

PRESS RELEASE

NATURE AND EXTENT OF THE SADF'S INVOLVEMENT IN THE ANGOLAN CONFLICT

1. The RSA's initial involvement in Angola came about because Southern Angola was thrust into a bloody struggle and misery directly by the Portuguese Government's decision regarding the eventual transition of Government. The chaos and confused conditions which reigned there made it possible for SWAPO terrorists to freely cross the border, to commit deeds of murder and robbery in Ovambo and to disappear again into the chaotic conditions in Southern Angola. The robbery and murder expeditions further threatened the construction and safety of workers at the important Hydro-electric schemes at Ruacana and Calueque.
2. The SA Defence Force moved in to protect these two schemes after the Portuguese Government failed to take the necessary precautions to ensure the safety of the workers at the two schemes. In this action peaceful contact was made with representatives of Unita/FNLA and MPLA.
3. At times it was necessary for the SADF to cross the border to follow SWAPO's in hot pursuit operations to bring them to justice for their cowardly deeds of aggression against Ovambo. From these expeditions it became obvious that an armed struggle between the three Angolan factions was developing.
4. Thousands of refugees started crossing the border. Apart from confirming the power struggle, they also mentioned the presence of Cubans supporting the MPLA.
5. In a hot pursuit operation the Defence Force came across Cuban ammunition and weapon dumps which placed the security situation Angola and the water schemes in a completely different light.
6. Meanwhile Unita and FNLA appealed to the SADF for support against communist infiltration in Angola. The communists were at that stage occupying the traditional area in Southern Angola. Dr Savimbi had full confidence that if he could maintain his authority in his traditional area the FNLA would have agreed to a peaceful change of government in which all three movements would have been represented. This was what he favoured all along.

rather than to involve his country in a bloody struggle which could not only have cost innocent lives of his people but also caused the destruction of his country's infrastructure. For this reason it was decided to give help and support on only a limited scale. .

7. It was planned that the re-conquering of the whole area by the UNITA/FNLA forces would take place in fases:

- a. By re-conquering and holding Southern Angola.
- b. To re-conquer the harbour cities of Benguela and Lobito and thereby ensuring and holding the whole FNLA/UNITA sphere of influence. The SA Army sent an officer to SILVA PORTO on 24 September 1975 to help plan an operation to stop the MPLA march to NOVA LISBOA. This officer was to advise UNITA on training and the re-organisation to hold NOVA LISBOA at all costs. A team of eighteen instructors with three anti-tankweapons and a few machine guns joined the liaison officer. On 6 October 1975 the operation was completed. A company-strength UNITA force, accompanied by South African advisors and instructors, who manned the Anti-tank weapons and machine guns clashed on that day with an MPLA/Cuban force at NORTON DE MATOS half-way between Lobito and Nova Lisboa. Dr Savimbi was in the vicinity. Five armoured cars and mortars supported the MPLA/CUBAN force. The MPLA march was halted, one armoured car destroyed and more than 100 of the enemy killed. The MPLA march from Benguela also came to a halt and the South African advisors organised the UNITA forces into defensive positions West and North of NOVA LISBOA. It now became obvious that the struggle, with strong Cuban support began to take on a conventional colour and as a result a squadron of armoured cars with crews were sent during middle October 1975 to SILVA PORTO, where it joined the South African trained UNITA forces to form the Foxbat combat group (More about this later).

