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COMMENTS FOR PRESS CONFERENCE OF THE
WASHINGTON OFFICE ON AFRICA
BY PROFESSOR DAVID WILEY
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I am here in Washington today to present to the Congress copies of a petition which has been signed by approximately 500 scholars of Africa in colleges and universities in approximately 40 states of the union. The petition has been circulated by the Association of Concerned Africa Scholars (ACAS), a voluntary association of African studies scholars interested in U.S. foreign policy toward Africa.

A press release is available here describing the petition, which calls on President Reagan and the Congress to prevent all military and non-lethal assistance to UNITA or other insurgent movements devoted to civil war, sabotage, and destruction in Angola.

In the judgments of practically all American academic experts on Africa, the proposals to provide U.S. aid for the UNITA movement, which operates from bases in Namibia and South Africa as well as inside Angola, will both harm the long-term interests of the United States and result in an intolerable loss of life and human welfare in Angola.

Angola has been torn apart by foreign intervention for almost 500 years - first by the rapacious Portuguese slave trade which forcibly brought so many Angolans to this nation. Then the Portuguese used Angola as a penal colony, a source of mining and plantation revenue, and a safety valve for relocating landless peasants of northern Portugal to the better African farmlands of central Angola. After 1960, Angolans endured fifteen (15) years of brutal colonial warfare by the Portuguese, who used NATO weapons, napalm, herbicides, and strategic hamlets to relocate much of the population and to decimate popular resistance. Since independence in 1975, Angolans have been invaded by the Zairean army and repeatedly attacked and bombed, indeed actually occupied for much of that time, by the South African army.

Foreign support of Jonas Savimbi and his UNITA movement only continues the destruction and death of civil war and sabotage that locks so many Angolans into lives without healthcare, schooling, and stable agriculture, the real needs of this destabilized nation.

There are other important reasons for the United States to return to the principles of non-intervention in the affairs of Angola.

1. Supporting civil war in Angola will damage U.S. economic interests.

Angola is the fourth largest U.S. trading partner in Africa, and trade is increasing. Chevron, Gulf Oil, Texaco, and other U.S. corporations are received hospitably in Angola, and their interests there are growing, especially with the new offshore oil finds. These companies oppose U.S. aid to Savimbi, who has announced his intention to destroy their installations. As the tenth largest U.S. oil supplier, Angola is a source closer to U.S. ports and free from the cauldron of instability of the Middle East. As potentially one of the wealthiest nations of Africa with a storehouse of natural resources, the Angolans are a prime target for long-term increasing U.S. trade.

2. Supporting a civil war in Angola will hurt U.S. strategic interests.

Angola has sought to remain non-aligned, has refused to provide facilities for the Soviet navy, has rejected joining the Eastern Bloc COMECON trade community, and has repeatedly requested the West to facilitate her non-alignment. Funding a civil war against the Angolan government further erodes her non-alignment.

**3. The aim of the U.S. to dislodge Cuban troops in Angola will not be further-
ed by aiding UNITA.** To the contrary, the Angolans and Cubans have both said on various occasions that the Cuban troops will leave when Angola is no longer under attack, her soil is free of foreign occupiers, and the nation free of sabotage and civil war sponsored by foreign clients. Indeed, the escalation from a small contingent of 200 Cuban trainers to more than 30,000 troops occurred directly in response to the South African invasion on Angola, which began in October 1975 and has continued since that time.

4. Supporting UNITA allies the U.S. with the most reactionary forces in Africa. UNITA and its leaders have a long history of opportunism and factionalism, seeking personal position divisively during the liberation war against the Portuguese, allying themselves against the African National Congress (ANC) and the South West African Peoples Organization (SWAPO), and joining forces with the South Africans. Savimbi has declared publically his friendship with South African State President Botha, whose inauguration he attended as the only foreign black representative. Furthermore, unlike the MPLA movement which has much ^{of} Angola's educated and urban peoples as members, without whom the country cannot operate, the UNITA movement (like the northern FNLA movement among rural KiKongo-speaking peoples) is a small and regional movement based on Ovimbundu language and ethnic loyalties.

5. Supporting a civil in Angola will delay settling the Namibia problem.

South Africa has said it is unwilling to leave Namibia while there are Cuban troops in Angola. With U.S. support of a civil war, the Cuban troops and Eastern Bloc military equipment will grow, delaying the excising of the South Africans from their illegal occupation of Namibia.

6. In the eyes of the rest of Africa, supporting UNITA or other dissidents in Angola places the United States in direct support of ~~the~~ South Africa.

The South African government's policy of destabilizing surrounding independent African states is designed to "show that political independence in Black Africa won't work" and to ensure that South African refugees and the ANC will not be hosted. To that end, South Africa has mounted economic sabotage against all the "Front Line States" and sponsored civil wars and coups in Mozambique and Lesotho, mounted raids against Lesotho, Botswana, and Swaziland, ~~and~~ sought to exterminate the independence movement in Namibia, and trained and armed dissidents in Zimbabwe. Supporting UNITA in Angola is viewed in Africa as parallel to these ~~acts~~ of aggression. Such action will further alienate potential U.S. political and trading allies in Africa.

7. The best opportunity to ensure that UNITA followers and the villagers in their region are better incorporated into Angola is by ending the civil war.

The civil war has interfered with the Angolan government's delivery of services to the peoples of the south as roads are mined, bridges destroyed, crops burned, and communications eliminated by UNITA and the South Africans. At the time of independence, the Angolans united in a coalition government. If outside patronage of subversion and regional rebellion were ended, the Angolans are capable of building a more integrated nation.

8. **Supporting civil war in Angola will isolate the United States from both European and NATO allies and from many African nations.**

Europe is interested to expand trade with Angola, to participate in her new oil finds, and to normalize relations with Angola. Active U.S. prosecution of civil war would set us at odds with their policies. A number of African states, including Nigeria and Zimbabwe, have expressed grave concern about potential U.S. funding of civil war. U.S. corporations, diplomats, and scholars are likely to become less welcome if the U.S. supports a civil war on this continent which has experienced so much foreign colonialism and subversion.

9. **Support in the United States for Savimbi is not fundamentally oriented toward the welfare of the Angolan peoples but is an expression of U.S. domestic politics and of conflict with the Soviet Union.** Savimbi and UNITA are being touted in the United States as bearers of the flag of freedom and as "a model for Africa." Such ideology takes no account of the actual internal politics and needs of Angola and of the fact that, at this time, UNITA symbolizes in Angola and for much of Africa an opportunistic movement, built on regional and ethnic factionalism, willing to mount a civil war that serves more the interests of its outside South African and other patrons than of their own rural peoples.

(David Wiley is a faculty member in sociology at Michigan State University, where he also is director of the African Studies Center, a faculty of over 100 African specialists. He is a specialist on African affairs in Southern Africa, including several years of research there in Zimbabwe and Zambia; author and editor of Southern Africa: Society, Economy, and Liberation (1981) and The Third World: Africa (1983); a founding board member of the Association of Concerned Africa Scholars (ACAS); Vice-Chairperson of the U.S. National Commission for UNESCO; and a member of international advisory committees of the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) and the National Science Foundation.)