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ANGOLA GROUP DISCUSSION : OATLANDS, VIRGINIA : 18 MARCH 1983

PRESENT:

SOUTH AFRICA:

Ambassador B G Fourie
Lt.-Genl P W van der Westhuizen
Brig C J van Tonder
Mr D Hough
Mr D W Steward

UNITED STATES:

Dr C Crocker
Assistant Secretary of State for
African Affairs
Mr R Cabelly
Special Assistant, African Affairs
Mr R Frazure
First Secretary, U.S. Embassy, London
Mr D Fenton
Analyst, CIA
Mr M Ranneberger
Country Officer for Angola

MR RANNEBERGER began with a survey of UNITA's military position. He was not aware of UNITA activities in Cunene. This was not in accord with what UNITA had told the U.S. There were limitations to UNITA's possibilities, given the importance of tribal support. The FNLA was moribund and there was little chance that UNITA could link up with it. UNITA had told the U.S. that it didn't want to fight SWAPO.

GENL VAN DER WESTHUIZEN pointed out that the Kuanyama tribe in Cunene Province supports Savimbi and UNITA accordingly has a basis for the extension of its operations to that region. Furthermore, 50% of SWAPO forces were deployed against UNITA.

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DR CROCKER said that UNITA has few illusions about its military position. Its main objective was to control the central highlands.

GENL VAN DER WESTHUIZEN noted that Savimbi did not want to make the mistake of having support within only one tribe. He wanted a confederation or federation and was prepared to accommodate other parties in Angola. His aim was not a military victory but to force an accommodation. It had to be recalled that Savimbi had been fighting for 23 years and that he was beginning to win the population. He was much stronger than he had been 3, 4 or 5 years ago.

AMBASSADOR FOURIE noted that Admiral du Plessis had said that were the Cubans to be withdrawn, Savimbi could possibly take over 60 - 70% of Angola's territory. Evidently, he did not want to take over the whole country.

DR CROCKER observed that both sides had agreed on Savimbi's objectives and on how he saw his position. He wanted a deal.

MR RANNEBERGER reiterated that there are basic limitations to Savimbi's power. It was not possible for UNITA to achieve an outright victory.

MR FRAZURE asked how Savimbi had reacted to Angola's talks with South Africa.

GENL VAN DER WESTHUIZEN replied that South Africa had kept him abreast of all developments.

MR RANNEBERGER, turning to an analysis of MPLA politics, stated that President Dos Santos was at present attempting to consolidate his own support at the expense of the right and left wings of the MPLA. To start with the "right wing" Catete group had been disciplined, then Dos Santos had moved against, Lukoki, the radical propaganda minister and had suspended a number of left-wingers. Developments since

Dos Santos received special powers in December 1982 had been promising. The promotions of d'Almeida of the Catete group, Kito Rodrigues and the moderate Paiva had been significant. Dos Santos was evidently trying to build a group of black moderates and had consolidated his position enough to proceed with bilateral talks with South Africa and the United States.

BRIG VAN TONDER asked how the United States then explained Angola's apparent willingness to allow the latest SWAPO incursion.

DR CROCKER replied that Dos Santos was still building his power base. He would not expect the Angolans to control SWAPO or to reduce the level of Soviet arms until they had established the credibility of South Africa and the United States. The SWAPO incursion was therefore an indication of the fact that peace had not yet been achieved.

GENL VAN DER WESTHUIZEN said that, as he recalled, 18 of the left-wingers who had been disciplined had since been restored to their positions. The radicals in the MPLA might therefore once again have the upper hand.

MR RANNEBERGER pointed out that the appointment of the moderate d'Almeida to the key propaganda post was very significant as was the fact that Ito Carreira, who had recently completed an extensive training course in the Soviet Union, had not, as had been expected, been appointed to a senior military position, but had been shunted to a side-track. Mr Ranneberger also noted that Dos Santos was particularly vulnerable since his attempts to consolidate his power might provoke some counter-action.

DR CROCKER said that there was no short cut to a settlement. One could not get round the problem of the Cubans. Angola needed the prospect of a settlement before it could control SWAPO. Speaking

as friends, Dr Crocker said that he was disturbed about reports emanating from South African sources, that the U.S. had decided about the necessity for the withdrawal of the Cubans by itself. These reports created real trouble for him.

AMBASSADOR FOURIE said that South Africa had made it perfectly clear to the Angolans that it also insisted on the withdrawal of the Cubans. However, he did not know how South Africa would reply to the latest Angolan letter and said that it was doubtful if the letter could lead to further talks.