8. The re-capture of South Angola. With the MPLA attack on Nova Lisboa averted for the time being, attention was now turned to the re-capture of South Angola. On 11 October 1975,

a senior South African Army officer became advisor to a lightly armed FNLA/UNITA force of about 1 000 men with vegetable vehicles and removal vehicles as their form of transport. Six South African officers and seven non-commissioned officers accompanied him and the Sulu battle group came into being, with the task of re-capturing as many towns in South Angola as possible. The force began to move on 14 October 1975 and subsequently achieved the following results:

- a. 19 Oct 1975: After Zulu had moved from Serpa Pinto via Artur da Paiva to Ferreira d'Eca, the southern district capital was re-captured with little resistance and local administration restored.
 - b. 20 Oct 1975: Rocadas was re-captured and a couple of armoured cars as well as mortar detachments joined Zulu.
 - c. 22 Oct 1975: Joao de Almeida, an important communications centre and the MPLA headquarters, was re-captured after a fierce battle.
 - d. 24 Oct 1975: Sa 'da Bandeira, capital of the district and an important population centre, where the MPLA had at its disposal a strong force and heavy weapons, was re-captured, and the UNITA/FNLA administration set up again. Yet more armoured cars and 81-mm mortars strengthened Zulu here.
 - e. 28 Oct 1975: Mocamedes, a port and a capital of the district, was recaptured and a large quantity of ordnance carried off after fierce resistance. FNLA/UNITA administration was again restored. Zulu then moved back to Sa' da Bandeira, where it was joined by more trained FNLA troops. At Sa' da Bandeira, re-organisation took place and preparations for an attack on Benguela, capital of the district and population centre, and a town which, according to information, was strongly defended by Cuban and MPLA forces.
9. The re-capture of Benguela and Lobito. With South Angola re-captured and the towns and cities in the hands of FNLA/UNITA

retaining forces, Zulu moved to Benguela and established its headquarters at Catenque, on 31 October 1975. From here, a cleaning up operation to the east was first undertaken, and a strong MPLA-Cuban Force, which had resumed its advance to Nova Lisboa where the Foxbat battle group was defending the city, was hard pressed and crushed. The road to Benguela was now open and yet another threat to Nova Lisboa warded off. The re-capture of Benguela and Lobito took place as follows:

- a. 4 Nov 1975: Zulu, with strength of about 500 FNLA/UNITA resulting from the retaining elements which were left behind in all bog cities, re-captured the Benguela aerodrome without meeting much resistance. On the road to Benguela, many signs of Cuban presence on a large-scale and also of Cuban cowardice, were observed. Well prepared, but deserted defensive positions were found South of Benguela, while hasty Cubans had even left secret documents behind. A large MPLA training camp, where Cuban instructors had trained MPLA, was summarily deserted and in their haste the Cubans had even left large quantities of weapons, ammunition, petrol and food. Zulu made good use of the above.
- b. 5 Nov 1975: After Zulu had been cornered for the whole of the previous day by heavy mortar and 122-mm rocket launchers, fired from Benguela, Zulu succeeded in determining the positions of these weapons which had, in the meantime, moved outside the city. Zulu then bombarded them with mortars. The Cubans, together with their weapons, did not wait much longer, but immediately retreated, after which Zulu occupied the city. The first wounded Cubans was captured in Benguela, the administration and services were restored and medical treatment administered by two South African doctors who had accompanied Zulu. Many of the wounded were teenage children, whom the fleeing MPLA and Cubans had hurriedly supplied with arms. After its experience of the 122-mm rocket launchers which had far exceeded Zulu's mortars in effective range, Zulu requested artillery support from the RSA. Four 88-mm Guns and personnel therefore also joined Zulu after 11 November 1975.
- c. 7 Nov 1975: Zulu continued its advance to Lobito and took the city without any resistance. Zulu then remained

in Lobito until 11 November 1975, in anticipation of possible orders to the South Africans to retreat. Battle group Foxbat joined Zulu in Lobito, but departed when it became obvious that its support was not needed. The third phase was thus successfully brought to a close. However no positive situation was in sight and Zulu was commanded to continue its advance to Novo Redondo, the northern border of the FNIA/UNITA area of influence.

