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SECURITY AFFAIRS

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ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20301

1-21303/76

23 Mar 1976

MEMORANDUM FOR THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

SUBJECT: US Policies with Respect to Possible Cuban Military Intervention
in Rhodesia and Namibia -- ACTION MEMORANDUM

(S/NFD) The attached ISA paper analyzes possible US responses to further Cuban/Soviet interventions in Southern Africa in broad political, economic, and military terms. It focuses on three general classifications of US options: minimal involvement, use of coercive measures, and positive engagement on behalf of black majority interests. The paper has a pro and con format to illustrate how the various ranges of options would impact on US relations with the Soviet Union in the global context, and with Latin America and Africa in their regional contexts. The dichotomies associated with US simultaneous condemnation of Cuban/Soviet intervention and the white governing regimes of the target states, as well as the diverse ways US responses would impact upon the global and regional contexts, are highlighted throughout the paper.

(S/NFD) In the wake of the Dallas speech, I think the WSAG principals ought to clarify, at least among themselves, what is meant by "The United States cannot acquiesce indefinitely in the presence of Cuban expeditionary forces in distant lands for the purpose of pressure and to determine the political evolution by force of arms."

(S/NFD) To square the circle of opposing Soviet/Cuban military involvement in the prime targets of Rhodesia and Namibia, while not supporting the white minority regimes of those countries, demands careful calculation. The problem falls into three policy arenas - US-Soviet relations, US-African relations, and US-Latin American relations. If we are not to oppose Cuban adventures in Africa by military means there, effective retaliation rests in US-Soviet relations and in the Hemisphere.

(S/NFD) The Cubans, however, must be kept uncertain of our method of retaliation. They are not in the perfect position either:

- The Cubans must retain full Soviet support for any future African adventures and would be sensitive to being abandoned if the cost on other tables is too high for the Soviets; and

- The Cubans have a large investment to consolidate in Angola. Having won the country for the militarily weak MPLA, the Cubans could not

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By DDP NLF Date 5/7/87

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soon, with any assurance of MPLA survival, drastically draw down their carefully picked black forces there.

(S/NFD) Dr. Kissinger has begun to build public and congressional concern over the Cuban expeditionary force. In addition, there is a greatly increased concern in Western Europe. The widespread public ignorance that underpinned the "no more Vietnams" votes on the Hill against Angolan aid in December is gradually being dissipated. The policy options outlined in Alternative B ("coercive measures") of the attached paper most closely resemble the de facto US policy which Dr. Kissinger has in train.

(S/NFD) I think at the WSAG meeting you should:


- Emphasize the broader policy considerations.
- Underline the US-USSR focus for discussion of US policy on Southern Africa.
- Recommend that official public statements on these issues be restrained and strictly keyed to the policy approach finally decided upon.


HARRY E. BERGOLD
ACTING ASSISTANT SECRETARY

Attachment a/s

- An analysis of the impact that majority rule in Rhodesia and Namibia is likely to have on South Africa, with specific emphasis on its internal policies, and on United States interests in South Africa.

Based upon the foregoing, the study should propose United States goals with regard to Southern Africa and alternative policy options -- both immediate and longer term -- for achieving these goals. The study should be prepared by the NSC Interdepartmental Group for Africa and should be submitted to the NSC Senior Review Group by May 21, 1976.



Brent Scowcroft

cc: Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff



US Policies with Respect to Possible Cuban Military Intervention in Rhodesia and Namibia

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I. BACKGROUND FACTS AND POLICY ASSUMPTIONS

- Cubans may intervene in other Southern African regions following their success in Angola.
- South Africa, although it will be affected by events in Rhodesia, is not the immediate concern for US policy responses. The South Africa case is not nearly so urgent, and the military situation is quite different.
 - The South Africans are capable of defending themselves against any likely near term threats.
 - The South African Government is more prone than the Smith regime to accept political solutions as evidenced by their policy of entente.
 - The US reaction to intervention in Rhodesia, of course, will tend to circumscribe its policy toward South Africa.
- Without Soviet support, Cuba could exacerbate existing regional instabilities, but it probably could not be a decisive force in the near future.
- USG has publically stated that it will not tolerate additional Soviet/Cuban interventions in Africa.
- USG has also publically concurred, however, with the UN position that the Government of Rhodesia and the South African governing of Namibia are "illegal."
 - At the same time, by virtue of the Byrd Amendment, the US continues to import strategically important materials such as chromium from Rhodesia.
- US actions to prevent further Cuban interventions, or responses to them if they occur, will affect:
 - US-Soviet relations (the global context)
 - US-Latin American relations
 - US-African relations
- US coercive responses against Cuban/Soviet encroachments in Rhodesia or Namibia would be widely perceived domestically and internationally as support for illegal racist regimes no matter how the USG tries to couch its policy.

