The United States has now plunged into a new and much more serious Western intervention in Zaire to rescue the Mobutu regime. The spectre of a Cuban-led take-over of Africa is being used to create a justification for this and possible future intervention in Africa. The threat to European lives is being used as a rationale for an operation which has military and political objectives as well.

Yesterday 800 French foreign legion paratroopers (mostly German nationals) were dropped into Kolwezi to "protect" French and other foreign residents and to re-establish "security". 1000 to 2000 Belgian paratroopers are also becoming involved. Eight US C-141s are being used to deliver fuel and ammunition for the Belgians to Kamina airbase, 130 miles north of Kolwezi. Ten US C-141s will be required to fly trucks for the French legionnaires from Corsica to Zaire. At least 120 French legionnaires with their jeeps have already been ferried by US planes. A dozen US airforce personnel are on the ground at Kamina to set up a communications center.

Such a rescue mission, ostensibly for humanitarian purposes, is very likely to turn into a bloody confrontation to shore up the Mobutu regime politically. In fact, the Belgian Premier admitted as much. "The nature of the French intervention is quite different from ours. Our purpose is uniquely humanitarian." Yet the US is backing both the Belgian and French operations.

The current scenario ominously resembles the Stanleyville operation of 1964 in which American planes airlifted Belgian paratroopers for a "rescue" mission. Zaire expert Dr. Stephen Weisman of the University of Texas points out that before the Stanleyville rescue there were 110 days of negotiations with rebel forces for the release of European hostages. This time the Western powers never even tried negotiations, either directly or through the UN or the OAU. Furthermore, rebel spokesmen deny that the Congo National Liberation Front (CNFL) has been holding the Europeans as hostages or is opposed to their release.

Dr. Weismann believes that the western intervention may in fact lead to more loss of life than the 200 Europeans killed in 1964. The West's precipitous action, based on scanty information, may have played a role in pushing the CNFL toward retaliation. 44 Europeans have already been killed, and the possibility of further losses in the hard fighting ahead are great. Last year, one American missionary lost his life, but otherwise foreigners were not harmed.

BACKGROUND TO THE PRESENT REVOLT

The Shaba crisis of 1978 makes it quite clear that Mobutu cannot survive without the presence of foreign troops. Yet propping him up one more time will destroy any remaining pretense of Zairean independence and of a US "new look" Africa policy.

In the last year Mobutu has purged his army of capable officers from regions suspected of disloyalty and those deemed politically ambitious. In January, he had to send troops to put down rebellions in Bandoundou and again to crush a strike of palmnut cutters. In mid-February 91 persons, including 67 officers, were court-martialed for high treason and conspiracy. 15 were hanged publicly. For four or five months the teachers were on strike with support from sympathetic elements of the army. Unpaid troops with low morale have had to be laced with mercenaries.

Zaire's economy is in shambles. It is heavily dependent on earnings from copper exports, now depressed by low prices. The central administration is terribly corrupt. Ballooning debts to western bankers haven't been solved, and development plans have ignored the pressing needs of the African population in favor of capital-intensive projects that benefit outside interests or a tiny African elite.

Meanwhile, the anti-Mobutu forces have been gathering strength. Some of the CNFL fighters who entered Shaba last year settled into the countryside, continued to mine roads, and were joined by disaffected elements of the Zaire army. Congolese rebel forces in the northeast, in Sudan and elsewhere are co-ordinating their efforts with CNFL in order to forge a united front. CNFL is not just a revival of the Katanganese Gendarmes of the 1960's who espoused a secessionist and right-wing cause. It is part of a loosely-linked but growing national front of diverse origin, generally socialist in tendency, who intend to overthrow Mobutu.

THE WASHINGTON OFFICE ON AFRICA 110 Maryland Ave., N.E. Washington, D.C. 20002 (202) 546-7961
WHY WESTERN INTERVENTION

What the West fears is that the insurgent forces will capture enough of the mineral-producing Shaba province to bring down the Mobutu government by destroying its ability to repay its debts to western banks. While the US would like to ease Mobutu out and replace him with someone more capable of protecting their interests, they fear "chaos and civil war" most. These are code words which were used in the sixties to justify western intervention to overthrow Lumumba's populist government. Today "chaos and civil war" appear to mean the political turbulence that would follow the success of the liberation movement in Zaire.

