

**November 27, 1973**

**Mike Malone to Secretary for Foreign Affairs,  
Pretoria, 'Angola: The Progress of the War'**

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SECRET



SUID-AFRIKAANSE KONSULAAT-GENERAAL,  
SOUTH AFRICAN CONSULATE-GENERAL,  
CONSULADO-GERAL DA AFRICA DO SUL,

C. P. 1304-C  
LUANDA,  
ANGOLA.

27 November 1973.

The Secretary for Foreign Affairs,  
PRETORIA.

ANGOLA : THE PROGRESS OF THE WAR

It is pleasant to be able, once again, to report that the general current of the anti-terrorist war in Angola, which is now in its twelfth year, continues to run strongly in favour of the Portuguese. It is no doubt an exaggeration to say - as did a senior Portuguese Security officer in the course of a conversation with me a few days ago - that "the war in Angola has been won". That it is well on the way to being won is, however, beyond dispute and barring international intervention or a general collapse of willpower in the mother country itself, the prospects for the future appear distinctly encouraging.

What have been the principal factors which have brought about the remarkable improvement in the situation here in the course of the last two or three years? Although it is difficult to list them in order of relative importance, it may confidently be said that the Portuguese success has depended largely upon effective socio-economic development schemes (among them the "aldeamento" system), an excellent security network, good military intelligence coupled with prompt reaction to information received on the part of special highly-trained combat units, systematic censorship of the Press and Radio (thereby eliminating all sensational reports which could lead to discouragement or panic among the civilian population) and - last but by no means least - the chronic inability of the three terrorist movements operating in Angola to co-operate with each other.

Compared with the position (say) in 1970, when the anti-terrorist struggle was going very badly indeed for the Portuguese, military, economic and politico-administrative measures aimed at "winning the hearts and minds" of the Native civilian population have become much more closely integrated, especially in the "danger areas" of Northern and Eastern Angola where Commanding Officers who act as Military

*Ms. V. V. [Signature]  
Gen. [Signature]  
11/23/73*

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*7.4 inf. Copies sent to  
BSS and Lisbon. 11/12*

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*[Signature]*

Governors in a general co-ordinating capacity have been appointed.

On the politico-administrative level it is true to say that the "aldeamento" system in Eastern Angola which, in its initial stages encountered serious practical difficulties, is now functioning satisfactorily. In the "Central Heartland" of Angola where terrorism never established a foothold, economic development combined with the socio-economic upliftment of the population, continues steadily, thereby providing a bulwark against subversion in that particularly important region. The same applies to Southern Angola, where the Cunene Scheme, when completed, holds great economic possibilities for both the European and Native populations of the area.

In the purely political field, the granting this year of a greater measure of local autonomy to Angola (leading to the possibility of a Black parliamentary majority at some future date) has had what appears to be a favourable effect on certain of the more moderate terrorist leaders, leading them to the conclusion that their aims could perhaps more easily be attained by constitutional methods than by subversion. It is only fair, however, in this connection, to add that the political developments referred to have led, in the case of the European population, to a measure of uncertainty as regards Lisbon's ultimate intentions. The existence of an underground "U.D.I." movement numbering among its adherents many of the long-term European inhabitants of this newly-created "Portuguese State" has long been an undisputed fact. Those involved, I believe, are now more concerned that Portugal may oblige them to shoulder the burdens of independence too soon (i.e. before terrorism is finally defeated) rather than too late. In the meantime, they are keeping very quiet and awaiting developments. This, however is merely by the way. Those involved in the potential "U.D.I." movement in Angola know very well on which side their bread is buttered and, as a faction, need not be taken seriously at the present juncture. Their moment will arrive only when it is absolutely certain that the terrorist danger has been permanently eliminated (something that appears unlikely for a considerable time to come) or that the war against the terrorists has deteriorated to such an extent that desperate measures seem to offer the only hope of success. This second eventuality, fortunately, appears at present a good deal more remote even than the former.

In the course of recent months whatever faint chance still existed of an effective reconciliation of the two principal rival terrorist groups operating in Angola (the M.P.L.A. and the F.N.L.A.) faded still further, while the split in the M.P.L.A. ranks about which I reported previously has grown wider. Not only are the M.P.L.A. and F.N.L.A. terrorists still doing all they can to thwart one another, but the rival M.P.L.A. factions (composed now of a "Northern" group under Chipenda and an "Eastern" group under Neto) have reached the stage where they are using their weapons against their erstwhile "comrades". It

appears, too, that the support of the African States, which was previously enjoyed largely by the M.P.L.A., has now been switched to their rivals, the F.N.L.A. - a factor which will do nothing to increase the love between Agostinho Neto of the M.P.L.A. and Holden Roberto of the F.N.L.A. In this connection it is worthy of note that, during the course of his recent visit to Tanzania (towards the end of July this year) Holden Roberto was publicly referred to by Nyerere as "the leader of the Angolan revolution". This, in view of the fact that Nyerere has always hitherto supported the pro-Communist M.P.L.A. movement, represents a startling volte-face on the part of the Tanzanian President.