- US responses to negate Cuban/Soviet intervention in Rhodesia or Namibia would not be construed as helping a Third World country preserve its independence from an outsider's hegemonic interests because of the unique character of the "illegal," white minority regimes.
- The vast majority of Latin American countries would support US actions against Cuban interventions in the Western Hemisphere; they would condemn US responses to counter Cuba in Southern Africa.
- US-Latin American relations would be adversely affected by any US unilateral action against Cuba in this hemisphere in response to an extra-regional Cuban action. Not only would a unilateral US response negate the new spirit of cooperation, consultation, and mutual respect, but the Latin Americans might consider the US regional activities to be more hostile than Cuba's actions outside the hemisphere.

II. POLICY GUIDELINES

US-USSR (Kissinger, 2/3/76)

U.S. seeks, regardless of Soviet intentions, to serve peace through a systematic resistance to pressure and conciliatory responses to moderate behavior. U.S. policies are designed to:

- Prevent the use of Soviet power for unilateral advantage and political expansionism to the detriment of the U.S.
- Enable U.S. allies and friends to live with a sense of security by maintaining an equilibrium of force.
- Accept that superpowers cannot impose unacceptable conditions on each other and must proceed by compromise.
- Advance the process of building an international order of cooperation and progress.

U.S.-Latin American (Kissinger, 3/4/76)

USG pledged that its hemispheric relations would:

- Respond to the development needs of Latin America.
- Support regional efforts to organize for cooperation and integration to include modernizing the inter-American system.
- Negotiate our differences based on mutual respect and sovereign equality.

- Maintain the U.S. commitment to mutual security against any who would undermine our common effort, threaten a nation's independence, or export violence and terror.

U.S.-African (Dept. of State Jan 76)

U.S. major concerns in the region are:

- That Africa attain prosperity for its people and become a strong participant in the economic order, an economic partner with a growing stake in the international order;
- That self-determination, racial justice, and human rights spread to all of Africa;
- That the continent be free of great power rivalry or conflict.

III. BROAD POLICY APPROACHES

A. Minimal Involvement. This approach would constitute some changes of our current policy in that the US, through statements and actions, would attempt to divorce the Cuban/Soviet threat against Rhodesia and Namibia from other US interests. Accordingly, we would make no further public or private statements implying US intent to seek to limit Cuban activity in that area. We would adopt the position that we continue to be irrevocably opposed to the concept of white minority rule; that we continue to consider the Rhodesian government and South Africa's governing of Namibia to be illegal; that we deplore Cuban and Soviet cynicism in using and encouraging violence to seek to achieve the kind of change which the people of Africa should be allowed to achieve on their own terms; that Soviet involvement in the matter risks working against resolution of other outstanding issues between us; that, categorically, the nations of this Hemisphere including, of course, the US will not tolerate Cuban interventionist activities in this hemisphere--where Treaty and other commitments apply.

PRO

- Minimizes US losses from its "no win" position on the Southern Africa-Black Africa issue.
- Does not tie our hands with respect to future threats to South Africa proper.
- Clarifies our policy with respect to Cuban activity in the Hemisphere.
- Restricts issue to Southern African context; by diminishing the importance of the issue to the US global position it minimizes adverse US-USSR and other international implications in situations where US is in the weaker position.
- Would recognize reality of the limited extent of our leverage on Smith regime and on African and other states directly involved.

- If Cuban/Soviet military activity increases, level of Congressional/public concern, as well as third world concern, would be raised and prospects for Cuba/Soviet expansion against legitimate governments in other areas could be set back.
- Reaffirms US commitment to principles of majority rule and self-determination, and sets positive tone with respect to our long-term relations with Africa.
- Rules out, in advance, possibility of US being expected to intervene there; thus relieving US of pitfalls of either "half-way," probably ineffective measures, or requirement to use degree of force which would almost certainly be unacceptable to US Congress, and could be stopped by War Powers Act.
- Suggests to African and other observers that we generally will not intervene on that continent.
- Would not raise doubts among most Latin American countries as to the reliability of US commitments within the Hemisphere.

