

FORD IS OPPOSED TO COMBAT ROLE IN ANGOLAN WAR

DEC 17 1975

Officials Assert Involvement
Will Not Go Beyond Aid
to Anti-Soviet Groups

AFRICAN PLEA REVEALED

Washington Moved to Allay
Fear by Mobutu of Zaire
and Kaunda of Zambia

NYTimes

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Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, Dec. 16 — President Ford has ruled out any form of combat intervention in Angola, including the sending of advisers, according to high and authoritative Administration officials, and will not go beyond the current program of aiding two factions fighting a group supported by the Soviet Union.

The officials said they were willing to make this disclosure although anonymously because the public and Congressional fear that "another Vietnam" might be developing in Angola went far beyond what the Administration sees as the limited interests of the United States and the Soviet Union in the outcome of the civil war in the former Portuguese colony.

Interests Held Limited

According to the officials, the United States began aid in arms and cash in response to the entreaties of two key African Leaders President Mobutu Sese Seko of Zaire and President Kenneth D. Kaunda of Zambia. The officials acknowledged that the Angolan situation was now in danger of growing into a test case of Soviet and American will in Africa.

Even as a test of will, the officials insisted, Mr. Ford and Secretary of State Henry A. Kissinger believe that American interests are limited, and the Angolan situation does not yet bring the whole relationship with Moscow into question.

A Warning to Soviet

Mr. Kissinger has publicly warned the Soviet leaders that intervention in Angola "must inevitably threaten other relationships. "And today President Ford expressed serious concern over Soviet and Cuban action in providing equipment and men in Angola. [Page 4.]

The only specific American interest cited by the officials was that a military settlement imposed by Moscow would have serious consequences for South Africa. As one official put it, "another radical regime on South Africa's borders would bring fighting, and black-white relations to a boil."

Some Pentagon officials do not even see any significant strategic stakes for the United

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States. One ranking Pentagon official said, "it's not a Soviet-American test of wills, but a test case between Henry Kissinger and Moscow."

A variety of officials said they thought Soviet interests were also limited, but Moscow, like Washington, had been caught up in the public exposure of the conflict and was trying to find a face-saving way out.

But these officials acknowledged that Moscow had not communicated this view and continued to airlift Cuban soldiers and arms to Angola even after Mr. Kissinger began his public warnings five weeks ago.

In sum, while high administration officials deny that Angola will turn into another Vietnam, they are using much of the Indochina rhetoric of the early 60's—warnings to others to stay out and protestations of limited American goals—to try to persuade Moscow that further involvement in Angola is risky and that compromise is possible.

The officials recognize, they said, that their justification of involvement in terms of Soviet-American rivalry and the impact on other African states sounded like familiar cold war rationales. They cited numerous statements by Mr. Kissinger to the effect that if the United States were not to act in situations as these, it would no longer be a great power.

Aims Termed Limited

But they insisted that what was new and different was the limited aims and means of American involvement. The officials asserted that the United States would not go beyond a program of indirect aid and was prepared to accept any solution acceptable to the Angolan parties themselves.

The officials say that they realize that Mr. Kissinger's public statements and the recent statements of Daniel P. Moynihan, the delegate to the United Nations, tend to increase the American stake in Angola.

They say they are completely confident, however, that the rhetoric will not be transformed into direct American involvement, if only because they are convinced that Congress would never agree to it.

All of the officials interviewed said they were less confident of Soviet restraint. Some noted that Moscow has insisted on its right to support "wars of national liberation" since the beginning of détente and must continue to do so in view of its ideological competition with China.

Others stressed that the Soviet leaders probably believed that their aid to one of the Angolan factions, the Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola, was a low-cost effort for easy gain.

"They probably said that here's a group we've supported for 15 years, it's aligned with us and not the Chinese, it's already recognized by many African states and more will follow," these officials suggested.

The general view seems to be that the Russians did not count on American counter-aid and did not sufficiently calculate the risks of their intervention to détente.

"We haven't made a decision to hook Angola to détente nor have the Russians," one high official said. "So far, we're both trying to keep the nuclear arms talks, the negotiations or force reductions in central Europe, and trade matters, out of this."

The officials said Mr. Kissinger's public warnings to the Russians did not represent a change in policy.

"What Henry has been saying," one official said, "is that the Russians should realize they can't do this in general, but certainly not in an election year, and if they want to give us a black eye in Angola, it will strengthen the hands of the American critics of détente."

There is no particular concern in the Pentagon or in many parts of the State Department that Soviet control of Angola would put the United States at a military or economic disadvantage.

Pentagon officials would not

like to see a Soviet naval base in Angola, but they do not believe that such a base would give Moscow control of shipping lanes from the Persian Gulf, as Mr. Moynihan contends.

State Department and Pentagon officials would not like Moscow to exert influence over the disposition of the oil and other resources of Angola, but they point out that the United States is not dependent on resources from that area of the world.

"Of course, we want access to the vast wealth of Angola and the bordering areas," one State Department official said, "but that in itself, or with the Soviet base business, is not nearly enough to justify our involvement."

History of Involvement

Officials traced American interest in Angola back to last spring. At that time, they said, the Administration did not care what happened as Angolan independence approached. The prevailing view was that the National Front for the Liberation of Angola in the North and the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola in the South were tribally based and would be able to hold their own against the group that has Soviet backing. The assumption was that the war would end in a stalemate and result either in a coalition government or in de facto partition.

At that point, the officials

said, American diplomats were approached by President Mobutu of Zaire and President Kaunda of Zambia and were asked whether the United States was prepared to do anything to prevent what they judged as impending victory by the Popular Movement in Angola.

Mr. Mobutu was said to be concerned about a new insurgency against him from Angola and wanted a hand in the disposition of Angolan resources. Mr. Kaunda was alarmed by the prospect of unfriendly control of the railway linking his nation to the sea through Angola.

Then, as now, the officials stated, Mr. Mobutu was the linchpin of American policy in Africa. Zaire is rich in resources and centrally located, and he has been ready to help smooth American relations with other African nations in international forums.

Thus, the officials said, the first phase of America's covert involvement was designed to please the leaders of Zaire and Zambia. In October, the Soviet Union further increased aid and began flying in Cubans; South Africans joined the fighting, and Mr. Kissinger began issuing his public warnings to Moscow.

The officials said the American objective remained a stalemate, not victory. They are waiting for Moscow to define its objective as something less than victory.

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