

U.S. Angola Cost: \$50 Million

Two Factions Get Arms, Money

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American involvement in the Angolan civil war has cost almost \$50 million in a covert operation that some informed sources believe may be the biggest the United States has undertaken outside of Southeast Asia.

The bulk of U.S.-supplied military equipment has been provided in less than six months.

Money and military equipment are being provided to two factions that are battling the Soviet-backed Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA), informed sources disclosed. Most of it is being funneled to Angola through neighboring Zaire.

In a separate operation, South Africa is also giving support to one of these factions, UNITA -- the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola -- headed by Jonas Savimbi.

Some American officials are

concerned that black African anger over the increasingly direct involvement of white-ruled South Africa may provoke the Organization of African Unity to recognize the Soviet-backed faction as the legitimate government of Angola.

Holden Roberto heads the third group, the FNLA -- the National Front for the Liberation of Angola. Roberto is close to the President of Zaire, Mobutu Sese Seko, and has long received American support. His backing within Angola, however, is said to be thin.

Sen. Dick Clark (D-Iowa), head of the African subcommittee of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee who has met with all three liberation leaders, said yesterday that he believes the United States, in supporting

See AID, A15, Col. 1

U.S. Aids 2 Factions In Angola

AID, From A1

Roberto, is "backing the only sure loser."

In Clark's view, Savimbi who heads a group with support in heavily populated areas, would be prepared to form a coalition with the Soviet-backed MPLA.

The decision to send arms, in addition to the "political" money that was already going to the two Angolan factions, was made by the Forty Committee in early spring, informed sources said. The Forty Committee must approve all covert operations.

While some of the equipment being made available is American made, much is being bought on the international arms market.

Sources said there has been a step-up of arms supplies following the arrival in Angola of 3,500 to 4,000 Cubans. The Cubans have provided the MPLA with the expertise needed to deal with sophisticated Soviet equipment being airlifted to Angola.

While American officials see the Cuban role as important, some doubt that their presence will be decisive. One estimates that the war will see-saw back and forth for months, possibly years.

Clark last week introduced an amendment to the military assistance bill that would prohibit any American assistance to any group in Angola without specific congressional authorization. Such an amendment is the only way Congress can bar activities of which it disapproves.

Noting that this is one of the most widely known of all "covert" operations, Clark attributes the disclosures to "deep divisions" in the administration about its advisability.

Clark, in an interview, said he is not particularly concerned about the prospect of a Soviet-backed faction winning out if the United States support were to stop its

"The history of Soviet intervention in Africa," he said, "is one of almost total failure . . . If the MPLA wins, the Soviets will be lucky if they can hang on for a year or two."

Some U.S. officials note that liberation movements, no matter how strongly they have been supported frequently fail to show their gratitude once in power.

Mozambique is a case in point. Despite the support Moscow gave to the Front for the Liberation of Mozambique (Frelimo), a Soviet requests for a port for its warships was rejected recently and the Russians have been rebuked publicly for trying to put pressure on Mozambique's leaders.

The Chinese, on the other hand, are more welcome both as instructors and as suppliers of military equipment.

Clark said he has spoken to the leaders of the three Angolan liberation groups and "they all sound almost the same. They all see themselves as African socialists."

For the last month, Secretary of State Henry A. Kissinger has complained publicly about Soviet intervention in Angola.

Kissinger has argued that Moscow's policy "is difficult to reconcile . . . with the principles of coexistence that were signed in 1972," and said "this would have to be taken into account by our policy if it continues."

He said that "the United States cannot be indifferent while an outside power embarks upon an interventionist policy."

Kissinger, who seems to see the Angola war primarily in terms of the superpower relationship, said that all "extracontinental powers should stay out of Angola."

This demand, however, does not solve the major problem from the African viewpoint, the involvement of South Africa.

Black African anger over the South African role, far more than the Soviet and Cuban involvement, could influence the outcome, officials here say.

The OAU foreign ministers are scheduled to meet Dec. 18 in Addis Ababa to work out an agenda for an African summit that American officials say might endorse the MPLA as the legitimate government of Angola.

Two thirds of the 46 members of the OAU have agreed to hold a summit on Angola.

The OAU's present position calls for a government of national reconciliation in Angola, a so-called "African solution" that would bring the three liberation movements into a single administration.