From what has been written above, the impression may possibly be gained that no acts of terrorism are currently taking place in Angola. This, of course, is incorrect. In war, as in all other phases of human activity, all things are relative and the situation here may be described as "peaceful" only in relation to what it was previously. During recent weeks, for example, two attacks upon vehicles took place in the Songo area of Northern Angola, in the course of which no less than thirty-seven persons (including five soldiers) were killed and seventeen wounded! As was to be expected during the season of the coffee harvest, the F.N.L.A. have been particularly active in Northern Angola, with their customary attacks upon vehicles and isolated farmhouses in the Cuanza Norte District - their aim being to disrupt the economic life of the area in question and to create an atmosphere of fear and uncertainty among the civil population. However, the Angolans have by now become used to this sort of thing and incidents - such as the Songo ambushes referred to above - which in the Republic, with the enthusiastic aid of our Press, would no doubt have caused something approaching a national panic, here pass entirely unnoticed. This happy state of affairs, of course, is due to a large extent to the fact that the Portuguese, who are a hard-headed and realistic race, have never seen any reason to place virtually unrestricted power to influence public opinion in the hands of a small group of possibly irresponsible private individuals for no other reason than that they happen to own or control newspapers. Had they followed our example and made a fetish of the concept of "the freedom of the Press", it is my personal opinion that the war in Angola would have ended years ago, and that the terrorists would have won it. But this is merely by the way.

On the Eastern Front, on the other hand, F.N.L.A. activity has, in recent months, been restricted to a little desultory mine-laying in the Teixeira de Sousa region, while the M.P.L.A. terrorists, large numbers of whom have either been liquidated by the Portuguese Security Forces or have retreated back into Zambia, have operated almost exclusively in the frontier areas of the Mexico District and around Alto Cuito. Their activities also were mainly confined to mine-laying and self-defence actions when cornered by Security Forces. In Northern Angola the disintegration of the M.P.L.A. continues and, in this region they have ceased to represent a serious danger.

Owing to the current favourable situation in Eastern Angola, Portuguese military operations in recent months have been principally concentrated on the North. Although no spectacularly large operations have taken place, the total results achieved by a large number of small operations were highly satisfactory - 146 terrorists killed, 49 wounded, 252 assorted weapons and large quantities of ammunition captured, 4530 natives liberated from terrorist control. Of even more long-term significance, however, is the socio-economic development plan for the Dembos region, which envisages the assisted resettlement of both White and Black farmers in the area North-East of Luanda, which became largely depopulated after the first terrorist onslaughts in 1961. It is expected that the scheme will prove a considerable attraction to the natives who are still under terrorist domination in the inaccessible forest areas of the Dembos region and who would, given the opportunity, like to return to a safe and settled life. It will also, if successful, provide a useful "buffer" of well-disposed and well-armed agriculturalists North of the capital, on the main terrorist infiltration route from the Republic of Zaire to the South.

So much, then, for the general progress of the campaign. On the debit side, however, it must be borne in mind that Portugal is fighting a "poor man's war" and that her Security Forces are obliged to operate with the minimum of logistic support. This applies particularly to air support, a factor which is of particular importance in an anti-terrorist war fought in a thinly populated and largely undeveloped country larger in total area than the Republic. A second disquieting factor is the poor motivation and unsatisfactory level of leadership displayed by the majority of "National Service" officers from Metropolitan Portugal who are sent here for their two years stint of compulsory military service. This problem is largely overcome, however, by using only a relatively small number of highly-trained and well-motivated professional or semi-professional elite troops to do the actual fighting, the remainder (the vast majority) being utilized merely for garrison duties and logistic support.

In conclusion, it is a truism to remark that the outcome of a revolutionary war depends to a very large extent on the relative willpower and determination of those concerned: the side that is prepared to "stick it out" longest, wins. In this respect, the Portuguese have a built-in advantage. Although slow-moving and by no means paragons of efficiency, they are, as a race, exceedingly tough and stubborn - and we in South Africa have excellent reason to thank Providence that this is the case. Whether, in fact, we always realise it is another matter.

three additional copies attached, one for transmission to the Ambassador, Lisbon, and one for the Secretary for Security Intelligence. Our military authorities are already in possession of all the facts mentioned in this report, plus a good many more.

L I S B O N.  
22 FEBRUARY 1973.  
*E. M. Malone*  
CONSUL.-GENERAL.

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8/2

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