

VERBATIM TRANSCRIPT OF COMMENTS MADE BY MR CARLOS ALDANA ESCALANTE
A MEMBER OF THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE OF THE CUBAN GOVERNMENT, DURING
A PLENARY SESSION OF SA/ANGOLAN TALKS IN NEW YORK ON 11 JULY
1988.

"Dr Crocker, Dr van Heerden.

We have devoted most of our time this morning to the consideration of the proposals made by the SA delegation. We agree that an effort, a serious effort, has been made with a view to the breaching of the gaps. We now find ourselves closer than ever to an understanding and agreement on the principles of the basis on which we would be able to conclude agreements on the understanding that the legitimate interests of all parties be considered and on the understanding that no one will come out of this or will attempt to come out of this as the winners. In other words the concept is that we have all made a contribution in the historic constellation of these events; a contribution to the settlement of the problem. The most important result of this is basically the creation of a new independent state in the international community. Now as far as we are concerned from our standpoint there is no way that this new independent state would have to be hostile to South Africa. In fact from the standpoint of SA prestige in the international community of nations, no one would be able to deny the contribution made by SA to create the circumstances to find a responsible and serious settlement to the problem. There is no way that this could be a threat to SA.

We understand that within the framework of the negotiations that we are currently holding, the question of the presence of Cuban troops bears a relation to the implementation of Resolution 435. Leaving aside rhetoric, we must recognise that there is a linkage. If it is not shown in this document it will be part of it, because there is a linkage. We cannot deny that fact.

Now how can we formulate or reflect this linkage? It is precisely in the spirit that Dr van Heerden has so happily pointed out: no one should come out of this as a loser. At other junctures, as we perhaps engaged in controversies, we rejected the concept of linkage. The question was debated in a variety of international fora and the idea was that if Namibia is to be independent, Cuban troops will have to leave Angola. We rejected that and there was great polemics about this. Now we do not deny that if we were to reach a settlement, that settlement would involve the withdrawal of Cuban troops. We reached this conclusion as a result of a joint decision between the governments of Cuba and Angola in terms of which we would subscribe to an agreement and make that agreement known to the public. We are actually ready to have this agreement known and to allow SA also to express its views. This process requires a calender. We recognise

that this calendar is subject to discussion.

From our standpoint these are concessions and we are making them on the understanding that it is important that the Government of SA understands that these are concessions otherwise the climate of confidence which we have presently achieved will disappear. It is important to understand that the Government of Angola and the Government of Cuba do not wish to have Cuban troops permanently stationed in Angola. It is not in our interests. In Angola we are acting on our own behalf and what is at stake is the skin of our own people. And nothing could be more honourable than Cuban troop withdrawal from Angola of our own free will, in keeping with an agreement with the Government that called us there in the first place and as long as the implementation of UN Resolution 435 would be enforced which would foster the independence of a new nation. Thus we would be able to achieve peace and could open up new avenues of co-operation among the States - and here we can certainly use the term "States of Southern Africa".

We know that there is a great deal of mistrust and many people may be thinking that we have a hidden card up our sleeve. And so we propose of our own free will that our withdrawal be duly monitored and verified by the United Nations. Now we would have to discuss the composition of the teams that would monitor our withdrawal. In other words more important than the content of the letter of the agreement is that we really achieve trust and understanding. Of course we do not expect you to take us at our word. That is why we are talking about agreements that would be endorsed by the United Nations. Cuba in this connection would not want to play any other role than the one that has been given historically by certain circumstances which we should not discuss at this point. We understand that as we talk about this paper each of the parties takes on certain obligations before its own public opinion and before its own government and before the political forces which may also have a say. We understand that it is incumbent upon us to come up with an acceptable formulation. We understand that.

Now when we contemplate the set of principles we find that there is an inter-relationship or inter-linkage of these points which are all part of this document. A practical link and a question of a time frame would have to be decided in practical terms and taking into account the political dimensions of this issue. And in this respect we are amenable to any further proposals on the basis that each of us is acting in a sovereign fashion. It would be a sovereign act by South Africa to withdraw its troops from Angola and to accept the implementation of Resolution 435 in other words to favour and to propitiate the implementation of 435. No one could think of imposing them on South Africa.

This is an agreement we conclude in a voluntary fashion and at this juncture we are really in a position to prevent that further situations arise, situations which no one really wants to come to pass. We do not want a disagreeable situation to evolve further to an escalation of hostilities. This is the very juncture at which each of us is in a position to take up its responsibilities and obligations before the international community under the auspices of the Government of the United States and before the eyes of the international community in a sovereign fashion.

Each of the parties would do this on the basis of the minimum modicum of confidence with the assurance that there are no hidden terms and that the legitimate interests of each of the parties would be protected.

I hope you understand that we cannot accept variations or any changes of wording that would show us as the enemies of the independence of Namibia. We cannot accept wording that implies that we are blocking or hampering the independence process; that if we withdraw our troops Namibia can become independent. How can we justify that politically? How can we explain that? In this document we undertake to implement Resolution 435, which is a commitment which involves the Government of Angola which means the immobilisation of SWAPO contingents in camps, a ceasefire and compliance with the terms of Res. 435. This also involves the Government of South Africa.

The second point of this document is drawn from a United States Government proposal. As it stands, we think it is literally and perfectly correct and we placed it in this order because it is linked to Res. 435 and we regard it as part of the same process as Res. 435. Because we then withdraw our troops as agreed by all the governments, we should not have any suspicions. This linkage does exist. It should be accepted that there is this linkage. So this is a clear statement that Cuban troops will be withdrawn - and we do not even use the word total because that is exactly what we are talking about: Cuban withdrawal. We have elevated this to a principle by allowing the monitoring and verification of withdrawal. I am sure that the distinguished representatives from SA will understand and will see that this is an act which from a political standpoint is of consequence and is most responsible. In some of our documents, the documents that we have submitted and are still pending discussion, the language is perhaps too political in our view for acceptance by all parties. We understand that.

Now in this document and in view of your understanding of this document we have tried to use elevated and respectful language so that no one would feel insulted or diminished or disparaged and that no one should appear to have been forced to do anything.

That is why I do not think it is now the time to get involved in semantic discussions trying to define the meaning of words like "concomitant". We should rather reflect the real fact which is that there is linkage and that 435 is accepted. Because the withdrawal of our troops is not only accepted in words, but we want to make an agreement and we want the United Nations to validate that. We want the United Nations to verify it.

I think on that basis both we and the Government of South Africa will be able to effect such an agreement and justify it before its people and before the political forces operating in South Africa, as a sovereign act and reject suggestions that the efforts that have been made have not borne fruit. Statements have been made and the impression may be that the Government of Cuba has not shared in these statements. We have informed the Angolan Government that we have taken our share of responsibilities because we trust in the seriousness of this process thanks to the validation provided by the mediation efforts by the United States and because we also firmly believe that the parties are in a position to reach an agreement which will respect their legitimate interests. This is what I have to add."