There are certain obvious interests which the West wants to protect: investments in present and future mineral riches (copper, cobalt, zinc and diamonds); Zaire's strategic location bordering on nine other countries with their own internal problems; the debts to the West, etc. In addition, Zaire has recently ceded 1/10th of the country to a West German firm, OTRAG, for rocket and satellite development. Well-informed speculation indicates that the security-tight mine in Eastern Shaba may be used to test cruise-missiles for NATO and for military surveillance of the states of southern Africa (Penthouse, March 1978 and Afrique-Asie, March 20, 1978)

THE PRESIDENT TILTS TOWARD BRZEZINSKI

Even though there is admittedly no hard evidence that Cuban troops or advisors are involved in the Shaba fighting, Brzezinski and Carter and the media continue to harp on a favorite theme: the presence of Cuban troops in Africa. But, as President Kenneth Kaunda of Zambia pointed out to both Carter and the American public, Cuban troops are in Africa at the invitation and request of recognized governments which are member states of the OAU. African countries such as Zambia, Kenya and Nigeria do not object to the Cuban presence. Propagandistic accusations of Cuban involvement have become the major rationale for US intervention.

The military success of Cuban-assisted Ethiopian troops in ousting Somalia from the Ogaden has created a rising clamor in the Administration and in Congress to demonstrate American determination to defeat "communism" and the Soviet "puppets" in Africa. This clamor has its intellectual counterpart in Mr. Brzezinski, who is more and more emerging as the Kissinger of the Carter Administration.

Liberals in the Administration like Andy Young who see past US military or covert intervention in the Third World as counter-productive do not seem to have the President's ear. Senator Clark and a host of liberal critics of the CIA such as Michael Harrington are now taking low profiles as they face re-election fights against right-wing candidates, many of whom will make Carter's alleged weakness on Africa a rallying point.

Former CIA agent John Stockwell in his recent book, In Search of Enemies, states that the CIA's covert intervention in Angola left US "exposed, dishonored and discredited in the eyes of the world." Yet the President is now complaining that his power to counter Cuban and Soviet "ventures" has been hamstrung by Congressional restrictions imposed as a response to the Vietnam defeat and the Angolan fiasco. He is referring particularly to the Clark amendment which forbids US military and paramilitary ventures, directly or indirectly, in Angola without Congressional authorization (see enclosed articles).

We regard the present situation as particularly ominous in that the President and Brzezinski are reverting to unknowledgable, ill-informed and closed ideological militancy which could be disastrous for the future of US policy toward southern Africa. After directly intervening to contain the CMLF, on the ground of halting Cuban and Soviet influence, the US may well begin to take a much harder line against the Zimbabwe Patriotic Front and SWAPO. Western intervention in the Congo crisis could also have the effect of loosening constraints on increased aid by Cuba or the Soviet Union to the liberation movements of southern Africa.

YOUR ACTION IS NEEDED

Your views on United States intervention in Zaire should be directed immediately to the White House, and to your Congressional representatives. So should your views on the change in thrust of US - Africa policy and on granting the President greater authority to renew covert military operations in Angola. Your voice urgently needs to be heard.
Carter Criticizes
Hill Restraint on
U.S. Role Abroad

By Edward Walsh
Washington Post Staff Writer

President Carter expressed frustration yesterday at Vietnam war-inspired congressional restrictions on White House action to help beleaguered "friendly" governments resist Communist insurgency.

He told a White House breakfast meeting with congressional leaders that he had ordered a State Department review of such restrictions on military and economic assistance by the United States.

White House press secretary Jody Powell said later that the review would lead to legislation that would ease some of those restrictions, although he and other administration officials were extremely vague in discussing how the president feels he is constrained.

Carter raised the subject of "restraints" at the leadership breakfast meeting after Senate Minority Leader Howard H. Baker Jr. asked whether a potential presidential candidate in 1980, questioned the administration's response to the Cuban presence in Africa.

House Minority Leader John J. Rhodes (R-Ariz.), one of the participants, said the president expressed a "certain amount, in fact a lot, of frustration at having his hands tied" in supporting friendly nations.

White House officials downplayed the significance of Carter's remarks. Powell said no recommendations for action were made at the meeting, and that it might be premature to speculate on the outcome of the State Department review.

Nevertheless, the comments offered a rare glimpse into the frustration felt by some in the administration, including, apparently, the president, over how to deal with the Cuban military role in Africa.

Zbigniew Brzezinski, Carter's national security affairs adviser, has been the chief advocate of taking a hard line, publicly suggesting that Soviet support for the Cuban presence in Africa endangers American-Soviet relations. In recent public documents, Carter has stepped up his criticism of the presence of Cuban troops in the Horn of Africa.

Yesterday's congressional breakfast came amid reports of another growing flareup in Africa involving attacks by rebel forces against the government of Zaire. Zaire government officials have charged that the rebels are being supported by the Marxist government of neighboring Angola.

