

SECRET

SUMMARY MINUTES OF A MEETING HELD AT THE U S EMBASSY IN CAIRO
ON 24 JUNE 1988 BETWEEN THE SOUTH AFRICAN AND U S DELEGATIONS
TO THE CAIRO TALKS

S A PARTICIPANTS

Minister R F Botha
Minister M A de M Malan
Mr N P van Heerden
Genl J J Geldenhuys
Dr L D Barnard
Ambassador P Koornhof
Genl C N van Tonder
Mr J H A Beukes
Mr L H Evans
Mr D W Auret
Brig D A S Herbst
Mr A Jaquet

U S DELEGATION

Dr C Crocker
Ambassador F Wisner
Ambassador Cohen
Mr L Napper
Mr M Bellamy
Ambassador E Perkins
Mr R Cabelly
Mr J Woods
Representative of the NSC

Minister Botha opened by saying that he would have to address in strong terms the matter of increased Cuban troop presence in South Western Angola. He said that this was a serious matter that could cause a war.

Dr Crocker agreed and said that he wished to sketch the background to the present talks. He first wished to plead for a return to the press blackout rule that had applied in London. The present talks in Cairo were taking place amid a lot of other developments. A great number of African countries had indicated that they wished to host the talks and the Egyptian authorities had taken less than one day to accept the United States suggestion that the talks be held in Cairo. In that short space of time they had sought and received the approval of the Frontline States and of the OAU.

Dr Crocker said that the USSR was following developments closely and had sent a senior Soviet official to Cairo to follow the talks and to lend moral support to the process. At the Moscow Summit, southern Africa had been placed next on the list after Afghanistan as the most important regional conflict to be settled. The subject had been discussed at Head of State level, at Foreign Minister level and also by Dr Crocker with his counterpart. The Soviets wished to be associated with the process but did not wish at this stage to be at the negotiating table.

Dr Crocker continued by saying that the closing statement of the economic summit of the G7 nations in Toronto referred to UN Security Council Resolution 435/78 and stressed that Cuban troop withdrawal and national reconciliation needed urgent attention. This was the first time national reconciliation had been mentioned in that context. Angola was also a focus of attention in the United States; both Dr Savimbi and Minister Pedro van Dunem were visiting the United States. Minister van Dunem had been received by Secretary of State Shultz and by the National

Security Council, during which meetings Cuban troop withdrawal and national reconciliation had been discussed in a firm manner. Dr Savimbi would be received at a high level and also by Members of Congress when he arrived in the US.

Minister Botha asked what the MPLA reaction had been to the idea of national reconciliation.

Dr Crocker said that the MPLA seemed reconciled to the fact that national reconciliation was now in the news and that the African and Soviet positions in this regard were evolving. They naturally would rather that it were not discussed but they were getting used to it, although they did not expect it to be discussed in Cairo. He did not have a reading as to what their real attitude was and said that it would probably fluctuate according to the military situation at any given time.

Minister Botha intimated that South Africa had received highly reliable and confidential information on the proceedings at the OAU Summit in Addis Ababa. South Africa suspected that President Dos Santos and Foreign Minister van Dunem Mbinda had no intention of bringing about national reconciliation and were biding their time and using diversionary tactics. They intended delaying until the Cubans were in a strong position and until SWAPO positions had been established in South Western Angola. With the southward thrust of Cuban troops, the Angolans and Cubans intended getting South Africa out of Angola and forcing implementation of UNSCR 435/78, in the expectation that they could then score an easy victory over UNITA. South Africa was aware of the US position. Maybe the Soviet Union did not want to disengage after all. Although he believed the impression conveyed to him by Dr F J Strauss and Dr Crocker, Minister Botha said that the Soviet intention to disengage remained a subliminal urge. He had asked Dr Strauss to send a message to Gorbachev saying that the southward movement of Cuban troops would cause a serious problem at a time when there was a genuine hope for

peace. Another question mark hung over the eagerness and sincerity of the MPLA to achieve a settlement. It was not clear to what extent Luanda was free to take its own decisions in the face of Cuba's own agenda.

