Statement on New Direction of U. S. Policy on Africa

Within the last few weeks, the Carter administration policy on Africa has taken a different and dangerous direction. The rhetoric which has been used by various representatives of the administration is reminiscent of the Kissinger years. The main issue, as this policy has been interpreted to the American people, is not African independence or the struggle against racism, but Cuban and Soviet Union presence on the continent.

Newspaper headlines have given extensive publicity to this new direction in U. S. policy. In his Chicago statement of May 25, President Carter accused the Cubans not only of knowing of the Katangan plans to attack Shaba province but of obviously doing nothing to restrain this action. In opening the NATO conference in Washington on May 30, President Carter again drew prominent attention to Cuba and the Soviet Union by saying the United States "cannot be indifferent" to their actions in Africa. In Annapolis on June 7, the President referred to Cuban troops and the threat they represented to regional peace and autonomy in Africa. He said, "The activities of the Soviet Union and Cuba in Africa are preventing individual nations from determining their own course."

Secretary of State Cyrus Vance, who has generally been looked upon as a voice of moderation in the administration, concentrated on the Soviet-Cuban presence in Africa in his testimony on May 12 before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. He emphasized that this presence threatened overall relations between the United States and the Soviet Union.

This new direction in U. S. policy has led the administration to consider re-involvement in the internal affairs of Angola. According to the New York Times, on May 23 President Carter expressed his concern to a group of senators that congressional restraints made it impossible for the United States to provide assistance to UNITA, one of the dissident forces in Angola presently fighting the government there. Senator Dick Clark concluded, "I've come increasingly to the conclusion that the President is considering re-involving this country in the Angolan civil war." Carter's later denials of this intention have been unconvincing in the light of the other actions taken by the administration. Because the attack on Shaba has been interpreted as a Soviet-Cuban plot to undermine the Mobutu regime in Zaire, the administration has authorized U. S. Air Force planes to fly in Belgian and French troops. Carter and Giscard d'Estaing together conceived the Paris meeting of the U. S. and four Western European countries to back-up the Mobuto regime. The
United States has supported the European initiative in flying troops from Morocco, Senegal, Ivory Coast, Togo and Gabon into Zaire. At least 30 such flights have been authorized from various parts of West Africa. Over 300 U. S. ground personnel have been authorized to implement this policy.

The new direction in the Carter administration policy is in sharp contrast with the objectives of the administration as outlined by Secretary Vance in an address not quite a year ago on July 1, 1977. At that time he said the United States would de-emphasize East-West confrontation in Africa and would emphasize instead support for the aspirations of African nationalists. He added that the United States would follow affirmative policies in Africa. Instead, by emphasizing the Cold War, the Carter administration is now repeating tragic errors of the past. These bankrupt policies of the past led the United States to: 1) give Africa little visibility for so many years because the continent was seen only in the light of the global politics of East-West relations; 2) build policy on Africa around the supposed stability of the Western European colonial presence and the white minority regimes; 3) consider the liberation movements unimportant and as threats to the economic and political stability in Africa rather than the forces for making necessary change on the continent; 4) intervene on the side of the losing movements in Angola for control of the former Portuguese colony; and 5) recognize much too late the demise of the white minority regimes of southern Africa, thus failing to play any positive role in the process of change to non-racial, independent states.

This new turn in the Carter administration policy is taking place at precisely the time when the struggle for majority rule and against the continued domination of the white minority has reached the point of explosion. By emphasizing the "communist threat" and de-emphasizing the liberation struggle, the administration is again putting the United States in the position of backing the wrong side.

During the first year of the Carter administration there were some hopeful signs in its policy toward southern Africa. Apartheid was denounced unequivocally. Initiatives were taken to find solutions to the struggle for majority rule in Namibia and Zimbabwe. Serious contacts were made with the liberation movements. Although ACOA was critical of the emphasis in the Carter administration on the possibilities of creative change in South Africa through continued investment there, nevertheless other actions did give reason for hope. Even the first Katangan attack on Shaba was not viewed in the light of East-West confrontation.
We are specifically alarmed by policy positions taken by the administration in the following areas:

1. The military support given to France and Belgium in sending troops into Zaire with General Haig of NATO playing an important planning role;

2. The support given to a Pan African security force (applied to Zaire) planned in Europe by European powers. President Nyerere of Tanzania has referred to this as the new Berlin Conference to partition Africa. He said, "This talk in Europe about a Pan African security force is an insult to Africa and a derogation of African freedom. Tanzania repudiates the claim that African freedom can be defended by a security force organized or initiated by European powers."

3. The Carter administration insistence that Angola and Cuba are responsible for the Katangan action in Shaba. This involvement has been specifically denied repeatedly by Fidel Castro in personal discussion with the U. S. representative in Cuba; and by Cuba's vice president in an address at the U. N. Furthermore, the supposed information the CIA has gathered accusing Cuba has been singularly unconvincing to such an array of senators as Sparkman (chairman of the Senate Foreign Relation Committee), Church (soon to be chairman), Clark (chairman of the Africa Subcommittee) and McGovern;

4. The administration threat to re-involve itself against the independence of Angola by finding ways of sending military assistance to UNITA through third countries; and

5. The hypocrisy of the U. S. position which, while it is attacking the Soviet Union and Cuba for their involvement in two countries in Africa, has nothing to say about the French military presence on the continent. According to Newsweek of June 5, there are almost 15,000 French troops in nine countries of Africa and the islands of Reunion and Mayotte in the Indian Ocean. Some reliable U. S. authorities have put the figure above 20,000.

We call upon the administration to enunciate an affirmative policy again. At the very least: 1) the rhetoric of the Cold War in Africa should be dropped. Africa should not become, in Senator McGovern's words, "a crucial testing ground of American resolve."; 2) the United States should announce a policy of no intervention in Zaire; 3) no efforts should be made to destabilize Angola and the People's Republic of Angola should be recognized; 4) the way should be opened for aid to be given to Mozambique and Angola to help in the difficult task of reconstruction; and 5) turning its back on a policy of subversion, the administration must develop ways of initiating active discussions with and support for the OAU-recognized liberation movements of Zimbabwe, Namibia and South Africa as they intensify the struggle for majority rule throughout southern Africa.