



# ACOA fact sheets

## AMERICAN COMMITTEE ON AFRICA

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### NATO AND SOUTHERN AFRICA - THE GROWTH OF A MILITARY BLOC

When the NATO Council of Ministers meets in Lisbon on the 3rd and 4th of June it seems likely that a major, though "off the record" discussion, will center on the problems of Southern Africa, the need to contain the growing movement for African liberation there and the future role of Southern Africa within the defense structure of the Western bloc.

All this will have to be "off the record" because the official sphere of operation of the 15-nation alliance extends only as far south as the Tropic of Cancer, excluding all the Portuguese-controlled territories of Africa (Angola, Guinea and Mozambique), Rhodesia (Zimbabwe) and the Republic of South Africa. It will also be "off the record" because the U.S. is reported to be trying to stifle any criticism of Portugal's colonial role in Africa by more "liberal" members of NATO such as Norway and Canada, a strategy which will in fact enable a more silent and cohesive coordination of aid to Portugal.

Yet there have been increasingly frequent indication that various pressures are being exerted, in and outside the alliance, to extend the NATO zone as far south as the Cape of Good Hope. Portugal itself, having just spent hundreds of thousands of dollars to ensure that the Palacio de Ajuda will provide a suitably impressive site

for the Council meeting, will no doubt renew its past requests that NATO recognition of the Portuguese role as "friend and natural ally in Europe" be extended to provide greater political and military support for the African operation. In 1970 Portugal's Defense Minister Rebelo offered NATO defense chiefs the "territories and bases outside the NATO zone" which he said "could help control the vast area of the whole Atlantic." It is significant that the new Secretary General of NATO, former Dutch Minister of Foreign Affairs Joseph Luns, who will assume his position at this Lisbon meeting, has always been sympathetic to the Portuguese position in Africa...and was recently reported as commenting that in the colonial wars "...Portugal sacrifices its blood for our freedom." (Emphasis ours.) Clearly Luns will be a strong conservative force in favor of continuing NATO support to Portugal without any criticism of the colonial war in Africa. For those who think in terms of NATO as necessary protection against "the Soviet global threat", Portugal's vicious colonialism is secondary to its convinced "anti-communism."

South Africa and the Portuguese already have a close "working alliance" - South Africa has active troops and equipment in Angola and Mozambique and regular meetings are held between Rhodesian, South African and Portuguese security chiefs.

#### SOUTH AFRICA - A NATO PARTNER

There has also been increasing reference in the international press to discussions about the future links between NATO and the Republic of South Africa. The so-called Soviet build-up in the Indian Ocean has provided a basis for far reaching projections of future European defense needs from many sources. A revealing example was the pre-election British Conservative Party blue-print on defense which outlined the importance of the Cape route in a situation of increasing Russian naval activity, and proposed that if the Conservatives were re-elected they re-activate the Simonstown Agreement between Britain and South Africa. This document warned that the most serious threat to the security of the Cape route lies in the Western African-Atlantic Ocean area of "Portuguese" Guinea and the Cape Verde Islands. Not surprisingly the main argument put forward by the Conservative British Foreign Secretary now in power, in

justifying the sale of helicopters to South Africa and his revised attitude towards the UN arms embargo for South Africa, was that Britain needs to arm South Africa for the defense of the vital Cape sea route. This argument was raised by the British at the NATO meeting in December 1970. The French Defense Minister similarly announced plans to intensify the French presence in the Mozambique channel and the Indian Ocean. The need to defend the sea routes is one of the justifications most often heard among French military circles for huge French arms sales to South Africa. Other voices have recently been raised in support of the contention that South Africa is essential for the control of the South Atlantic and Indian Oceans and the South Africans have been quick to exploit this increasing concern.

