

hand is visible in the current offensive. Some 14 Soviet MiG-23 fighter jets and numerous Soviet Hind-35 attack helicopters are attacking UNITA, while, according to the State Department, 100 Soviet military advisors are involved in planning and directing the fighting. Moscow has sent an estimated \$1 billion in military assistance to the Angolan regime over the past year in preparation for such an attack.

The immediate objective of the Soviet-backed off-ense is to capture Mavinga, one of UNITA's two remaining airfields. An Angolan government military source confirmed a Tuesday that the capture of Mavinga would mean the end of UNITA's military existence. UNITA will be pushed to the sea, where it is expected to be annihilated.

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## ANGOLA: TESTING GORBACHEV'S "NEW THINKING"

It is the first major test of the Soviet Union's "new thinking" in East-West relations, and Mikhail Gorbachev may be failing it. In Angola he is showing that, despite his promises, Moscow may not be willing to end regional confrontations with the West. It is in Angola last week where a massive Soviet-supported military offensive was launched against the United States-supported Angolan resistance forces, led by Jonas Savimbi. The military attack is the largest since Savimbi and his followers took up arms against Angola's Soviet-supported regime in 1975. There now is mounting concern that Savimbi's remaining bases could be overrun soon.

What is happening in Angola will have global repercussions. Steve Symms, the Idaho Republican, told his Senate colleagues last week: "Soviet conduct in the Third World is a vital indicator of Soviet long-term intentions toward the U.S." Added Senator Dennis DeConcini, the Arizona Democrat: "Little attention has been paid in recent months to what may become a large scale slaughter." If the Bush Administration does not condemn this attack strongly and does not help Savimbi resist the offensive, Washington will be telling Moscow that the Soviets need not change their behavior in regional affairs. Said Symms: "Unless we stand firm now, the Soviets will feel free to act with impunity in the Third World to the detriment of U.S. national security interests." This is a message that must be taken to Moscow this week by Secretary of State James Baker when he meets with Soviet Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze. Baker must not allow Moscow to conclude that Washington's focus on (and delight with) the developments in Eastern Europe can blind the U.S. to what happens elsewhere.

The U.S. has made a significant investment in Savimbi's National Union for the Total Independence of Angola, widely known as UNITA, providing the rebel movement with an estimated \$100 million in assistance since 1986. This assistance has paid off. Largely as a result of UNITA's battlefield success, Cuba and the Angolan regime announced in December 1988 that the 50,000 Cuban troops in Angola would leave by July 1991, in exchange for Namibia's gaining independence from South Africa. U.S. support for UNITA also forced the Angolan regime to start negotiating with UNITA last June to discuss a settlement to the Angolan conflict and the reform of Angola's authoritarian political system.

**Success and Respect.** Since Washington began sending military aid to Savimbi's UNITA forces, they have made significant headway: liberating one-third of Angola from communist rule; establishing a functioning government which provides a full-range of services; and earning the respect of many world leaders, including Ronald Reagan and George Bush. Last week in Lisbon, Savimbi addressed a joint session of the Portuguese parliament, and was welcomed by Portugal's Socialist President Mario Soares. Many of Africa's senior statesmen, such as Ivory Coast's Felix Houphouet Boigny, Zaire's Mobutu Sese Seko, and Kenya's Daniel arap Moi, support Savimbi's objectives of a democratic Angola.

Opposing Savimbi in Angola is that country's Marxist regime, which has been kept in power since 1975 only with the help of 50,000 Cuban troops and 2,500 Soviet military advisors. Moscow

hand is visible in the current offensive. Some 14 Soviet MiG-23 *Flogger* fighter jets and numerous Soviet *Hind-35* attack helicopters are attacking UNITA, while, according to the State Department, 100 Soviet military advisors are involved in planning and directing the fighting. Moscow has sent an estimated \$1 billion in military assistance to the Angolan regime over the past year in preparation for such an attack.

The immediate objective of the Soviet-backed offensive is to capture Mavinga, one of UNITA's two remaining strongholds. An Angolan government military source confirmed last Thursday that the capture of Mavinga was "imminent." Should Mavinga fall to the Marxist regime, UNITA will be pushed back to its last base camp, Jamba, which the Angolan regime is expected to bomb.

**Unexplained Interruption.** UNITA's difficulties have been complicated further by an unexplained interruption in the arrival of American military supplies. Though Congress has appropriated an estimated \$30 million to assist UNITA this year and Bush has declared that UNITA will receive "appropriate and effective assistance," American supplies have been arriving only sporadically. Without the American arms, Savimbi lacks anti-aircraft weapons, fuel, and other critical supplies.

Should UNITA continue to lose ground, or be defeated completely, the Soviet Union will consolidate its control over Angola, one of Southern Africa's greatest strategic prizes. The Bush Administration will lose credibility in Africa as a reliable partner at the very moment when Washington's prestige in Africa has begun to climb and when America, in contrast to the Soviet Union, is being viewed as a model of political and economic development. To ensure that Savimbi and the U.S. do not lose, the Bush Administration should:

- ◆ ◆ **Reopen immediately the American military supply line to UNITA.** UNITA needs *Stinger* anti-aircraft missiles, fuel and ammunition.
- ◆ ◆ **Strongly condemn Moscow's role in the offensive.** Baker should put this at the top of his agenda when he meets with Shevardnadze in Moscow.
- ◆ ◆ **Suspend immediately the American humanitarian assistance program in Angola.** The Bush Administration was scheduled to begin sending humanitarian assistance this month to the Angolan regime. This should be suspended until the Angolan army withdraws completely from UNITA-controlled territory.
- ◆ ◆ **Ensure that any cease-fire agreement between the Angolan regime and UNITA is conditioned upon the Angolan regime moving its forces back to previous positions.**

The American public is justified in asking: "If Mikhail Gorbachev cannot be trusted in Angola, can he be trusted anywhere?" If there is "new thinking" in Soviet foreign policy and if Gorbachev is, as he claims, very different from Leonid Brezhnev, then Moscow will call off the Angolan offensive. If not, then Gorbachev's "new thinking" will fail its first regional test, forcing America to reconsider its new relaxed attitude toward the Soviet Union.

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For further information:

Michael Johns, "Namibia and the Global Democratic Revolution," *Heritage Lecture* No. 224, 1989.

Michael Johns, "Angola at the Crossroads," *Heritage Foundation Executive Memorandum* No.219, November 17, 1988.