Dr Crocker then gave his impression of Soviet Government thinking on the matter. The Soviets felt that the situation in Angola was not similar to the one in Afghanistan. The reality was that they would not be forced out but were looking for an end to what they saw as a no-win situation for themselves. However they were not desperate to do so. The USSR was not benefiting financially from Angola and in return for vast expenses only managed to harvest some fish. The Soviets had indicated that they would not participate in the destruction of their ally. To make their withdrawal from the region easier, they needed to do so under cover of an African initiative and decision. The Soviets were playing some cards in Africa at the moment but they were in essence playing safe. Gorbachev had many more pressing internal problems that affected vital Soviet interests and had not yet made all the necessary decisions to achieve total Cuban withdrawal from Angola.

Dr Crocker said that the Angolans were feeling pressure from all sides; from the US, from their African brothers, from the Cubans and from the South African military, and could not make the necessary decision. He suspected that the Cubans had been very upset at being excluded from Brazzaville and had only agreed to an African venue under protest. On the other hand the United States had many questions about Cuban motives in this matter. He felt that Castro had been bluffing when calling for implementation of UNSCR 435/78 by 29 September 1988 and after some debate in Washington, the US had decided to call the Cuban bluff. The Cubans saw the situation poised on the brink of a major military conflict and felt that all sides were now faced with the decision of whether to have peace or war. This represented an opportunity to test the sincerity of the Cubans. Of course

they would also be testing South Africa. Both sides harboured profound suspicions about the other parties. He finally said that the southward Cuban troop movement was significant and unprecedented and could be explained in several ways, but said that he preferred an expert to brief South Africa in that regard.

Mr Woods then gave an informal assessment of the southward thrust, saying that it had been the subject of much attention by the Intelligence Agencies in the United States. Cuban behaviour in Angola at the moment was becoming a test of what they were prepared to do to achieve their aim. A primary fact was that Fidel Castro was personally deeply involved. He was making all the major decisions and it was therefore necessary to read Castro's mind, which at best of times was a difficult thing to do. The US had been surprised by the size and nature of the deployment in the south. Late in 1987, Cuban troops in Angola had been increased by 10 000 to 12 000 men and current strength was in the region 47 500 to 50 000 men. More troops were on alert and about 3 500 others on the way, but it was not clear yet whether these were being added or whether they were replacing other troops. It appeared that current numbers were therefore in the region of 51 000 to 53 000 men. These were the best units Cuba had, they were armed with advanced equipment, were much tougher and of a higher calibre than any troops seen in Angola before. The troops involved in the southward movement were prepared to take advanced combat positions and were building airfields at Cahama and elsewhere. The main threat in South Western Angola was the full squadron of Mig 23's which had an aggressive posture and capacity. Turning to the fifth military region, Mr Woods said there appeared to be between 8 000 and 10 000 Cubans there, with FAPLA and SWAPO elements bringing this number up to between 15 000 and 20 000.

The following equipment had also been sighted:

800 pieces of heavy armour
400 pieces of light armour
300 artillery and rocket launchers
250 air defence weapons
80 missile launchers
60 to 70 fixed wing aircraft
20 to 30 gun-ship helicopters

The question now arose as to what their intentions were. It did not appear to be merely a blocking force to prevent South African troop movement into Angola. Initially the US had estimated that this was a political buildup so as to improve the negotiation posture at the talks. However the force had become too big for that to be the only reason and now it appeared to be an offensive force looking for a fight. They might be seeking to implement a 4-part strategy:

1. To advance to the border and occupy the Calueque hydro-electric installation;
2. To seek out South African Defence Force units in the border area or in northern Namibia as a result of Castro's belief that South Africa could not absorb as many casualties as Cuba could;
3. To take and occupy South African bases in SWA and drive South African forces further south, at the same time driving eastwards along Namibian roads to cut UNITA off from the rear; and
4. To refocus the force currently in the fifth region against UNITA. The intentions of the Cuban southern thrust would become clearer by mid-July and those forces would be in the best shape for an attack in about mid-August.

On their side, the Soviets did not seem to be encouraging Cuba and there were no reports of Soviet assistance. On the other

hand there were no reports of the USSR trying to cool matters down either. The US did not know whether the Soviet Union intended acting strongly against this trend, but the US would be most disappointed if the Soviet Union went back on its commitment to resolve regional conflicts.

For its part, the MPLA appeared to be pleased at the increased Cuban willingness to fight, but angry at unilateral moves that were being made on the ground without their knowledge. The USA readings on the Soviet and MPLA attitudes were poorly defined and ambiguous at present.