- d. 12 Nov 1975: After Zulu had continued its advance, it clashed with MPLA Cuban Forces just south of Novo Redondo. The MPLA/Cuban Forces were in well prepared defensive positions. Zulu suffered losses and the first South African member of the force was killed. Zulu's newly acquired artillery came into action at once and the enemy fled. Novo Redondo was re-captured on 13 November 1975. Zulu halted, took up defensive positions and a large section of Zulu left to join the Foxbat battle group which was, at that stage experiencing fierce resistance in the Santa Comba area.
- e. Summary of Zulu's results. Zulu's results speak for themselves. A total distance of 3 150 km was covered in 30 days (including rest). 21 Minor clashes or ambushes, 16 quick attacks and 14 deliberate attacks against well prepared defensive positions took place during this time. 210 MPLA were killed, 96 wounded and 56 captured, while 4 FNIA and 1 South African Soldier died and 21 FNIA and 20 South Africans were wounded.

10. Operations in Central Angola. Back to battle group Foxbat. At Silva Porto, on 25 October 1975, an MPLA-Cuban Force, supported by armoured cars, attempted to advance from Dondo to Nova Lisboa itself, after their failure, on the western approaches to Nova Lisboa. The force took Quibola and then Santa Comba. Nova Lisboa was threatened again. At the same time, the MPLA-Cuban forces on the western approaches began to stir. Foxbat's moment had come. On 26 October 1975, Foxbat, comprising a South African-trained batallion, South African advisors and an armoured car squadron moved from Silva Porto to Teixeira da Sousa. From here a Foxbat element was sent to Santa Comba Cela area to scheck the MPLA advance, and killed a Cuban General while the main force moved westwards and subsequently on:

- a. 27 Oct 1975: Caraculo was re-captured after slight resistance.
- b. 1 Nov 1975: Together with Zulu, Foxbat crushed the MPLA-Cuban Forces at Cubol.
- c. 3 Nov 1975: After fierce resistance, Norton de Matos was re-captured. Foxbat moved further west from 6 November employed east of Lobito, to cut off the MPLA-Cuban retreat before Zulu.
- d. 9 Nov 1975: Moved to Cela, where the main force of Foxbat joined a UNITA element which had been placed there, and which had already taken Cela and SANTA COMBA. On 11 November 1975, Foxbat made contact with the enemy North of SANTA COMBA. The enemy withdrew and the first real destruction by the enemy was carried out during the retreat.

11. RSA involvement with FNLA in North Angola. The RSA also acted in an advisory capacity at Holden Roberto's headquarters at Ambriz, north of Luanda. This advice was that Roberto must, at all costs, retain his territory and not launch an offensive. It was hoped that the FNLA would, in this way, be occupying the whole of its area of influence in North Angola at the time of independence. This advice was, however, thrown to the winds and on 6 November 1975, the SADF sent a senior officer as an observer to Roberto's headquarters. This officer was, at the time of the FNLA attack on the MPLA-Cuban defensive positions, just north of Luanda. As a result of the fact that no South African instructors had accompanied this FNLA force, the attack by an FNLA battalion, supported by a number of armoured cars manned by Portugese, and artillery, was a total disaster. The attack was badly planned and co-ordination between supporting fire and troops was extremely poor, with disastrous results. Against the advice of South Africa, Roberto gambled away his forces on careless attacks, instead of using them for the retention of his traditional area of influence. The results for FNLA were disastrous.

12. The situation on 11 November 1975. On 11 November 1975, the allies held the general line north from Lobito to Santa Comba and from there eastwards to Luso. As was the case with Foxbat was able to move northwards with the greatest of ease, and clean up and retain the territory up to the Cuanza River. The geographical borders of the RSA's involvement, as well as the possibility of RSA withdrawal by 11 November 1975, however, prevented it. After mediation by go-betweens, the RSA forces, which comprised at that stage about 300 advisors/instructors and personnel as well as a limited number of armoured cars, mortars and anti-tank weapons, remained in anticipa-

tion of a political solution which was the prospect held out by the mediators.

INVOLVEMENT AFTER 11 NOVEMBER 1975.

