

Soviet-Backed Force in Angola
 Reports Seizing a Rival Capital

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JOHANNESBURG, South Africa, Jan. 5 (Reuters)—A major gain in the Angolan civil war was claimed today by the nationalist movement that is supported by the Soviet Union.

The Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola said in a broadcast from its capital, Luanda, that its forces had captured the northern headquarters of the rival National Front for the Liberation of Angola. The town, Uige, formerly known as Carmova, was said to have fallen after Popular Front forces closed in on three sides over the weekend, pushing the rival troops back.

A Popular Front offensive had been predicted by intelligence reports here. These said that the Luanda-based group wanted to gain as much territorial advantage as it could before the Organization of African Unity meets in the Ethiopian capital, Addis Ababa, next weekend to seek a way to end the Angolan fighting.

The loss of Uige, which is about 150 miles northeast of Luanda, would be a major blow to the National Front and its leader, Holden Roberto. The front's forces are already reported to be demoralized by constant barrages of Soviet-made missiles.

South African Pullout Rumored

As reports of a Popular Front offensive circulated over the

weekend, there was growing speculation here that in the absence of any military commitment by other Western powers, South Africa might be about to announce its withdrawal from the fighting.

According to unofficial estimates, South Africa has 1,000 to 6,000 troops in Angola.

In addition to the Uige action, heavy fighting was reported today in eastern Angola around the town of Luso, which was recently captured by troops of the National Front and its civil war ally, the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola. Together, these groups have proclaimed a rival government at Huambo in the center of the country.

The Luanda broadcast said Luso had been "invaded by a South African armored column." It added: "In the central southern front, where the main body of regular South African forces is concentrated, the situation remains stationary."

Expanding on its report that Uige had fallen, the Popular Front said its forces had destroyed "two American aircraft" on the runway of the town's airport and "recovered" hundreds of tons of war material, including armored cars and transport vehicles.

An earlier communiqué said



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Popular Movement said it took Uige. Fighting was reported at Luso.

that the Popular Front, in its weekend offensive, had captured the air base at Megage, some 165 miles northeast of Luanda, cutting off an airlift of arms and other equipment to the National Front.

The communiqué also said that the towns of General Freire, Vista Alegre and Nambuangongo had been captured.

Guinean Warns African Unit

ABIDJAN, Ivory Coast, Jan. 5 (Reuters)—President Sekou Touré of Guinea said today that his country would quit the Organization of African Unity—and encourage other members to follow—if it did not recognize the Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola as the sole government in the newly independent country.