DR CROCKER said that he wanted to discuss the next steps to be taken. He was disturbed by Adm. Du Plessis' estimate that if the Cubans left, the MPLA would retain only X% of Angola. He didn't agree with this. There was still a considerable margin for manoeuvre.

GENL VAN DER WESTHUIZEN pointed out that now was the best time for the MPLA to negotiate because Savimbi was growing stronger by the day. The MPLA could now negotiate from a position of reasonable strength.

DR CROCKER said that the United States was seeking a credible Cuban withdrawal, which didn't necessitate a prior agreement between MPLA and UNITA.

MR FRAZURE added that we would be overloading the circuits to look for an agreement between UNITA and MPLA at this stage.

AMBASSADOR FOURIE asked whether the MPLA could get rid of the Cubans without first reaching some sort of understanding with UNITA.

MR RANNEBERGER said that an advance by UNITA would be detrimental to efforts to have the Cubans withdrawn.

MR FENTON added that if UNITA were too successful the MPLA would call in Cuban reinforcements.

GENL VAN DER WESTHUIZEN said that UNITA could take Mongue but wouldn't do it. Nevertheless, things were going very badly for the MPLA. It had to be borne in mind that Savimbi believed in his cause.

DR CROCKER observed that these matters had important implications. They had to be related to the intentions of the Soviet Union and to the question of time. Soviet logistic capabilities had brought about a dramatic increase in its ability to project its power in southern Africa. Further MPLA losses would undoubtedly lead to an escalation of hostilities. The Soviets would send in more equipment and more troops. The United States would not be able to do anything about it and the Soviet action of sending in more Cubans would be applauded by the Africans.

MR FENTON added that the more Dos Santos was weakened, the less chance there was of getting the Cubans out.

DR CROCKER then asked how South Africa projected the future.

GENL VAN DER WESTHUIZEN replied that South Africa was aware of these factors and could cope with them. He asked about the possible deployment of Mig 23's in Angola.

MR FENTON replied that, instead of sending in Mig 23's, the Soviet might try to overwhelm South Africa with hundreds of Mig 21's.

DR CROCKER stated that the United States had been in contact with the Angolans in Paris. They had now reached a very delicate point and were, at last, dealing through the right channels (Kito Rodriques and De Moura). They could now be sure that their messages would go right to the top. This should tell the U.S. something and it would be necessary for the U.S. and South Africa to keep in close touch. However, despite agreement

between the U.S. and South Africa on the basic facts of the situation, there appeared to be a fundamental difference in the conclusion which both sides had reached. South Africa thought that time was on our side. The Americans disagreed. Time was not on our side.

AMBASSADOR FOURIE asked for further information on the U.S.'s discussions with the Angolans.

DR CROCKER replied that the talks had been informal and productive with the assurance that other parties were not monitoring them. He added that they were similar to South Africa's recent talks with the Angolans in Harare, to which the South African side responded that they knew of no such talks.

MR HOUGH said that, in fact, South Africa regarded time as being of the essence.

MR STEWARD added that the South African Prime Minister attached great importance to the early solution of the S.W.A.-problem, inter alia because the expense involved meant the difference between a good and a bad South African budget.

AMBASSADOR FOURIE referred to progress which had been made in respect of the South African track in the negotiations on South West Africa. South Africa had during these talks been trying to sort out the factual side. There was a degree of escalation and speed was essential.

DR CROCKER then gave the following reasons why time was not on our side:

1. the Contact Group could not be held together for ever, and as Mr Eagleburger had pointed out the previous day, the U.S. attached the greatest importance to its relations with its west European allies;

2. there might also be problems with the Front Line States. There was a series of international meetings coming up which would stir up emotions and which would culminate in May or June in a Security Council meeting or a Special Session of the General Assembly on Namibia;
3. President Reagan had built up a reputation as a credible opponent of the Russians. There was a possibility the Soviets would be tempted into challenging him next year during the Presidential election campaign. President Reagan would accordingly be stronger this year than next year when he would have to consider the election;
4. the military situation was volatile particularly with regard to charges of South African destabilization of its neighbours and Soviet ability to play on these fears.

In the light of the above-mentioned factors, DR CROCKER said, that the United States needed South Africa's help in removing the Cubans. It needed an agreement between Angola and South Africa.

AMBASSADOR FOURIE said that he hoped the Angolans had taken note of South Africa's position on the Cubans. Now South Africa and Angola should discuss mutual restraint.

GENL VAN DER WESTHUIZEN reiterated that we must get the Cubans out.