CON

- Rules out, in advance, possibility of US being expected to intervene, thus permitting Cuban and Soviet freedom of action which could be detrimental to our posture vis-a-vis the Soviets and supportive of both Soviet and Cuban images as significant international actors.
- Suggests to African and other observers that we generally will not intervene on that continent.
- Would deprive us of opportunity to attempt to bring our influence to bear on course of events in Rhodesia and Namibia.
- Would convince black Africans that we had decided against involvement anywhere in Southern Africa.
- Incurs setback to credibility of President and Secretary of State.
- Could encourage Cuban/Soviet military activity against Rhodesia and in Namibia at level sufficient to bring black guerilla leadership to power in one or both cases.
- Could raise doubts among some Latin American countries (Haiti especially) that US would default on Hemispheric commitments if challenged, given U.S. apparent reluctance to carry out its public statements with respect to the Cubans in Africa.

B. Coercive Measures Against Cuba and/or USSR

This approach is premised on the view that US inaction in the face of Cuban and Soviet aggressiveness in Africa would be costly to our international posture, and particularly to our posture vis-a-vis the Soviet Union. "Coercive" refers not just to military actions, but to economic, political and diplomatic pressures designed to affect the behavior of the Cubans and/or Soviets. In consideration of this approach, it is essential to recognize that should some combination of measures be tried and fail, the US probably would be put in a more difficult position than had those measures not been undertaken at all.

Within the USG there is a widespread feeling that measures in the areas of diplomatic and economic pressure would not be effective against the Soviets. There is an even more unanimously held view that military measures against the Soviets should be ruled out because the outcomes with respect to Rhodesia or Namibia are not vital interests for the United States. It is believed that military measures against the Cubans could be effective and could be undertaken at acceptable, military risk, i.e., the Soviets would not become militarily involved.* One of the strongest arguments for isolating the problem to a Cuban-US framework would be that there we could be virtually assured of being able to step up our coercion until it became effective. A major argument against that proposition is, of course, that there is very little chance that the Executive Branch could gain sufficient domestic, international, and Congressional support for military measures against Cuba.

The greatest problem for decision makers is posed by the requirement to assess to which non-military measures, if any, the Soviets would respond as we desired. There is a significant risk, irrespective of the other pros and cons of various US approaches, that the degree of coercion we would have to exercise against the Soviets to induce a change in their policy would be so great as to jeopardize issues which are of more importance to us. Examples are such measures as cancelling the grain deal or cooling (or additional cooling) of our posture in SALT. The above difficulty relates to our estimate of the Soviet stakes. That estimate bears, of course, on basic answers to our own policy questions. How much should we do? Against whom should we do it? Should we start something we cannot finish?

* Recent intelligence indicates an augmentation of Soviet pilots in Cuba. It is believed that these are not part of the Soviet "MAAG" and that their introduction might be some sort of signal to the US to refrain from taking acting against Cuba. This is only one indication, but it would be very relevant to our own assessments as to whether the Soviets themselves, are seeking, or would seek, to place the Cuban activity primarily in a US-USSR context,

The measures which follow are illustrative.

Soviet Union

Public condemnation

Economic and trade constraints (cancel wheat deal)

Diplomatic pressures (cancel meetings; public expressions of hostility)

Private threats

Private actions which could remain private, or at least not be publicly related to the Southern Africa question (in SALT, MBFR, CSCE; troop/submarine movements)

Cuba

Escalate public condemnation

Explicit threats to prevent their further military activity

Organization of international economic pressures

Organization of Hemispheric political and economic pressures

Range of military measures (increased SR-71 surveillance; ship activity; jamming communication networks; reinforce Guantanamo; covert operations; naval harassment; check Cuban ships for military cargo; blockade; port mining; strikes and invasion)

PRO

- Conforms to implications of current US policy statements.
- Increases the credibility of our international posture with respect to US reliability.
- Discourages further Cuban and/or Soviet actions of this type elsewhere.
- Deters, if sufficient measures taken, further Cuban military activity in Africa.
- Demonstrates to the Soviets, even if measures not fully effective, that US will take positive actions against Soviet support of aggression and attempts to expand its influence in Africa.
- Privately, considerable Latin American relief because of our strong stand.

