

SFChronicle *for AD* DEC 12 1975

U.S. Reported Sending Arms, Funds to Angola

Slightly longer version filed Angola.

Washington

The United States has sent \$25 million in arms and support funds to Angola over the last three months, a high-ranking government official said yesterday, and plans to send another \$25 million in supplies to counter the large-scale military intervention there by the Soviet Union and Cuba.

The official said the first \$25 million was distributed by the Central Intelligence Agency, mostly through Zaire, which has a 1200-mile frontier with Angola.

He said the secret U.S. operation was an attempt "to create a stalemate" in the Angolan civil war.

Strife broke out in July in the former Portuguese colony and has intensified since Angola attained independence November 11. The civil war involves factions that grew out of three separate national independence movements.

The official said the Soviet Union has sent 27 shiploads of military supplies since spring and, since October, has flown 30 to 40 supply missions with huge AN-22 cargo planes. He said there are about 200 Soviet military advisers in Angola.

Since mid-October, Cuba has sent infantry weapons and troops to Angola. As of last week the administration estimated there are 4000 Cuban soldiers in combat there.

Another high-ranking official said there is evidence that Cuba now has "close to 5000" men in Angola. Cuban infantry and artillery units have been seen on all three major battle sectors in the northern and central regions of the country.

According to intelligence reports reaching Washington, the most effective weapons supplied by the Soviet Union are 24-barrel anti-personnel rocket launchers and tanks.

The launchers for 122-mm.

rockets and the Soviet T-54 tanks are manned by Cubans, the official said, adding: "The MPLA has experience in guerrilla fighting, but not with sophisticated weapons." (PLA is the Portuguese acronym for the Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola.)

American military supplies have consisted mainly of portable infantry weapons, the official said, including large numbers of anti-tank missile launchers and anti-personnel rocket launchers — "the kind you hold on your shoulder that you could use with a minimum of training."

"There are no American advisers in Angola, either civilian or military," the official said. He added that no Americans are involved in the ground fighting.

However, he said the United States has supplied five artillery spotter planes that fly into the Angolan battle zones, returning to bases to Zaire. "They fly in and out," he said of the American pilots.

The official said that the additional \$25 million worth of weapons and support funds to be sent to Angola "shortly" will exhaust the CIA's funds for such contingencies.

Should the administration want additional funds for the Angola struggle it would need congressional authorization, the official said.

He said additional military

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equipment is being sent from Western Europe for the forces fighting the Popular Movement. But he did not disclose which countries are the suppliers, or the nature or amounts of the supplies.

"But the Soviet-Cuban involvement is far in excess of anything we or the Europeans are doing," he asserted.

He said the American supplies were flown mostly by C-141 transports to landing fields in Zaire. There, he said, the equipment is turned over to the Zaire army, which is said to have about 1000 soldiers on the northern Angola front above Luanda.

The Zaireans are reported to be fighting alongside the Front for the National Liberation of Angola headed by Holden Roberto, a brother-in-law of Zaire's President Mobutu Sese Seko.

The officials said a small number of American-supplied weapons has also reached the southern-based forces of the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola, which is allied with Roberto's forces.

The National Union forces are fighting the Luanda-based Popular Movement and Cubans in several sectors of a long front parallel to and sometimes crossing the 896-mile Benguela railway, which stretches from the Atlantic to the Zaire frontier.

The National Union troops have been bolstered by South African soldiers and equipment, including armored vehicles, the official said. Although the United States has no figures on the size of the South African involvement, American intelligence officials believe that about 100 South African soldiers are in Angola.

"Our effort is to have a standoff between the factions so as to get all the parties together in a coalition," he added.

A high-ranking Soviet diplomat in Washington, questioned about his country's aims in Angola, denied that the Soviet-Cuban involvement is designed to insure a takeover of all of Angola by the Popular Movement headed by Augustinho Neto.

"It is not total," he insisted. "We are just helping them stay alive, that's all. It is equal to your involvement. It is not that big. You have blown it up in your press."

New York Times