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ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20301

*From Angola 092 (Jan) 1976, Box 64* 8 January 1976  
79-0049 I-20076/76

INTERNATIONAL  
SECURITY AFFAIRS

MEMORANDUM FOR THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

SUBJECT: Angolan Policy Options -- ACTION MEMORANDUM

*Angola 092*

~~(S)~~ Deterioration of the FNLA/UNITA position in Angola and the movement of three Soviet ships - a destroyer, a Cresta guided missile cruiser and an LST - toward or into Angolan waters has raised the question of possible US military counteractions. The attached NSC memorandum for the President (Tab A) raises and discusses a number of such actions. ISA has examined the possible options identified.

~~(S)~~ NAVAL SHOW OF FORCE OFF ANGOLA. We believe a naval show of force off Africa would not be timely (the closest US naval units are in the Mediterranean, some 12-13 steaming days from Angola) and could be counterproductive--particularly if we sent a carrier, implying threat of direct intervention. While it would be welcomed by South Africa and Zaire, many moderate African states might be apprehensive that a US-Soviet confrontation was developing over Angola. Moreover, most of the twenty African countries that have recognized the MPLA would react with hostility to what they would view as a US attempt to upset a legitimately constituted government.

~~(S)~~ The Soviets probably would not view any US ships other than a carrier as a threat to their vessels or to the Soviet position in Angola and could be expected to make political capital in the third world by charging US neo-Colonialism.

~~(S)~~ Domestically, the move might be seen either as threatening a new Vietnam or possibly as a measure of US resolve in the face of a Soviet move to exploit detente and install a Communist regime in an area that heretofore has been removed from great power competition. I believe the adverse factors clearly predominate, for there would be no real utility apparent short of confrontation which would trigger strong domestic and international opposition. I therefore recommend strongly against it.

*S Jan 76*

~~Director, Africa Policy, OSD/PA~~  
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PRESSURES ON CUBA. A show of force in the Caribbean, possibly by movement of air or naval units to the area, dispatch of a battalion landing team to the vicinity of Guantanamo Bay, or increase in frequency of reconnaissance flights, also is considered unpromising. President Ford and Secretary Kissinger already have stated clearly that Cuban involvement in Angola forecloses the possibility of any improvement in Cuban-US relations, and it appears unlikely that such military actions would trigger any turnabout in Cuban policy. Moreover, US military posturing against Cuba could be counterproductive to our relations with other Latin America states, several of which have serious outstanding problems with us. Resentment of Cuba's action vis-a-vis Angola is strong and growing within the Latin American countries; any US show of force at this time could serve to lessen this resentment and turn current concern into empathy for Cuba.

AIR/SEA SURVEILLANCE. Surveillance of the Soviet naval units moving toward or off Angola appears to have some value, although the long transit time from the Mediterranean limits the timeliness of surface surveillance there. Deployment of 2-6 destroyers would be required to conduct general surveillance of the three Soviet vessels now in the area, and additional vessels or coordinated air sweeps would be necessary to shadow or trail them closely. A brief listing of ship and US naval air assets, prepared by the Joint Staff, is attached (Tab B).

P-3 surveillance of the Cresta ASW Cruiser off northwest Africa could be mounted from Lages or Rota on short notice after a decision to divert P-3's stationed there from their assigned tasks. Assuming British agreement to use Ascension Island, limited surveillance against the Soviet units in the Gulf of Guinea or off Congo/Angola could be mounted within 36-48 hours. Other Maritime Patrol assets could be tasked to augment these aircraft, if required.

Based on the foregoing I recommend strongly against shows of force either off Angola or in the Caribbean. Surveillance of Soviet units off northwest Africa and Angola could be mounted--initially with aircraft and, subsequently, with naval vessels

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from the Mediterranean--and would serve to give a signal of US concern to the Soviets and mild encouragement to FNLA/UNITA, Zaire, Gabon, and South Africa. It would, however, represent the first direct US military involvement in Angola, and could be expected to generate adverse reactions from some congressional and domestic elements.

(U) Joint Staff concurs.

SIGNED

AMOS A. JORDAN  
Acting Assistant Secretary  
International Security Affairs

Enclosures - 3

Tab A, NSC Memorandum  
Tab B, Soviet Naval Movements and Surveillance  
Tab C, Angolan Update

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Prep: John A. Reed, Jr.  
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