CON

- Raises stakes for US, risking our being placed in position of
 - ineffectively opposing Cuban/Soviet activities;
 - effectively opposing them with considerable political cost and some military risk;
 - In either case, aligning ourselves, de facto, against black African interests.
- US coercive actions against the Soviet Union which are designed to limit Cuban actions in Rhodesia may be dysfunctional in the global context due to the illegitimate nature of the Smith regime. To the extent that the US raises the stakes with the Soviets, it is at a propaganda disadvantage worldwide for attributing, in effect, great importance to the survival of white racist regimes.

C. Positive Engagement on Behalf of Black Majority Interests.

This approach accepts the proposition proffered by the international community (to include Cuba and the Soviet Union) that the Rhodesian Government should be quickly changed to reflect black majority rule. It differs from the Cuban/Soviet alternatives in that it condemns violent means. The US would actively engage in political and economic measures to try to coerce the Smith regime to give way quickly to a legitimately chosen government. The USG would then assert that it is on the proper side in Southern Africa and using the right methods, whereas Cuba and the Soviet Union were fostering an unnecessary resort to violence. This approach would seek to preempt any overt Cuban/Soviet encroachments in Rhodesia by putting those countries at a propaganda disadvantage. The African states would be faced with non-violent US alternatives or the violent approaches of Cuba and the Soviet Union. This approach assumes that it is quite possible that a number of African states, as well as most of the non-Communist world, would condemn Cuban and Soviet interventions if they thought that the US was prepared vigorously to seek an early, peaceful settlement to the problem.

PRO

- This is the only approach which places the US clearly on the popular side of the Southern Africa - Black Africa issue.
- Rather than minimize US losses from a "no win" position, if successful this approach would result in US gains and Cuban/Soviet losses.
- Keeps the problem in a regional context by focusing on the end of changing the Rhodesian regime, thereby somewhat negating potential US losses in the global context even if the policy should fail.

- If carried out early and forcefully, the US is less likely to be accused of failing to honor its public commitments to halt Cuban/Soviet interventions.
- Reaffirms US commitment to principles of majority rule and self-determination and sets positive tone with respect to our long-term relations with Africa.
- Cuban/Soviet actions would be considered more hostile than the US approach, as the US would be urging the use of non-violent means.
- Vast majority of Latin American states would applaud the US course of action while condemning the means advocated by Cuba.
- Would minimize charges from US allies that USG is not prepared to honor its commitments.

CON

- May constitute too little, too late and involve US in situation where we could bring little significant influence to bear.
- Constitutes less forceful response than approach #2 to broad Soviet challenge in Africa.
- To some extent puts US at odds with South Africa, further endangering that government's position vis-a-vis its black majority and black Africa states.
- In effect leaves further initiative to Cuba and Soviets with respect to their own activities in Africa.
- If the US approach is unsuccessful in changing the Rhodesian regime, USG would face the dilemma of accepting the Cuban/Soviet alternatives, supporting the Smith regime against the Cubans, or taking more coercive action against the Soviet Union and/or Cuba.

IV. Conclusions

- The issue of Cuban military activity in Rhodesia and Namibia is primarily a US-Soviet issue which has implications for (1) the US-Soviet relationship in all its ramifications and (2) the global posture of the United States.
- The racial overtones associated with the issue are important for our African policy but in the last analysis, secondary.
- The US response to Cuban military activity in Rhodesia and Namibia can be made elsewhere either in US-Soviet relations or in the Hemisphere.
- Latin American support for coordinated US action against Cuban military activity in this Hemisphere would be forthcoming. Latin America would not support US action to prevent further Cuban military activity in Africa.

- Our policy toward Rhodesia and Namibia can be largely divorced from that toward South Africa proper. The problem of South Africa is not immediate and the military situation there is not comparable.

V. Recommendations

- That you emphasize the broader considerations at the WSAG Meeting on Wednesday.
- That you underline the US-USSR focus for discussion of any US policy with respect to Southern Africa.
- That you recommend that official public statements on these issues be restrained and strictly keyed to the policy approach finally decided upon.