In February, 1971 the South African Navy mounted a dramatic publicity campaign in which South African newspapers were inundated with stories and photographs of Soviet naval activity in the Indian Ocean. The campaign culminated in eight journalists being taken on a 10-hour reconnaissance flight so that they could personally report on the value of watch-dog functions which South Africa performs for the West by way of her 24-hour surveillance of shipping in the "southern seas." What South Africa wants is not just to be able to purchase arms from Britain and other NATO countries, but to involve these countries in a defense alliance of some kind. If there seems little likelihood that this would take the form of an official NATO alliance, there are certainly several NATO nations, including the U.S., Britain and France who might be interested in some form of agreement with the South African Government that would make her a "backdoor" member of the alliance. The influential journal NATO's Fifteen Nations comments that because of the overt political implications "any extension of NATO responsibility must be considered unrealistic, [but] the only possible solution would be the setting up of a regional maritime alliance consisting of States interested in the security of the vast area extending from the shores of the Indian and South Atlantic Oceans to Antarctica. These would be the U.S., Great Britain, Portugal, South Africa, Australia, New Zealand, Argentina and Brazil."

### SOUTH AFRICA'S MILITARY ALLIES

In fact such an alliance would serve to formalize ties of cooperation that the past few years have already seen well established. South Africa already derives the bulk of its imported military equipment from NATO countries. France has supplied jet fighters for ground attack operations, crucial helicopters, submarines and submarine warfare training; has developed the surface-to-air "cactus missile" in close collaboration with the South Africans, and allows armored cars to be supplied and manufactured under license in South Africa. The Italian arms firm Oto Malara is planning to supply the South African Navy with surface-to-surface missiles. Macchi 326 jet trainers, known in South Africa as Impala trainers are built locally with British Bristol Viper jet engines imported from Italy where they are manufactured under license by the Piaggio aircraft concern. Belgian automatic rifles are manufactured under license. Britain is supplying the Wasp helicopters and will no doubt move on into other fields. The U.S. which has consistently sold several million dollars a year worth of equipment to South Africa has recently licensed the sale of "light jet aircraft" which are technically classified as "non-military" but which form a basic component of an anti-guerilla force.

### NATO'S "POOR MAN" - PORTUGAL'S DEPENDENCE

If the role that NATO will play in the future in relation to formal alliances involving Southern Africa is still somewhat speculative, there is no doubt at all about the invaluable support that has flowed from individual NATO members to Portugal in its fight to hold on to its African Empire in the face of a decade of determined armed struggle by the people of Angola, Mozambique and Guinea-Bissau.

Poverty stricken Portugal has the second lowest annual per capita income of all the NATO members - \$539 as against \$346 for Turkey and \$4,279 for the U.S. Yet it spends more on defense as a per centage of Gross National Product (G.N.P.) (7.8%) than all the other members except the U.S. (9.6%). In fact, almost 50% of annual Government expenditure now goes to fight the wars in Africa. Further, Portugal has little industry and is certainly not capable of producing complex air, naval and military equipment within its own borders. Thus it has relied heavily on economic, political and military aid from

its allies to enable it to continue its fight.

The terms of the NATO alliance are such that all aid given should be used only within the NATO area, but it is quite clear that the Portuguese, who choose to regard their vast land holdings in Africa as part of Portugal, do not consider themselves restricted by this technicality.

#### U.S. MILITARY AID TO PORTUGAL

In April 1971 a Washington Post reporter commented that "French made helicopters are becoming more vital to the Portuguese as they switch to more aggressive and mobile tactics. Airplanes manufactured in West Germany drop napalm and crop-killing herbicides over some contested areas. And American jet liners are used routinely for Portuguese troop movements to and within the embattled provinces." U.S. involvement in Portugal's colonial war serves as a useful example of the inevitable consequences of maintaining any kind of alliance with a country fighting a war of national oppression.

The U.S. continues to give some military aid to Portugal directly and openly. Reported military aid in the years 1946 to 1967 amounted to \$326 million; the figures reported for recent years are small....\$.6 million in 1968, \$1 million in 1969. But recent revelations in Congress and the Senate make it clear that published figures do not tell the whole truth. Congressman Coughlin has pointed out that the unclassified arms sales figures released by the Department of Defense for arms supplied to Africa gave no indication at all of the huge volume of weaponry supplied to Ethiopia, a quantity actually valued in excess of all U.S. military aid to the other independent African states combined. Similarly in the Senate, testimony was recently given that more than one billion dollars allocated for the Food for Peace program had been used for military purposes. Testimony before Senator Proxmire indicated that in fact no one knows in how many different ways the U.S. gives military aid, nor how much it adds up to. The only item clearly labelled military assistance in the current budget totals \$409 million - but 2 Pentagon officials, pressed for a more realistic total at the hearings finally came up with a figure of \$4.9 billion. So in fact it is impossible to know how much military aid the Portuguese actually get from the U.S.