Minister Botha asked what this meant for the present negotiations, since this analysis pointed towards war. He regarded the present meeting as an opportunity to test the other side and would react accordingly to proposals from the other side.

Dr Crocker said that such testing had also taken place from the other side, in the form of the proposals put forward by Luanda. He felt the Minister had two options. He could, if he so wished, dramatize his suspicions and could state South Africa's goals and intentions clearly. On the other hand he could concentrate on general points of principle. In Dr Crocker's view the first option would give Castro what he was looking for.

Minister Botha said that he intended to combine the two routes. As far as South Africa was concerned the test lay in the proposals that had been put to the Angolans. He wanted the proposals to surface and to let them be the test of sincerity on the other side. However, he could not merely gloss over the Cuban southward thrust in Angola.

Dr Crocker suggested that South Africa should not give the impression of being totally preoccupied with that matter.

Minister Botha said that he would have to seriously warn the Cubans that if they continued, South Africa would retaliate in no uncertain terms. South Africa was prepared for anything the Cubans wished to attempt.

Dr Crocker said that Castro was trying to create the impression that he was pushing South Africa around.

Minister Botha agreed that Castro's intention was to tempt SA into foolish action. He then asked what the American side felt about the proposals SA had submitted to the Angolans. His approach was that there had to be total foreign troop withdrawal, (both Cuban and South African) in the region. Turning to developments in SWA he said that an important issue that was basic to South Africa's thinking was the reduction in South African financial contribution towards SWA. The State President's statement in Parliament several days earlier had had a dual purpose: The intention had been to indicate that South Africa was serious and sincere in its efforts but that it was no longer prepared to accept accusations that it was illegally in SWA. South Africa would quite willingly withdraw from the territory administratively and financially, and was tired of footing the bill. It was quite prepared to let Ovamboland become the battleground with SWAPO. The idea was not to pull the plug on the Transitional Government but rather to send them a serious message that they should stop quarreling. It was also intended as a message to the United States and the others that South Africa was tired of unjust accusations and that it was quite prepared to make Ovamboland the battleground.

Minister Malan said that while initially South Africa had selected the killing ground to be north of the SWA border, it might now be preferable to fight inside SWA.

Dr Crocker said that the opportunity would arise to test the

political track of Angolan thinking. The MPLA thought that South Africa would concentrate on the Cuban deployment in south western Angola. They were also in a mood to attempt to fight and beat South Africa. He said further that the Cubans would interpret the two six-week phases in the South African proposal as an attempt by South Africa to turn back the clock to the status before the war had started. Phase Three also looked to the Angolans and Cubans as something that South Africa only wanted to discuss later.

Mr Van Heerden then said that the proposals were a package but that it was essential to ensure agreement after every phase.

Dr Crocker pointed out that references to national reconciliation in phases one and two did not meet with the approval of the MPLA. The US supported national reconciliation but felt that it could best be achieved by means of parallel discussions. The US was working very hard on this aspect but national reconciliation could not be a subject of international negotiations and was in fact an internal matter.

Minister Botha then said that South Africa had no quarrel with SWAPO, if it abandoned violence and came peacefully into the territory. National reconciliation was not a new condition imposed by South Africa, but it remained a fact that unless national reconciliation were achieved in both countries, peace did not stand a chance.

Dr Crocker then asked what South Africa considered itself bound to with regard to UNSCR 435/78.

Minister Botha said that South Africa wished to achieve the withdrawal of all foreign troops - including South African troops - from the region. While UNSCR 435/78 would not be tampered with, there had been vast changes since 1978 which meant that the settlement plan needed to be altered. The Cubans had said

so in the London talks. He said that the situation had reverted to the state of affairs in 1975/76, with this difference that there now was a better chance of success. Nigeria's position had changed and South Africa would certainly not introduce new elements into the picture.

Dr Crocker then said that the MPLA delegation would ask during the course of the meeting how the South African position had changed.

Minister Botha said that there had been no change and that he saw the present meeting as a means of testing the intentions of the other side on Cuban troop withdrawal.

Dr Crocker suggested that on the second day specialists or experts could break up into smaller groups and discuss details.

Minister Botha agreed that the first day would be devoted to principles and that substance could be discussed by experts on the second day. He concluded by thanking the US Government and Ambassador Wisner for their efforts to bring peace to southern Africa.

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