Brzezinski told the congressional leaders that there are 20,000 Cuban troops in Angola, 17,000 in Ethiopia and 3,000 in reoccupied areas in other parts of the African continent

While Carter spoke of congressional "restraints," the only specific limitation reportedly discussed at the breakfast meeting was the so-called "Clark amendment" to the Arms Export Control Act of 1976.

The amendment, named after its sponsor, Sen. Dick Clark (D-Otawa), prohibits direct or indirect U.S. aid to any nation or group planning military action in Angola. In effect, it bans U.S. assistance to military efforts to overthrow the Angolan government.

The most sweeping restriction on the president's freedom to act overseas is the War Powers Act of 1973, which bans the commitment of U.S. troops to a foreign nation for more than 60 days without congressional approval.

However, White House officials said that Carter was not considering asking for a repeal or easing of that restriction, but rather is concerned over other restrictions on providing military and foreign aid to other countries.

Most of the restrictions written into law were enacted by Congress in reaction to the Vietnam war policies of former President Nixon and Secretary of State Henry A. Kissinger, a fact that did not go unnoticed by House Minority Leader Rhodes.

"These restrictions were put on by a Democratic Congress on a Republican president and done for political purposes," he said.

In fact, while most of the Democrats who attacked the White House breakfast had little to say about Carter's comments, Rhodes said he and other Republicans would support legislation to ease the restrictions that are troubling the president.

Late yesterday, Secretary of State Cyrus R. Vance discussed the State Department review with House Speaker Thomas P. (Tip) O'Neill Jr. (D-Mass.).

Vance told reporters that "Some of these laws do restrain the president as to what he can and cannot do, so the president feels strongly that he should be looking at that." He mentioned specifically the Clark amendment and another congressionally imposed restriction that prohibits the CIA from conducting covert activities abroad unless authorized by the president to be "important to national security."

Washington Post staff writer Mary Russell contributed to this article.

Washington Post May 16, 1978
Zaire Again

For the second successive spring, it appears, Cuban-assisted Katangese soldiers have crossed from Angola into a traditional tribal area (Shaba) in southern Zaire, posing again the threat of grabbing Zaire's copper belt and setting up a separate state. The first sketchy reports suggest that this year the invaders are better prepared and that they are making a good deal more initial progress against the forces of President Mobuto Sese Seko.

It was widely noted last year that Angola, in sponsoring the Katangese, was "repaying" Zaire for Zairian support of the Angolan factions that the Neto government defeated in taking power in 1975. General awareness of that African background cost Zaire sympathy, if not support, for its troubles. Yet Angola did not thereby acquire a right to sponsor annual invasions. It has no such right. It has, rather, an obligation to accept international standards of respect for the integrity of other states.

In its straitened circumstances last year, the Mobutu government cast about for foreign support, getting little from the United States. Much of American public opinion found Zaire and its appeal unworthy on various grounds, and the then-new Carter administration largely stepped aside, leaving it—in something of a cliffhanger—for Zaire's other foreign friends to fill the breach. Zaire is scarcely less straitened this year, and internal conditions have not substantially changed. But there is a greater awareness of the Cuban-Soviet presence in Africa. The attention that Mr. Carter himself now focuses upon it gives a country like Zaire, which seems to have fallen victim a second time to a communist-supported attack, that much more of a claim upon American aid.

Until the dimensions of the latest Shaba crisis are known, it is unnecessary to consider what the specifics of an American response might be. Kinshasa's first line of defense is, plainly, itself. Zaire's other foreign friends and the African community all have a stake in upholding the principle of territorial integrity and in putting a halt to aggression and tribal irredentism. Just as the administration seems more primed to counter another communist-backed advance in Africa, however, so the public would also probably be ready to go along. That is the difference a year's African experience has made.

Washington Post editorial, May 16, 1978
Pondering Covert Aid in Africa

By Murrey Marder
Washington Post Staff Writer

White House strategists for at least two months have attempted to develop a plan to permit the United States to funnel sophisticated arms and funds clandestinely to African guerrilla forces fighting Soviet-backed Cuban troops in Angola and Ethiopia.

This objective is an underlying motive, according to authoritative sources, behind the frustration expressed by President Carter to congressional leaders on Tuesday. Carter complained about restrictions on White House ability to help beleaguered friendly governments resist communist aggression.

"That was just the tip of the iceberg," one knowledgeable source said yesterday in referring to the accounts that reached the public.

Visible now is the new Western aid and air-escape mission to Zaire in the wake of the border-crossing from guerrillas into Zaire's rich copper belt.

The double operation has been launched with unpublicized apprehension by some officials inside the Carter administration that it is, as one put it, "a first step into the quicksand—on the Vietnam model."

