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RESPONSE TO NSSM 224

UNITED STATES POLICY TOWARD ANGOLA

Prepared by the National  
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private investments in Angolan diamonds, minerals, and the Benguela Railroad. The South Africans also maintain a consulate in Luanda. Pretoria is concerned that a communist or otherwise unfriendly regime in Luanda might support guerrilla activity in Namibia and foster serious problems along that border. However, South Africa does not seem to be planning action to counter this threat and, as a fact, gives little indication that it sees any need to formulate an Angolan policy at all.

B. USSR AND OTHER COMMUNIST COUNTRIES

The USSR has backed the MPLA since 1956 when the movement was founded with the aid of the small, clandestine Angolan Communist Party. Competition with the Chinese has now become a factor in Soviet support for the MPLA. Other communist countries, such as Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia, are also now giving military assistance.

During the early years of the insurgency, Moscow provided the MPLA with a steady supply of financial and military aid, most of it channelled through the Congo, Zambia and Tanzania. In about 1971 or 1972 Soviet interest in the MPLA appeared to wane because of the serious factional struggle within the movement that had



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seriously weakened its ability to conduct insurgent operations. Soviet interest picked up, however, following the coup in Portugal in April 1974, and by mid-summer renewed Soviet support to the MPLA was evident. We are unable to determine the quantity of military assistance being provided by the USSR and other communist countries. In Soviet terms the magnitude probably is not great, but for the MPLA material assistance from communist countries is of major significance. The major part now appears to be channelled primarily through the Congo. From there it is transshipped into Angola, frequently through Cabinda, by air and by sea. As many as six Soviet aircraft, for example, off-loaded military equipment in Brazzaville in March for transshipment to Cabinda. According to the Portuguese High Commissioner in Luanda, a steady supply of military equipment has been delivered to the MPLA since at least October 1974.

Despite the USSR's support of the MPLA and its apparent interest in helping an ideologically congenial party come to power, Soviet policy objectives in Angola are not clearly definable. The USSR could find its continued involvement in Angola a source of increasing embarrassment, particularly if concerned African states



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(e.g., Zambia) begin to criticize openly the contribution of Soviet arms shipments to the escalating violence in Angola and to increasing tensions in the area. The Soviets would appear to have few, if any, important economic or strategic interests in Angola, and their support for groups in Angola and Cabinda appears to be dictated by their desire to maintain credibility and influence with their various clients--the MPLA, Congo-Brazzaville, Algeria and the Portuguese Community Party--and to protect its image as a supporter of anti-colonial liberation struggles. This motive probably explains the pattern of Soviet aid and involvement in Angola. It would also suggest that the Soviets will maintain careful limits on their involvement and a close eye on the reactions of other states with which it wants to maintain good relations.

