

Cuba Says Africans' Vote Won't Affect Angolan Aid

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By DAVID BINDER JAN 12 1976

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HAVANA, Jan. 11 — Cuba's Deputy Prime Minister for foreign affairs says that his country will continue to provide troops to the Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola regardless of any resolution adopted by the Organization of African Unity calling for an end to foreign intervention in the Angolan civil war.

In an informal talk last night with correspondents from the United States, Carlos Rafael Rodriguez, the Deputy Prime Minister and a member of the ruling Politburo, said when asked if whether Cuba would withdraw its soldiers in response to an African demand: "No, only if Neto says we should withdraw. We would disregard a call from the O.A.U."

He was referring to Agos-

tinho Neto, leader of the Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola, which also is supported with large arms shipments from the Soviet Union.

Since October Cuba has dispatched what United States officials estimate to be more than 7,500 soldiers to Angola to fight alongside units of the Popular Movement against two other factions in the civil war, which is now in its seventh month.

"We always helped them," Mr. Rodriguez said. But when asked to confirm that Cuba had over 7,000 soldiers, he said, "I am not going to tell you how many."

In the conversation, which took place in the Cuban

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Government's newly completed marble and glass "salon of reception," Mr. Rodriguez also provided new details of Cuba's involvement in Angola.

He said it became substantial late last spring when the tenuous coalition of the Popular Movement with the National Front for Liberation of Angola and the

National Union for the Total Independence of Angola broke apart.

Request for Advisers

"Neto asked us for advisers then," Mr. Rodriguez recounted, "and we sent 180 — no, it was 230 — military men to Angola. They set up four training centers for Angolan fighters."

"Then, on Oct. 23," the South Africans suddenly came into Angola," Mr. Rodriguez continued.

"Our people felt it there." He apparently was alluding to the capture and display of a Cuban soldier by South African forces last autumn.

"Neto then asked us for more help and we sent it," Mr. Rodriguez said, indicating that the reason for the Cuban intervention was the appearance of South

African units in Angola.

Ford administration officials concerned with the Angola situation have said previously that they believed Cuban soldiers, equipped with Soviet tanks and rocket launchers, began arriving in Angola in mid-October, but they have never named a date.

They credit the Cubans with providing the Popular Movement

a fighting edge [that] permitted it to drive north and south from Luanda in November and December to recover territory lost to the two other factions.

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Casualty Figure Disputed

Asked whether Cuban casualties were 50 to 60, as estimated by several Western governments, Mr. Rodriguez said: "No. Much less. Much, much less."

He was asked how the Cuban people had received the involvement of Cuban soldiers in Angola. "They accepted," he asserted.

He said that at the first Congress of the Cuban Communist Party last month, "solidarity for Angola was so strong there has been nothing like it here since the Declaration of Havana in 1961." He was referring to the declaration by Prime Minister Castro on the socialist nature of his revolution after the bombing by the Central Intelligence Agency of Cuban airfields on April 15.

While young Cubans do voice support of the Angola intervention in conversation with Western visitors here, there seems to be a high degree of concern about the cost in Cuban lives. They have not been told how many Cubans are in Angola or how long they have been there or exactly what they are doing.

Cuban Seeks News

"Have you heard anything about the O.A.U. meeting?" a Cuban asked a visitor in a Havana ice cream parlor today. She indicated that while imbued with revolutionary feeling, she was worried about the Angola situation.

Many Cubans met by visiting newsmen seem to have a friend or a relative who has been sent to Angola. Cubans say the bulk of those who went were volunteers.

Mr. Rodriguez insisted that Cuba's action conformed not only with the principles of "proletarian internationalism" but also that "it is legal in international law because we asked for help by an established government that has now been recognized by 40 states—22 of them in Africa."