

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

January 27, 1976

Office of the White House Press Secretary

THE WHITE HOUSETEXT OF A LETTER FROM THE
PRESIDENT TO THE SPEAKER OF
THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

January 27, 1976

Dear Mr. Speaker:

I want to express to you and to your colleagues in the House my grave concern over the international consequences of the situation in Angola. In the absence of effective Western assistance, the two largest political movements in the country will be destroyed by Soviet armaments and a Cuban expeditionary force.

This imposition of a military solution in Angola will have the most profound long range significance for the United States. The US cannot accept as a principle of international conduct that Cuban troops and Soviet arms can be used for a blatant intervention in local conflicts, in areas thousands of miles from Cuba and the Soviet Union, and where neither can claim an historic national interest. If we do so, we will send a message of irresolution not only to the leaders of African nations but to United States allies and friends throughout the world.

The facts are clear. In the fall of 1974, the USSR began to increase its military assistance in Angola. During the period from March to December 1975, the Soviet Union and Cuba provided almost \$200 million in weapons and other military assistance to a minority faction in Angola. The Cubans have dispatched more than 10,000 combat troops, which are right now actively engaged in the effort to destroy opposing factions -- factions which command the loyalties of more than 60% of the population and occupy a major part of Angola's territory. For the United States to turn its back on requests for help from these people would be an abdication of our responsibility to play a positive role in international affairs.

The United States has no intention of interfering in internal African affairs. The United States' objective in Angola is to enable the people of that land to determine for themselves their political future. Until the late summer of 1975 the US provided no military assistance to any group. Since then the United States has provided modest amounts of assistance to forces opposing the Soviet/Cuban-backed effort, solely to enable the indigenous majority to stabilize the military situation and to create conditions for a negotiated solution. As was demonstrated at the recent meeting of the Organization of African Unity, a clear majority of the sub-Saharan African countries clearly supported this effort to offset Soviet-Cuban intervention. The US assistance, small as it was, began to reverse the tide and block the Soviet-backed effort to take over the country by force. However, in September and October, the Soviet Union, with the help of a Cuban expeditionary force, massively escalated the conflict. In response the Administration sought, through

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consultation with the appropriate Congressional Committees, to gain approval for the reprogramming of \$28 million to continue our assistance. (The matter of our assistance in Angola was the subject of 25 separate contacts with eight Congressional Committees.) In concert with this proposal, the Administration launched a determined diplomatic effort to bring an end to the fighting and to find a means to bring about a negotiated settlement acceptable to all of the Angolan parties. Unfortunately, this effort was substantially undermined by the vote of the Senate in December 1975 to cut off US assistance to Angola.

As I have stated on a number of occasions, the US seeks no special advantage in Angola, nor are we opposed to the MPLA faction per se. Our sole objective has been to preserve the opportunity for this Angolan problem to be resolved by Angolans, and not through the application of brute military force by the Soviet Union and Cuba. I believe that resistance to Soviet expansion by military means must be a fundamental element of US foreign policy. There must be no question in Angola or elsewhere in the world, of American resolve in this regard. The response of the United States is a matter of fundamental concern to our friends and allies everywhere. The failure of the US to take a stand will inevitably lead our friends and supporters to conclusions about our steadfastness and resolve. It could lead to a future Soviet miscalculation based upon its perception of that resolve. It would make Cuba the mercenaries of upheavals everywhere.

I bring my most serious concerns over the course of events in Angola and the significance of a Soviet victory there to your attention. I strongly urge the House of Representatives to take them into account in its deliberations on Angola today and vote to disagree with the Senate amendment to the Defense Appropriations Act.

Sincerely,

GERALD R. FORD

Honorable Carl Albert
Speaker of the
House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

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