

JAN 8 1976

Report of U.S.-Built Planes in South African Airlift to Angola

Washington

South Africa is using planes bought from the United States to ferry troops and equipment into Angola, intelligence sources say. Such use of the American-built planes would violate terms of the agreement under which the planes were sold to South Africa.

The sources said the South Africans are using four C-141 Starlifter transport planes sold to them by the United States during the past two years to ferry troops and material to at least three sites in Angola where an estimated 2000 South Africans are reportedly fighting beside two Western-supported factions in the country's civil war.

The transport planes, the sources said, operate out of Grootfontein, in South-West Africa, a key South African military staging base, and fly to Benguela, on Angola's west coast, to Huambo (formerly Nova Lisboa), in the southwest, and to Luso, in the east, where there has been heavy fighting against the Marxist faction.

A State Department spokesman said he "had no information" on the use of C-141s by South Africa, but added that several C-130 Hercules transport planes were sold to South Africa before the arms embargo took effect in 1963. Since 1963, he said, an

Angolan Development

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South Africa has informed the Ford administration that it is prepared to pull its troops out of Angola in the next 48 hours, authoritative administration sources disclosed last night.

The sources said that a major remaining problem, however, would be how to pressure Cuba to withdraw the 7500 troops which it has committed to the Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola.

United Press

undetermined number of what he described as "civilianized versions" of C-130s were sold to South Africa by the United States with the proviso that none of them be used for "military purposes."

The spokesman added that he did not know if any of the C-130s sold since 1963 have been used to support South African military operations in Angola.

A Pentagon spokesman said, "We have no information on any C-141s being sold to South Africa."

The South African use of the

American transports, the sources said, was done without consultation with the Americans, although U.S. officials are aware of it.

"There will not be a protest, I suspect," one source said, "because both we and the South Africans have a strong mutual interest in Angola; namely defeating the MPLA (the Soviet-backed Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola). We knew full well when we sold them those planes that they would use them for military purposes."

Officially, the South African government denies any involvement in the Angola fighting, and says only that its troops engage in "hot pursuit" operations against guerrillas fleeing north into Angola from South-West Africa. However, eyewitnesses reportedly have seen South African forces operating at least 400 miles inside Angola.

Sources said the South Africans began using air transports in Angola about a month ago to support troop columns that had outpaced their supply lines. As the South Africans met increasing resistance, the original force was doubled to 2000 men and new equipment was ferried in to counter Soviet heavy weapons sent to the Marxist faction.

Associated Press