

Turner Reports On Cuban Role In Zaire Attack

Washington

CIA Director Stansfield Turner apparently persuaded the House Intelligence Committee yesterday that President Carter was justified in asserting that Cuba trained, equipped and knew of the rebel attack on Zaire from Angola last month, a charge that has been repeatedly denied by Cuban leaders.

Committee Chairman Edward P. Boland (Dem-Mass.) said after a two-hour closed-door briefing, "I'm satisfied, and the committee itself is satisfied, that the President's statement was correct."

So far the administration has not made public its intelligence information with regard to the invasion of Shaba province, but instead has begun to brief key members of Congress and committees on the situation. Boland said Turner presented evidence from "prisoners, diplomats and persons surrounding Zaire itself."

In speaking to reporters, Turner was cautious in describing the evidence.

"It is my considered opinion that we have sufficient evidence to draw the conclusion that there must have been Cuban involvement in the training and equipping of these insurgent forces which attacked the government of Zaire last May 13," he said.

"We made a careful, objective evaluation of this. No intelligence conclusion is ever absolutely black and absolutely white — but when you have a preponderance of evidence as we do in this case from a variety of sources over a period of time, one can only come to the kind of conclusion that we did," Turner said.

President Fidel Castro and other Cuban leaders have denied any recent involvement with the rebels, former inhabitants of southern Zaire known as Katangans who have lived for some time in northern Angola near the border with Zaire.

Whether Havana played an active role in aiding the Katangans is important because much of the administration's African policy in recent weeks has been based on the assumption that the Cubans and

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Russians were causing trouble for Zaire.

Carter at a news conference in Chicago May 25 said Angola had to bear a heavy responsibility for the "deadly attack" against Shaba province "and it is a burden and a responsibility shared by Cuba.

"We believe that Cuba has known of the Katangan plans to invade and obviously did nothing to restrain them from crossing the border," the President said. "We also know that the Cubans have played a key role in training and equipping the Katangans who attacked."

Senator George McGovern (Dem-S.D.), who has publicly noted the discrepancy between the statements of Carter and Castro, said yesterday that he was told by the Cubans that their involvement with the Katangans ended two years ago.

McGovern said the Cubans insisted that they trained and equipped the Katangans only to help them fight on the side of President Agostino Neto in the Angolan civil war. The Cubans say that since the victory of the Neto forces in that war, they have had nothing to do with the Katangans, McGovern reported.

But Boland said the information provided to the committee showed training by Cubans as recent as in the past year.

McGovern, who has not yet been briefed on the CIA information, said that if it turns out the Cubans were lying, he would regard this as a "personal insult."

Some administration officials have been less than satisfied with the quality of the intelligence information. They have privately questioned the reliability of many of the informants and have said that much of the data was circumstantial.

The first briefing was at the White House last Friday and involved leaders of Congress, such as House Speaker Thomas P. O'Neill Jr., who said yesterday that "I would say that the proof is there that Cubans participated in Zaire," and that he understood the CIA had photos of Cubans with Katangans.

Turner, when asked about O'Neill's comment, said: "This government made no such statement that Cubans were in Zaire or they were not. The evidence is not that clear one way or the other."

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