expanded its membership to incorporate House members of both parties and belonging to key House committees that influence U.S. policy towards Haiti.

Members of the delegation to Haiti included:

Rep. David S. Monson (R-UT)
Rep. James L. Oberstar (D-MN)
Rep. George W. Crockett, Jr. (D-MI)
Rep. Sam Gejdenson (D-CT)
Rep. Mervyn M. Dymally (D-CA)