CAN A NAMIBIAN SETTLEMENT AND CUBAN TROOPS IN ANGOLA BE LINKED?

BY

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The Reagan administration is attempting to link a settlement of the conflict in Namibia to the withdrawal of Cuban troops from Angola. I am convinced that this plan has no chance of succeeding. The proposal which has been outlined in a number of memoranda, commented on publicly (most recently by Leslie Gelb of the *New York Times* of June 1, and in the Congressional confirmation hearings for Chester Crocker, the Reagan nominee as Assistant Secretary of State for Africa) in essence is this:

If the Cubans troops are sent home by the Angolans, then the United States will use its considerable influence to convince South Africa to withdraw its troops from Angola and to hold elections which will lead to Namibian independence. In addition, the Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA) government will be pressured to share power with the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA), the insurgent group led by Jonas Savimbi and backed by South Africa. The assumption is that if this were done, there would be no internal reason for Cuban troops to remain in Angola since their major role has been to supply counter-insurgency support against UNITA, and no external reason because South African troops would be withdrawn from Namibia.
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The Reagan administration appears to be somewhat more concerned about getting Cuban troops out of Angola than it is about Namibian independence. Its policy rests on the threat of continued South African military action in both Namibia and Angola if Angola refuses to withdraw the Cubans. The danger is that if Cubans troops do not leave Angola, the U.S. might not press South Africa to leave Namibia, the UN independence elections might not be held and guerrilla war between South Africa and SWAPO would continue. South African incursions into Angola would continue as well. There is the additional threat that the U.S. might resume active assistance to UNITA, joining South Africa in this support. There is a name for this kind of policy. It is blackmail. Angola and the African states must agree or suffer continued South African military aggression and intransigence on Namibia.

During the month of April, Chester Crocker tested this new policy on a tour of the front line states of southern Africa, Nigeria, and Kenya. Coincidentally, I was in southern Africa at the same time, and we crossed trails in both Mozambique and Angola. Among those with whom I talked were President Kaunda of Zambia, Prime Minister Mugabe of Zimbabwe, Foreign Minister Chisano of Mozambique, and Foreign Minister Jorge of Angola. From my discussions I must conclude that the U.S. plan has no chance of acceptance for these reasons:

1. South African troops are not in Namibia because Cuban troops are in Angola. The Namibia issue goes back to the foundation of the United Nations and before. It must be dealt with on its own merits. Only the U.S. is making the linkage between Namibia and Angola, a linkage that is unacceptable to the African states in-
cluding Angola.

2. Angola will not accept dictation from the outside. Cuban troops are there because South African troops and mercenaries (with U.S. involvement in 1975-76) supported the competing movements, the National Front for the Liberation of Angola (FNLA) and UNITA, in their bid for power after the demise of Portuguese control. The MPLA, with Cuban support, defeated both the South African backed UNITA and the FNLA with its mercenary troops. It is unlikely, given this history, that an MPLA government would ever agree to a coalition with UNITA, and they would certainly not do it because of outside pressure.

3. The front line states and the vast majority of the members of the OAU, support Angola in this position. Mozambique, Zimbabwe, and Zambia suffer because of the continued conflict in Namibia. But, as they showed in the long struggle for the independence of Rhodesia, they will bear the suffering if necessary. Although African states would like to see an end to fighting in Namibia and military attacks in Angola, they would not agree to a proposal leading to this conclusion if Angola's independence was jeopardized or South Africa's control in Namibia was not brought to an end.

4. There is no guarantee that South Africa would agree to the holding of independence elections in Namibia under UN supervision and control even if Cuban troops were to withdraw from Angola. Angola, and the Cuban troops, have not been attacking South Africa. Quite the reverse. South Africa is afraid that elections in Namibia will bring SWAPO to power and remove the fiction of the popular base of the South African backed movements in Namibia. This fear has led South Africa to stall on the implementation of UN procedures
for elections, and there is no reason to believe this reality would change with the withdrawal of Cuban troops.

The Reagan administration is doing untold harm in its relations with Africa by pursuing this policy of linking the Namibia issue with that of Cuban troops in Angola. The proposal can only be interpreted as a new and deeply resented effort to interfere in the internal affairs of an African country - Angola.

The Reagan administration does have influence with South Africa. Let this be used to work toward the implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 435 calling for elections leading to the independence of Namibia. If this path is followed the issue of Cuban troops in Angola will take care of itself.