Prevent CIA Covert Action in Angola

June 27, 1980

Last week the Senate voted to gut the Clark Amendment which prohibits CIA covert operations in Angola without congressional approval. Since 1978 the Republican right wing led by Senator Helms, the CIA and elements in the National Security Council have been pursuing this goal. By putting authority in the hands of the President rather than Congress, the Senate has given the green light to CIA action that we stopped four years ago.

But the battle isn't over. The Foreign Assistance Authorization Act (S.2714/ H.R.6942) now goes to conference where we think we have a good chance of striking out the Senate amendment. Please WIRE, PHONE or VISIT the House and Senate conferees urging them to DELETE the Helms-Javits-Tsongas Amendment and KEEP the Clark Amendment as is. Action could come next week, before the July 4th recess, or when Congress reconvenes on July 20th. Don't let up till you hear further from us! (See other side for list of conferees.)

BACKGROUND In January 1975, the CIA began funneling money and arms to the FNLA in Angola in order to prevent the MPLA from coming to power. As the MPLA fought off FNLA attacks, it called for help from other countries. The CIA upped the ante by pouring aid into UNITA. South Africa intervened in October with CIA collaboration. When the story of CIA intervention leaked out, Congress was angry that they had not been informed and feared that the United States was entering another internationalized civil war as in Vietnam with no clear U.S. security interest at stake. So Senator Dick Clark, Chairman of the Africa Subcommittee, moved to prohibit U.S. assistance to any movement or group involved in military or paramilitary activity in Angola "unless and until Congress expressly authorizes" it. If the President believed it was in the national security interest to give such aid, he was required to report to the Congress his recommendation giving his reasons "in unclassified form". The effect was to force an open debate on the issue of why the U.S. should get into a war in Angola. The Senate and the House passed the Clark Amendment overwhelmingly.

CURRENT LEGISLATIVE SITUATION Last week on June 17th when Senator Helms moved to repeal the Clark Amendment, few Senators were on the floor. Because of the pro-CIA mood on the Hill, Senators Tsongas and Javits worked to avoid an out-and-out repeal by constructing a hasty compromise, which passed by a voice vote. But it really wasn't a compromise. While much of the language of the Clark Amendment was retained, its essence was reversed. Responsibility for deciding whether to authorize covert action in Angola was shifted back from the Congress to the President. His report to the Senate and House foreign affairs committees could come after the decision, not before. No wonder that Helms found the compromise language "totally acceptable".

This amendment will have disastrous implications for U.S. policy toward Angola and for negotiations on Namibia. It will put us squarely on the side of South Africa in a war to destabilize Angola, whose government only the U.S., China and Senegal have refused to recognize. South Africa has recently
stepped up its attacks into Angola and its support for UNITA, the movement which the CIA intends to join South Africa in arming and training.

TIMING OF THE CONFERENCE  We cannot tell you now the exact time when the Conference Committee will make its decision on this amendment. We believe that the committee will start its deliberations on the foreign aid bill on Tuesday, July 1st. But they may not complete work on the bill before the July 4 holiday. In that case, we will have the July 4 to July 20 recess to try to influence the conferees.

What we ask you to do

1. If you live in the district or state of a conferee, immediately call his local office or send a mailgram to his Washington office urging him to DROP THE HELMS-JAVITS-THOMAS AMENDMENT AND KEEP THE CLARK AMENDMENT AS IT IS.

2. If you are part of a national, regional or local organization, send a similar message to all conferees from your area immediately.

3. Ask for an appointment to meet with your Congressional representative during the recess if a decision has not been reached by then.

4. Contact friends or colleagues you may know in districts which conferees represent and ask them to help.

5. If there is time, get some publicity to your local radio station, newspaper or TV station.

6. Write or call us telling us what you have learned about any conferee’s position.

DON'T LET UP YOUR WORK UNTIL YOU HEAR FROM US THAT A FINAL DECISION HAS BEEN REACHED.

HOUSE AND SENATE CONFEREES

HOUSE
Clement Zablocki (Wis.4)  Dan Mica (Fla.11)
L.H. Fountain (N.C.2)  David Bowen (Miss.2)
Dante Fascell (Fla.15)  Wa. Broomefield (Mich.19)
Lee Hamilton (Ind.9)  Edward Derwinski (Ill.4)
Lester Wolff (N.Y.6)  Paul Findley (Ill.20)
Jonathan Bingham (N.Y.22)  John Buchanan (Ala.6)
Stephen Solarz (N.Y.13)  Larry Winn (Kans.3)
William Gray (Penn.2)

SENATE
Joseph Biden (Del.)  Frank Church (Idaho)
John Glenn (Ohio)  S.I. Hayakawa (Cal.)
Jacob Javits (N.Y.)  Claiborne Pell (R.I.)
Charles Percy (Ill.)

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