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TO IMMEDIATE FCO

TELEGRAM NUMBER 380 OF 31 JULY

AND TO IMMEDIATE WASHINGTON PRIORITY UKMIS NEW YORK PRETORIA

US-ANGOLAN BILATERAL TALKS

I HAVE TRIED THIS WEEK TO URGE UPON PRESIDENT DOS SANTOS THE IMPORTANCE OF REACHING AN EARLY AGREEMENT ON CUBAN WITHDRAWAL AND TO GET SOME FEEL FOR THE ATTITUDES TOWARDS THE NEGOTIATIONS AMONGST OTHER MEMBERS OF THE ANGOLAN LEADERSHIP. AS WELL AS THE PRESIDENT I HAVE SPOKEN TO LARA, NASCIMENTO AND DA MOURA. LARA IS THE LEADING IDEOLOGICAL HARDLINER IN THE MPLA AND NASCIMENTO A KEY MINISTER. THE FOLLOWING ARE SOME IMPRESSIONS AND COMMENTS:

1. I BELIEVE THAT PRESIDENT DOS SANTOS ACCEPTS THAT THERE MUST BE EARLY AGREEMENT ON CUBAN WITHDRAWAL IF THE NAMIBIAN SETTLEMENT IS TO GO FORWARD AND IS ANXIOUS TO REACH ONE.
2. THE POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC IMPERATIVES IMPELLING THE ANGOLANS TOWARDS A SETTLEMENT ARE AS STRONG AS EVER.
3. DESPITE THEIR DESPERATE NEED FOR A SETTLEMENT THE ANGOLANS ARE ACUTELY AWARE OF THEIR VULNERABILITY TO EXTERNAL ATTACK AND INTERNAL SUBVERSION. THEY WILL NOT AGREE TO ANY TIMETABLE FOR CUBAN WITHDRAWAL WHICH IN THEIR VIEW SERIOUSLY WEAKENS THEIR EXTERNAL SECURITY OR ENDANGERS THE SURVIVAL OF THE MPLA GOVERNMENT.
4. IN THE ABSENCE OF EXPLICIT WESTERN GUARANTEES AGAINST SOUTH AFRICAN MILITARY ATTACK I SEE NO POSSIBILITY WHATEVER OF PERSUADING THE ANGOLANS TO AGREE TO A PARALLEL WITHDRAWAL OF SOUTH AFRICAN AND CUBAN FORCES WITHIN THE PERIOD OF IMPLEMENTATION OF SCR 435. EVEN WITH GUARANTEES SUCH A TIMETABLE WOULD NOT BE EASY TO SELL
5. THE ANGOLANS SEEM ADAMANT THAT UNITA MUST BE EXCLUDED FROM THE NEGOTIATIONS. AT THE SAME TIME THEY INSIST THAT SOUTH AFRICA MUST AGREE TO CEASE ALL ASSISTANCE TO UNITA. THEY APPEAR TO HAVE MADE NO PROGRESS IN INITIATING SERIOUS QUOTE RECONCILIATION UNQUOTE TALKS YET SEEM PREPARED TO ADMIT AT LEAST IMPLICITLY THE RELEVANCE OF THE CUBAN PRESENCE TO THE UNITA PROBLEM.
6. IF THE AMERICANS WOULD AGREE TO THE ANGOLANS RETAINING A CUBAN RESERVE FORCE OF MODEST SIZE FOR A PERIOD AFTER THE INDEPENDENCE ELECTIONS IN NAMIBIA THEY MIGHT (LAST WORD UNDERLINED) BE ABLE TO PERSUADE THE ANGOLANS TO AGREE TO PARTIAL (BUT SUBSTANTIAL) WITHDRAWAL OF CUBAN FORCES WITHIN THE IMPLEMENTATION PERIOD.
7. THE IDEA OF FRANCE (OR OTHER WESTERN COUNTRY) ACTING AS A SURETY FOR ANY ANGOLAN UNDERTAKINGS OF WITHDRAWAL SEEMS TO ME WORTH PURSUING.
8. THE AMERICANS AND ANGOLANS APPEAR TO HAVE COME AWAY FROM THE SECOND ROUND OF WALTERS TALKS EQUALLY DISAPPOINTED AND DISSATISFIED.
9. THERE IS A STRONG CASE FOR AN EARLY RESUMPTION OF THE TALKS BUT THE ANGOLANS WILL EXPECT A SIGNIFICANT QUOTE IMPROVEMENT UNQUOTE IN THE U S PROPOSALS ON TIMETABLING.

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10. THERE MIGHT BE ADVANTAGE IN THE U S IN THE NEXT ROUND NAMING A DATE FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT OF DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS.

11. THE U S NEED TO THINK HARD ABOUT HOW TO MEET THE ANGOLAN FEARS ON SECURITY. SOME TENTATIVE IDEAS:

(A) COULD THE US GIVE SOME KIND OF GENERAL, PERHAPS PRIVATE, ASSURANCE THAT THEY WILL USE THEIR BEST ENDEAVOURS TO SEE THAT ALL PARTIES INCLUDING THE SOUTH AFRICANS RESPECT ANY COMMITMENTS OR UNDERSTANDINGS ENTERED INTO? A FORM OF UN SECURITY COUNCIL RECOGNITION OF ANGOLA'S SOVEREIGNTY (UKMIS NEW YORK TEL 1169) IS ANOTHER POSSIBILITY. BUT SOME KIND OF EXTERNAL ASSURANCE FOR ANGOLA'S SECURITY FOLLOWING THE DEPARTURE OF THE CUBAN LEGIONS COULD HAVE AN IMPORTANT INFLUENCE ON ANGOLA'S RESPONSE TO REVISED PROPOSALS.

(B) WOULD IT BE WORTHWHILE ENCOURAGING THE SOUTH AFRICANS TO ENTER INTO SECRET BILATERAL TALKS WITH THE ANGOLANS TO EXPLORE THE POSSIBILITIES OF REACHING AN UNDERSTANDING ON AVOIDING BOTH CROSS-BORDER AGGRESSION AND SUBVERSION FOLLOWING NAMIBIAN INDEPENDENCE?

(C) THE U S MIGHT OFFER SOME SYMBOLIC GESTURE TO COINCIDE WITH ESTABLISHMENT OF DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS. FOR EXAMPLE THEY COULD OFFER TO FINANCE AND CONSTRUCT THE BRIDGE OVER THE CUNENE AT XANGONGO WHICH HAS BEEN TWICE DESTROYED BY THE SOUTH AFRICANS. THIS MIGHT HAVE SENTIMENTAL APPEAL - QUOTE A BRIDGE OF PEACE UNQUOTE ETC.

12. IF THE AMERICANS DECIDE THAT THE NEXT ROUND OF TALKS ARE TO BE THE QUOTE BIG PUSH UNQUOTE FOR FINAL AGREEMENT I WOULD THINK (THOUGH THIS IS OBVIOUSLY NOT OUR BUSINESS) THERE WOULD BE ADVANTAGE IN DR CROCKER REJOINING THE TEAM. GENERAL WALTERS HAS DONE A FIRST CLASS JOB IN RESTORING A BADLY NEEDED ELEMENT OF TRUST IN U S INTENTIONS BUT IN THE FINAL ROUNDS DR CROCKER'S NEGOTIATING SKILLS AND AUTHORITY WOULD BE IMPORTANT FACTORS.

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