

29 LOST IN WAR BY SOUTH AFRICA

JAN 27 1976

Minister Makes a Formal

Report on Angola Role NYTimes

CAPE TOWN, Jan. 26 (Reuters)—The South African Government announced today that 29 of its soldiers had been killed in the Angolan civil war but said its forces had won most of their battles against Soviet-supported Angolan forces.

The Government statement, made in Parliament by Defense Minister Pieter W. Botha, did not include an expected announcement that South African troops were withdrawing from the front lines. But he spoke of South African involvement in the past tense.

"We acted with a limited objective," he said, "and succeeded in doing so."

First Formal Announcement

The statement was described here as the first formal announcement to Parliament that South African had been involved in the Angolan fighting.

While Mr. Botha had nothing to say about reports that South African troops were leaving front-line positions in the center of Angola, he did say the soldiers would stay in the area of Angola's border with South-West Africa until his Government received a guarantee that the frontier was safe.

The Defense Minister said the 29 South Africans had been killed in Angola between last July and last Friday. He said everything possible was being done to get back South African prisoners held by the leftist Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola.

Mr. Botha reported that South African forces had taken prisoners, among them some Cuban soldiers fighting for the Popular Movement.

Soviet-Cuban Involvement

About 9,000 regular Cuban soldiers and 500 Soviet military advisers have been reported assisting the Popular Movement in its struggle against two pro-Western Angolan groups—the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola and the National Front for the Liberation of Angola. South Africa is estimated to have committed 1,200 troops to the Angolan fighting.

In his report to Parliament, Mr. Botha spoke of "hot pursuit" operations into Angola by South African forces chasing guerrillas of the South-West Africa People's Organization, and he added:

"We were on occasions involved in other fights as well. Most of these went in our favor."

Mr. Botha said South Africa had become involved in Angola because it wished to insure the maintenance of a free and independent southern Africa.

He said the first troops went in last summer to investigate reports of trouble at a hydroelectric dam being built by South Africa at Calueque, about 25 miles inside Angola.

African workers had taken sides in the Angolan civil war and work on the dam had stopped temporarily, he recalled. He said the platoon of

soldiers that went to Calueque had occupied it because they were fired upon.

Speaking of the South African forces now in "the Angolan border area," he said:

"If we are attacked, we will retaliate effectively. In the past we hit back with small forces. If necessary, we will retaliate with greater force."

During a subsequent debate on a motion of no confidence in the Government, Mr. Botha called for more Western intervention in Angola.

After his statement, Mr. Botha was assailed by opposition Members of Parliament.

Withdrawal Held Completed

LUSAKA, Zambia, Jan. 26 (UPI)—The head of the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola was quoted today as having said that South African troops had completed an orderly withdrawal from front-line positions Friday, two days after receiving orders to pull back.

This statement, by Jonas Savimbi, the leader of the National Union, was reported by reporters returning here from Angola. They said Mr. Savimbi had pledged that his troops would fight on despite the loss of South African support, using guerrilla tactics if necessary.