13. After independence, Cuban forces and an unlimited number of Russian armaments streamed into Angola and completely took over the military function from MPLA. Foxbat, strengthened by Zulu, had to contend with heavy 122mm fire on 13 November 1975, after which this battle group also requested artillery from the RSA. While the build-up of Cuban forces took place mainly in the Quibala area, the South African supported UNITA and FNLA concentrated on the retention of their traditional areas of influence. Action in which these forces was concerned took place mainly in no-man's land between Quibala and Santa Comba. The need of hold the territory resulted in an escalation of South African involvement and the creation of additional battle groups to such an extent that the South African involvement just before withdrawal stood at just under 2 000 men (logistic element included). As a counter-move to the Cuban build-up and especially to the 122mm rocket launchers, 140 mm guns were brought into the struggle. This caused chaos among the Cuban ranks. The following events are exceptional:

BRIDGE 14

- a. To deny the Cuban forces access to the anti-communist line of defence, the Battle of Bridge 14 took place on 9 December 1975 in the Catofe area. During this battle, the battle group Foxbat dealt the Cubans a shattering blow. Foxbat comprised 3 FNLA/UNITA companies, a company of South African infantry and an armoured car squadron, supported by 8 - 140 mm and 4 - 88mm guns, a platoon of mortars and an engineer-element, all South Africans. The Cuban-MPLA Force consisted of a battalion of Cubans, an MPLA battalion and a mixed supporting battalion with 122 mm rocket launchers, artillery and mortar support. The battle raged from 9 December 1975 to 12 December 1975 and yielded the following results:
 - i. 200 Cubans dead.
 - ii. 200 MPLA dead.
 - iii. 10 x 76 mm Guns seized

- iv. 22 x 122 mm mortars seized.
- v. 4 x 122 mm rocket launchers destroyed.
- vi. 1 x 122 mm rocket launchers seized.
- vii. Four South African dead.

- b. Occupation of the Salazar Bridge. A newly appointed battle group, known as Orange, comprising a UNITA battalion, an armoured car squadron, a company of South African infantry and artillery occupied the Salazar Bridge over the Cuanza River, north of Mussende, the Northern border of the UNITA area, on 12 December 1975.
- c. Harassing Attacks south-east of Quibala. In order to harass the Cuban forces at Quibala and to retain a UNITA stronghold at Cariango, the battle group Orange came to blows with Cuban forces at Quibala on 15 December 1975. Enemy concern at this harassing action is obvious from the fact the Cubans used jet aircraft and tanks, of which one was put out of action.
- d. Capture of Iuso. At the special request of Dr Savimbi, who wanted to ensure the safety of the whole Benguela railway line for a Free Angola, a battle group, named X-ray, constituted the same way as Orange, launched the Battle of Iuso, from 8 December 1975 to 11 December 1975, and took the city. Approximately 250 MPLA were killed here and an appreciable amount of equipment, including heavy weapons, was seized. After this, the battle group divided up into three battle teams which:
 - i. On 20 December 1975 cleaned up eastwards to Lamege and there came across the great railway bridge, already destroyed.
 - ii. On 14 December 1975 cleaned up eastwards to Bucaco and seized the bridge across the Luchia River.
 - iii. On 19 December 1975 cleaned up southwards to Lentembo.

14. The above were a few examples of the aggressive way in which the anti-communist forces maintained a 800 km defensive front, in anticipation of an OAU - inspired political solution. But with the inability of the OAU an accomplished fact, the RSA forces, except for a limited number of protective forces in South Angola,

had to withdraw by 22 January 1976.

15. The allied FNLA/UNITA forces supported by South African forces could have conquered the whole of Angola, but Dr Savimbi insisted that he was only interested in controlling his traditional area because he was determined to reach a settlement with the MPLA to the advantage of Angola.

