

U.S. SLOW TO WARN SOVIET ON ANGOLA

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Formal Protest Made Only
in October, Official Says
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WASHINGTON, Dec. 24—The United States first expressed concern over the Angolan civil war to the Soviet Union in September, a top-ranking Administration official said today.

But the official, who asked not to be identified, went on to say that the United States did not make a formal protest against the Soviet arms build-up until the end of October.

By that time, he noted, Cuban troops had begun to appear alongside the forces of the Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola as fighting increased between three factions in the former Portuguese colony, which attained independence Nov. 11.

Previously, the only public indication of a complaint to the Soviet Union was given in the last week of November when Secretary of State Henry A. Kissinger denounced the Soviet role in a speech in Detroit. Later it was disclosed that he had spoken to Ambassador Anatoly F. Dobrynin that week and had lodged a protest.

The American official said today that discussions between Mr. Kissinger and Ambassador Dobrynin had taken place "four or five times" since September, the latest occasion being yesterday.

No Soviet Responses

So far, the Soviet Union has not indicated a willingness to reduce or stop its military supply effort, the official said.

"But they haven't said 'no,' either," he said, indicating that the Administration believed there was still a possibility for a negotiated settlement.

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On Friday, The New York port operations in Angola were first authorized in January, two months before the first significant Soviet build-up. The official in his comments today described the report as "a distortion," remarking that there was a lag of more than two months between the authorization and the transmission of American funds and that, by the time they arrived in Angola, the Soviet Union had substantially bolstered its supply effort.

He said that in retrospect it would have been preferable, in the context of Soviet-American détente, if the United States had called the attention of the Soviet Union to its concern over the Angolan developments much earlier, say, in the spring.

This was not done, he said, "because we didn't realize until later that the Soviets were going in so heavily."

The official went on to say that information about the Soviet build-up was available in April and May, but was kept bottled up in the bureaucracy for more than eight weeks.

"It didn't reach the top level until July," when the Popular Movement, equipped with Soviet rocket launchers and armored cars, drove an opposing faction out of Luanda, the official stated.