

CIA Reportedly Arming Angola

Washington

The Central Intelligence Agency has begun an airlift of arms and other military equipment into Zaire for use by two anti-Communist nationalist groups in Angola, according to military and intelligence sources in Washington.

An American aid effort grew during the past week, the sources say, following the reported arrival in Angola a few weeks ago of at least 2000 Cuban troops and new shipments of sophisticated Soviet arms for the pro-Communist faction in Angola's civil war.

The reported CIA operation is the most direct U.S. involvement in the Angola fighting. The United States previously had limited its role to financing arms purchases for the pro-Western groups.

According to the military and intelligence sources, the United States has begun airlifting to Zaire at least \$20 million worth of arms, including rifles, machine guns, mortars, small military vehicles, rocket launchers and small caliber artillery. The arms are flown in aboard U.S. Air Force C-141 Starlifters routed through the Azores and landed secretly in Zaire. There, the sources said, the arms are turned over to Zaire military authorities, who in turn give them to U.S.-backed Angolan troops.

The U.S. effort is another complicating factor in an already complex situation in Angola. The former colony was formally granted its independence by Portugal on November 11, but has fallen into civil war.

Three groups that spent years fighting Portuguese troops, now vie for control of the new nation. One group, the Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola, is Communist-dominated and backed by the Soviet Union. The two groups aligned against the Popular Movement are the National Front for the Liberation of Angola and the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola. Both are strongly anti-Communist.

Foreign involvement has been increasing since heavy fighting broke out among the three groups

two months ago. The National Union and National Front both have received aid from the People's Republic of China, mostly in the form of small arms. The Popular Movement, which controls the Angolan capital of Luanda, has received nearly \$10 million worth of arms from the Soviets, the U.S. sources said, followed by Cuban soldiers to shore up the inexperienced ranks of the Popular Movement. Most of these soldiers are barely proficient in the use of small arms and know only bare rudiments of

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guerrilla tactics.

Soviet involvement reportedly has led to direct South African involvement, with up to 1000 South African troops reportedly fighting alongside the National Union and National Front forces.

"There's no question in my mind that a very important decision was made a week or so ago to get into this thing (Angola) very strongly," said one intelligence source. "Actually, we have been helping the anti-Communist faction since last spring in a relatively small way, but we were content to let the Chinese do the real gunrunning. But then the Soviets got involved in a big way — because of the Chinese, I suppose — and it's a whole different ball game now."

In the past two weeks, U.S. sources said, Soviet aid suddenly skyrocketed. The Russians began shipping in armored vehicles, including PT-76 amphibious tanks, anti-aircraft guns, 120-mm. rocket launchers, surface-to-air missiles and 20 MIG-21 fighters, now based in Congo-Brazzaville.

Additionally, the sources said, the Russians have another 600 tons of military equipment awaiting overland shipment from the Tanzanian port of Dar-es-Salaam.

The U.S. response, the sources said, is the CIA operation, which operates with the tacit approval of Zaire President Mobutu Sese Seko.

In return, the sources said, Washington has agreed to push for doubling the current U.S. aid package for Zaire from \$30 million a year to \$60 million. The CIA operation is similar to the agency's operation in the former Belgian Congo in 1960 (Zaire includes most of the former colony's territory), when the United States intervened on behalf of anti-Communist factions.

Although U.S. State Department spokesmen say they have no knowledge of any U.S. arms-running operation for Angola, one source said:

"I think it's silly for us to deny it; everybody knows what's going on. The other day, the Popular Movement grabbed some weapons, including a U.S. 4.2-inch mortar. It was clearly stamped 'Anniston, Alabama' (a U.S. Army arsenal), and was still stamped with markings indicating it had been shipped out of South Carolina."

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