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FM PRETORIA 261535Z AUG 81

TO PRIORITY MODUK

TELEGRAM NUMBER SIC U2J 960 OF 26 AUGUST 1981.

AND TO PRIORITY FCO, LUANDA, UKMIS NEW YORK AND CAPE TOWN EMBASSY.

FOR DI4 FROM DA.

SADF OPERATIONS IN ANGOLA.

MILITARY ATTACHES WERE BRIEFED ABOUT CURRENT SADF OPERATIONS IN ANGOLA. BRIEFING WAS SKETCHY BUT FOLLOWING POINT WERE MADE:

1. MAJOR PART OF CURRENT OPERATION WAS AGAINST SWAPO NORTH WESTERN FRONT HQ SITUATED 5 MILES SOUTH OF XANGONGO (1645S 1458E). FAPLA GARRISON AT XANGONGO WAS WARNED BY AIR DROPPED LEAFLETS NOT TO INTERFERE BUT HAD IGNORED THE WARNING AND A THREE HOUR SKIRMISH BETWEEN SADF AND FAPLA DEVELOPED IN THE AFTERNOON OF 24 AUG. FAPLA EVENTUALLY WITHDREW AND THE SADF HAD MOPPED UP THE SWAPO HQ CAPTURING 200 TONS OF ARMAMENTS AND 2 TANKS. ALL SADF TROOPS HAD NOW WITHDRAWN FROM THE VICINITY OF XANGONGO AND WERE NOW CARRYING OUT MOPPING UP OPERATIONS IN CONJUNCTION WITH OTHER FORCES TO THE EAST OF THE RIVER. THE IMPRESSION WAS GIVEN THAT THESE OPERATIONS EXTENDED ACROSS THE SWAPO NORTH AND NORTH EASTERN FRONTS OPPOSITE OWAMBO TO A DEPTH OF APPROX 70 KMS.
2. TOTAL NUMBER OF SADF TROOPS INVOLVED WAS SAID TO BE APPROX 4,500 ROUGHLY THE SAME AS IN SMOKESHELL.
3. SADF AIRSTRIKES HAD BEEN LAUNCHED TO TAKE OUT RADAR STATIONS AT CAHAMA AND CHIBEMBA ON THE ROAD FROM XANGONGO TO LUBANGO WHICH THREATENED SAAF AIR OPERATIONS IN SUPPORT OF GROUND FORCES. IT WAS ALSO CLAIMED THAT A SA6 MISSILE SITE WAS IN AN ADVANCED STAGE OF PREPARATION AT CHIBEMBA.

COMMENT

I BELIEVE THERE HAVE BEEN EXTENSIVE AIR OPERATIONS IN S ANGOLA AS WITNESSED BY THE TEMPORARY CLOSURE OF AIRFIELDS IN N NAMIBIA TO CIVILIAN TRAFFIC AND TOTAL ABSENCE OF FLIGHTS FROM WATERKLOOF THIS WEEK, WHICH LEADS ME TO BELIEVE THAT SIZABLE ELEMENTS OF THE MIRAGE, BUCCANEER AND CANBERRA SQNS NORMALLY BASED THERE ARE DETACHED TO NAMIBIA.

4. SPOKESMAN JUSTIFIED ATTACK ON XANGONGO AS NECESSARY BECAUSE SWAPO INCIDENTS IN OWAMBA HAD BEEN ORGANISED FROM THERE FOLLOWING SADF SUCCESSES AGAINST THE SWAPO HQ'S IN THE NORTHERN AND NORTH EASTERN FRONTS.

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5. SPOKEMAN SAID CLAIMS THAT SADF GROUND FORCES HAD PENETRATED HUNDREDS OF KILOMETRES WERE NONSENSE AND NO TROOPS HAD MOVED NORTH OR WEST OF XANGONGO.

6. SPOKESMAN ESTIMATED THAT THE OPERATION WHICH COMMENCED ON THE 24 AUG WOULD NOT LAST LONGER THAN FIVE DAYS.

CURRAN

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