Others strongly disagree, insisting that in Zaire the Carter administration is involved only in "aid and humanitarian" objectives.

But apart from what is happening around Kolwezi there is a web of strategic concern especially preoccupying Carter and his national security affairs adviser, Zbigniew Brzezinski.

Brzezinski, who left Washington yesterday for China, is described by informed sources as at least as "obsessed" with the Soviet-Cuban projection of military power into Africa as was former secretary of state Henry A. Kissinger over Angola in 1975-76.

To Brzezinski, what is at stake is a fundamental test of the validity of American-Soviet detente, and he is determined to do anything he can to thwart the Russians' Cuban "mercenaries" or surrogates in Africa.

In Peking, Brzezinski evidently will encounter similar attitudes. China has its own anti-Soviet involvement and stake in Africa. The New China News Agency reported from Peking yesterday that in a meeting between Chinese Foreign Minister Huang Hua and Zaire's ambassador to Peking, "The ambassador informed him of the grave situation of the renewed invasion of the Shaba region engineered by the Soviet Union and executed by Cuban mercenaries," and that Huang replied that China will "firmly support" Zaire in its "just struggle to repulse the Soviet-Cuban mercenaries..."

Where Brzezinski and Huang will go from there is an open question.

According to sources in Washington, Brzezinski wants the United States to shake free from the Vietnam war-inspired curbs on presidential power enough to permit U.S. aid for clandestine operations in Africa "to save the Cubans" and limit their ability to stretch into other adventures—notably in Rhodesia.

One concept is to furnish sophisticated U.S. weapons, and money, to the supporters of the major guerrilla war that has been continued in Angola since 1975 by Jonas Savimbi's United Front for the Total Independence of Angola. Savimbi's UNITA covertly receives support from a consortium of nations, as well as South Africa.

The nations involved all deny this, when they publicly address the subject at all. The size of "the consortium's" investment is reported by some sources to be in the $30 million to $40 million range. One Washington source said yesterday "that figure is too high," and other sources put the investment in guerrilla warfare at closer to $20 million.

Another concept that has been pushed behind the scenes is to encourage greater covert assistance by Saudi Arabia and other wealthy anti-Marxist nations to the various liberation fronts fighting in Ethiopia's Eritrean Province. Ethiopia this week launched a major offensive to crush that secessionist movement, claiming it has support from the Soviet Union, Cuba, East Germany and other communist nations.

The extent to which President Carter completely shares these perceptions attributed to Brzezinski about what must be done to resist the Soviet-Cuban thrust in Africa is not clear—even to some of the most senior administration officials.

There is burgeoning concern at the top of the administration, (as in Congress) about the scope of Soviet-Cuban adventurism in Africa, among Secretary of State Cyrus R. Vance, Defense Secretary Harold Brown and others, even including many of the pro-Africanists who were dismayed by Kissinger's fixation on the superpower struggle in Africa.

But what is in profound dispute behind the scenes inside the administration is what the United States should, or can, do about it. One large fear is that the Carter administration, through preoccupation with Soviet African ventures, may end up jeopardizing the strategic nuclear arms limitations negotiations just as Soviet Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko is due in the United States for near-escalatory negotiations.

In many respects, the internal struggle of 1976 over clandestine American support to anti-Marxist factions in Angola's civil war is being repeated—but this time more in the open, forced there by the limitations imposed on Angola by Sen. Nick Clark (D-Iowa), chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations subcommittee on Africa, and others.

"Let the Cubans have their Vietnam in Africa," one senior administration official pungently said yesterday. "There is no reason for us to get panicked and plunge into the quicksand with them."

This is a predominant view across the State Department, and it is reported to be shared as well by many officials in the Pentagon, and in the Central Intelligence Agency which ran the U.S. venture in Angola that was lopped off by Congress.

Beyond the Carter administration's internal differences over how to thwart the Russians and Cubans in Africa, there is an overarching global issue—the conduct of American-Soviet detente.
In an assessment that could have been uttered by Henry Kissinger — and it was in 1973-75 — Brzezinski is quoted in a revealing profile by Elizabeth Drew in the May 1 issue of The New Yorker as saying:

"There is a tendency in America to be traumatized by international difficulties. The generation of the 1960s was always thinking about the failure of the League of Nations... The leadership of the '60s was always thinking about Munich. Now there is a generation worried by Vietnam, with consequences of self-imposed paralysis which is likely to be costlier in the long run."

Brzezinski's determination to show the Carter administration is not "paralyzed" by Soviet-Cuban ventures in Africa led, over the past two months, to probing attempts behind the scene to seek a way around what he and the president regard as unnecessarily restrictive congressional limitations on covert action abroad, especially in Africa.

