

Ford Signs Bill Barring Angola Aid

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Washington

President Ford yesterday reluctantly signed a \$112.3 billion defense appropriations bill that also forbids covert aid to Angola, calling the ban an undesirable precedent forced upon him by a Congress that "lost their guts."

"I am deeply disappointed that the Congress has acted in this bill to deprive the people of Angola of the assistance needed to resist Soviet and Cuban military intervention in their country," Mr. Ford said in a statement.

"I believe this provision is an extremely undesirable precedent that could limit severely our ability to play a positive and effective role in international affairs."

Earlier, he told a group of journalists at a private breakfast meeting that most Americans would come to realize the prohibition on aid to Angola "was a serious mistake" and that members of Congress "lost their guts by backing down" in the face of Soviet

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and Cuban intervention.

The measure he signed provides money for defense operations for the 15-month period that ends September 30 and is \$8.6 billion less than Mr. Ford had originally requested.

It includes money for further development of the controversial B-1 bomber and the acquisition of four airborne warning and control system aircraft.

But the most controversial section was the ban on U.S. military assistance to Angola, where rival factions are engaged in a civil war and where a Soviet-backed group appears to be gaining the upper hand.

Mr. Ford said he signed the bill, despite reservations, "because of the importance of the programs which are funded by appropriations contained in this bill and the problem which would be caused by a further delay of this legislation ..."

Senate majority leader Mike Mansfield responded that Mr. Ford's criticism of Congress "won't hold water."

"They wanted \$28 million more. By now, very likely, they would have asked for \$50 million," he said.

Mansfield told reporters that "he feels an aggressive policy in Angola would be counterproductive. Asked how the United States could protect its interests there, he responded: "What are our interests in Angola?"

The United States, Mansfield said, "does not have unlimited resources. We have to be realistic, practical and face up to the fact we cannot exert our influence in all countries on all continents."

Mr. Ford said he will ignore a provision which would bar obligation of some money in the bill until it is approved by Senate and House armed services and appropriations committees.

"The legislative branch cannot inject itself into executive functions," said Mr. Ford, arguing the provision is unconstitutional. He said he would treat that section of the legislation as "a complete nullity."

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