There is also a great deal of mystification about the nature of the aid that the U.S. acknowledges that it gives to the Portuguese. The U.S. Government had said that since 1961 "it has been our policy that military equipment provided to the Portuguese under either the Military Assistance Program (M.A.P.) or through U.S. Government or commercial sales shall be used only in the NATO area - which does not include any part of Africa."

Yet over the last few years the U.S. Government has allowed T.A.P., the Portuguese state airline to purchase seven 707s, three 727s and two 727 Cs (converted to passenger use) from Boeing, many of the purchases having been financed by the U.S. Government backed Export-Import Bank. The Portuguese have openly admitted that the Military charters T.A.P. planes for transporting men and material in and to Africa. Recently, extending U.S. complicity with the Portuguese colonialists yet further, it was revealed that the U.S. Government had approved the sale of two Boeing 707s direct to the Lisbon government - placing no restrictions at all on their use. Lisbon observers at the time commented, "One purpose of the aircraft will be to ferry soldiers home on leave quickly, thus improving morale among the 150,000 men in Africa."

Official sources say that U.S. military aid to Portugal "concerned only with enhancing Portugal's NATO role, consists almost entirely of air defense and anti-submarine warfare training and material." As the Portuguese have concentrated increasingly on developing aerial techniques as they lose command of the land in Africa to the liberation movements, this claim itself says more than it is intended to. Recently the Textron subsidiary, Bell Company, sold five helicopters to the Portuguese in Mozambique to be used for "logistical" support in the Cabora Bassa Dam area which has been under heavy attack by the forces of the Mozambique Liberation Front. Kaiser has sold jeeps to the Portuguese Army in Mozambique through a South African subsidiary. In fact, Portuguese deserters have frequently stated that U.S. army personnel and particularly U.S. guerilla warfare experts operating in countries such as West Germany, have been involved in training programs for men of the Portuguese army. Portuguese officers were being trained at the University of Monterey in 1970, and General Kaulza de Arriaga,

currently in charge of all military operations in Mozambique, was an honored guest of the State Department in the U.S. in 1969. There are innumerable other indications of the existence of a working Portuguese-U.S. alliance. U.S. equipment such as the G3 rifles are made in Portugal under license. The Information Bureau for West Germany of the Republic of Zambia has published a long list of U.S. (and other NATO country) weapons now being used by the Portuguese in Africa, including rifles, light machine guns, mortars, rocket launchers, mines, grenades and ammunition. In 1970 the Portuguese added defoliants to the napalm and other vicious weapons they were using against the people of Angola - a quick check of U.S. export figures reveals that in the first 11 months of 1970 the export of herbicides (Code 5120629) to Portugal was four times greater than the total exported in 1969. The fact that the U.S. maintains a base on Portuguese territory in the Azores can only reinforce the U.S. desire to maintain a "stable Portugal" by all means necessary.

LIBERATION MOVEMENTS' OPPOSITION - CALL FOR ACTION

The Liberation movements within the Portuguese colonies have again called on all who support the struggle of the people for freedom and self-determination to act to end the NATO alliance and U.S. support for Portuguese imperialism.

Amilcar Cabral, Secretary General of the African Party for the Independence of Guinea and Cape Verde (PAIGC) has cited the NATO meeting in Lisbon as "concrete proof of NATO complicity in the Portuguese colonial wars against Africa," and the Mozambique Liberation Front (FRELIMO) cites in a statement that Portugal will probably receive more NATO power sympathy than before because its need for outside assistance is more obvious after the failure of the Portuguese offensives in Mozambique. FRELIMO also states, that "many of the NATO's more vocal spokesmen are constantly pointing out, Portugal is defending their interests as well as her own." These mounting alliances against the liberation of Guinea, Angola and Mozambique require that we more fully extend our support to the African movements by heightening our opposition to NATO, and by emphatically protesting U.S. complicity with repression in Southern Africa.