Private talks, it was learned, have been held with Sen. Clark, House Speaker Thomas P. (Tip) O'Neill Jr. (D-Mass.), Senate Majority Leader Robert Byrd (D-W.Va.) and others on possible routes around the legislative inhibitions.

Late Tuesday, after House Minority Leader John J. Rhodes (R-Ariz.) came out of a White House breakfast reporting Carter's "frustration at having his hands tied" in supporting "friendly" nations, Vance pursued the subject with O'Neill in person, and with Byrd by telephone.

According to reputable sources, Vance, presumably at Carter's direction, specifically concentrated in the O'Neill and Byrd discussions on what might be done about the Clark amendment of 1976. This amendment imposes extraordinary limits on U.S. aid, "directly or indirectly" to "any nation, group, organization, movement or individual to conduct military or paramilitary operations in Angola unless and until the Congress expressly authorizes such assistance by law...."

Initially, according to several sources, it was Brzezinski's hope that despite the Clark amendment, Congress would agree to turn "a blind eye" to covert U.S. support passed to

third countries to help to "tie down" the Cubans in Africa.

Clark is reported to have told Brzezinski, Vance and CIA Director Stansfield Turner and others that as much as he shared the administration's concern about the Soviet-Cuban danger in Africa, they were asking the impossible. As a third party put it "The law is the law and there is not a damn thing Clark or anyone else can do about it."

Wednesday night it was learned Clark and the Senate's deputy majority leader Alan Cranston (D-Calif.) met with Vance at the State Department just before the White House state dinner for Zambian President Kenneth Kaunda. None of the participants mentioned that confrontation and both Clark and Cranston were in California yesterday on a speaking trip.

Zambia's Kaunda, in the meantime, went on the record Wednesday, soon after he began his talks with Carter, with the comments undercutting administration's concern about the Cuban presence in Africa.

Kaunda, whose nation provides bases for some of the guerrillas seeking to topple white minority rule in Rhodesia, told reporters, "I am not sure there is a single Cuban on the African continent who has not been invited by some member of the continent." The Cubans in Africa, Kaunda said, are "the effect," rather than the "cause" of the turmoil which Kaunda says, and other black African leaders agree, is the prolonged denial of black majority rights notably in Rhodesia and in Namibia (South-West Africa).

Kaunda is threatening, in desperation, to join in inviting Cuban troops into the Rhodesian struggle if the West fails to respond adequately to black African aspirations. There is no indication that Kaunda has deflected the administration from its goals.

State Department spokesman Tom Reston said yesterday that the department's legal office is studying statutes that limit presidential authority abroad. He added this would "undoubtedly include" the Clark amendment on Angola, and requirements for reporting covert operations that are contained in 1974 legislation known as the Hughes-Ryan amendments.

At the same time, Sen. Bob Dole (R-Kans.) apparently scented opportunity to capitalize on widening Republican demands on the Carter administration to "stiffen its backbone" against Soviet-Cuban penetration of Africa, has attacked the Clark amendment as "a short-sighted partisan effort to handicap a Republican president" — meaning President Ford in 1976 — which much be overhauled.

Dole has introduced legislation to make it "absolutely clear that the 1976 Clark amendment is no way restricts United States military, paramilitary or nonmilitary assistance to any African country, such as Zaire, for the purpose of defending its territory against internal or external attack."

Clark, reached in California yesterday, said, "I can't believe we want to get involved again in the Angolan civil war." Nothing in his amendment, he said, precludes bonafide U.S. aid to Zaire or any other "friendly nation." To Clark supporters, Dole's proposal and others in the wind are flank attacks that obscure an attempt by the executive branch to roll back congressional restrictions born of the Vietnam experience, which should be faced openly.

At the same time, Carter administration officials last night insisted that there is no connection whatever between their long-term strategy in Africa and the "international rescue mission" for the beleaguered Europeans and remaining Americans caught in Zaire's Shaba province. But that disclaimer left untold numbers of skeptics in Washington.

There is an unusual grouping of people and attitudes inside the administration with paired memories of the failed 1975-76 attempt to checkmate the Russians and Cubans in Africa.

They include the director of the State Department's Policy Planning Staff, W. Anthony Lake, a onetime member of the Kissinger staff at the White House; Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs Richard M. Moose Jr., who, it might be noted, helped to draft the Clark amendment as a Senate Foreign Relations staff member, and Secretary Vance himself.

THE WASHINGTON OFFICE ON AFRICA
110 Maryland Avenue, N.E., Washington, D.C. 20002
(202) 546-7961