

South Africa Sought to Gain Time in Angola, Aides Say

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CAPE TOWN, Feb. 5—Officials here assert that South Africa undertook its recent drive into Angola on behalf of two nationalist groups there on the understanding that the United States would rush sufficient supplies to make it possible to counter the Soviet-supported movement.

A high official said in an interview that the South African hope that the weapons superiority of the Soviet-backed forces could be balanced was based on contracts with American officials. He did not name the man he made this statement, but at another point he expressed special disappointment with Secretary of State Henry A. Kissinger.

"We had been in touch," the official said in an interview. "We felt if we could give them a lapse of time they could find ways and means."

Earlier, the official said:

"We accepted the utterances of Mr. Kissinger and others. We felt surely he has the necessary pull to come forward with the goods."

Instead this, official and other highly placed sources here said, South Africa's troops found themselves in advanced positions, supported only by poorly armed troops of the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola and themselves outgunned by the combined forces of the Cuban units and the Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola.

On the Diplomatic Front

The aim of the South African incursion some months ago, it was explained, was to prevent a rout of the pro-Western forces, establish a front line midway through Angola and thus gain time to equip the national union and its ally the National Front for the Liberation of Angola, as a solid counterforce to the heavily supported Popular Movement.

South Africa had hoped that this would prevent recognition of the Popular Movement as the government of Angola at last month's meeting of the organization of African Unity in Addis Ababa.

It is suggested here that Zambia and Zaire pleaded with South Africa before the Addis Ababa meeting to strengthen its military presence in Angola, and this presence is held responsible here for the Popular Movement's inability to obtain a majority at the conference.

It is suggested also that

Presidents Kenneth D. Kaunda of Zambia and Mobutu Sese Seko of Zaire renewed their pleas when South Africa informed them after the Addis Ababa meeting that it was withdrawing from the front line to a strip close to the South African border.

A high official commented in this connection that no matter how disappointed South Africa was with American failure to provide full support to match Soviet and Cuban backing of the pro-Communist forces, it was nothing compared with the feeling of chagrin of the Zambian and Zairian leaders.

What South Africa Expects

As matters stand, the sources indicated, South Africa does not envisage a renewed offensive against the Popular Movement. Authoritative South African sources well informed on the Angolan civil war predict a strong Cuban-Popular Movement push southward and the retreat of the National Union forces to a line about 100 miles from South Africa's border within a month.

South African troops now control a strip of up to 30 miles wide on the Angolan side of the border. Defense Minister Pieter W. Botha has disclosed that a total of 4,000 to 5,000 troops have been committed to this mission on both sides of the border.

Officials questioned here and in Pretoria refused to confirm or deny that South Africa continues to provide support to the National Union's army from its forward positions.

Having failed in its objective of significantly strengthening the National Union's military power, South Africa, according to the high official sources, is now concentrating on the defense of its borders and national interests against what it perceives as a Communist threat.

This does not necessarily mean, it was said, that it would resort to war only if Popular Movement troops crossed the South African border.

"We will decide where we will defend our border," a high official said. But he added that this did not require a defensive front across the full width of Angola. "We may just defend the Calueque Dam at all costs," he said.

South Africa considers the hydroelectric and irrigation project on the Cunene River at Calueque, about 25 miles inside

Angola, to be a legitimate South African national interest. South Africa believes it must protect—being built under an agreement reached with Portugal before Angola's independence—until there exists an Angolan government with which it can negotiate on the future of the installation.

"Much money has been poured into it," the official said.

Conversations with South African officials on the repercussions of the Angolan crisis turn constantly to a deeply held conviction that Soviet involvement in Angola is a threat first to the security of Angola's black neighbor nations, then to South-West Africa, a territory under South African rule, then to South Africa itself and, finally, to the world balance of power.