Defence Headquarters,
Pretoria

3 February 1977

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FOLLOWING IS TEXT OF STATEMENT ISSUED BY CHAIRMAN OF APARTHEID COMMITTEE ON 24 FEBRUARY 1977 AND NOW RELEASED AS O.P.I.

DOCUMENT GA/AP/631:

"MY ATTENTION HAS BEEN DRAWN TO A HIGHLY BOASTFUL ACCOUNT, RELEASED BY THE SOUTH AFRICAN DEFENCE HEADQUARTERS ON 3 FEBRUARY 1977, OF SOUTH AFRICA'S CRIMINAL ADVENTURE IN ANGOLA IN 1975-1976.

"THE APARTHEID REGIME HAS NOW PUBLICLY CONFESSED THAT AFTER A

SERIES OF INCURSIONS INTO SOUTHERN ANGOLA, IT HAD SENT AN OFFICER TO THE NATIONAL UNION FOR THE TOTAL INDEPENDENCE OF ANGOLA (UNITA) HEADQUARTERS, AS EARLY AS 24 SEPTEMBER 1975, TO PLAN OPERATION AGAINST THE PEOPLE'S MOVEMENT FOR THE LIBERATION OF ANGOLA (MPLA). EIGHTEEN INSTRUCTORS AND MILITARY EQUIPMENT WERE SENT SOON AFTER AND THE SOUTH AFRICANS ACCOMPANIED UNITA FORCES IN CLASHES WITH MPLA FORCES BETWEEN LOBITO AND NOVA LISBOA. IN MID-OCTOBER, A SQUADRON OF ARMoured CARS AND CREWS WERE

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SENT TO SILVA PORTO AND FORMED A SPECIAL COMBAT GROUP. THIS GROUP PARTICIPATED IN ATTACKS ON PEREIRA D'ECA, ROCADOS, JOAO DE ALMEIDA, SA DA BANDEIRA AND MOCAMEDES BETWEEN 19

AND 28 OCTOBER. THEY THEN ADVANCED TO BENGUELA AND LOBITO. IT WAS ONLY ON 4 NOVEMBER THAT THEY OBSERVED SIGNS OF ANY PRESENCE OF CUBAN PERSONNEL, NAMELY INSTRUCTORS AT AN MPLA TRAINING CAMP NEAR BENGUELA.

"SOUTH AFRICA ALSO SENT A SENIOR OFFICER TO THE HEADQUARTERS OF MR HOLDEN ROBERTO, THE NATIONAL FRONT FOR THE LIBERATION OF ANGOLA (FNLA) LEADER."

"I MAY RECALL THAT THE SPECIAL COMMITTEE AGAINST APARTHEID

CONSTANTLY DENOUNCED THE AGGRESSION BY THE APARTHEID REGIME

AGAINST ANGOLA FROM SEPTEMBER 1975 WHEN IT BECAME AWARE OF THE SOUTH AFRICAN INCURSIONS. AT THAT TIME, A NUMBER OF WESTERN POWERS FEIGNED IGNORANCE OF SOUTH AFRICAN INTERVENTION AND SPREAD SOUTH AFRICAN PROPAGANDA OF MASSIVE CUBAN INTERVENTION AS AN EXCUSE FOR INACTION.

"I HOPE THAT THE RECENT CONFESSIONS BY THE APARTHEID REGIME

WILL HELP TO PERSUADE THEM THAT IT IS A CRIMINAL AND AGGRESSIVE REGIME AND A CONSTANT THREAD TO PEACE. EFFECTIVE ACTION MUST BE TAKEN, UNDER CHAPTER VII OF THE CHARTER, TO CURB THIS REGIME

WHICH CONTINUES TO COMMIT ACTS OF AGGRESSION AGAINST ANGOLA AND
OTHER NEIGHBOURING STATES AND HAS DECLARED A VIRTUAL STATE OF WAR
WITHIN SOUTH AFRICA ITSELF.”

SAFDEL

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