

DO NOT REMOVE Angolan Scenarios

National and international opinion is currently being conditioned for imminent conflict between President José Eduardo dos Santos' MPLA government and the UNITA movement of Dr. Jonas Savimbi. Blame is already cast on UNITA and its intransigence towards Angola's peace agreement. The situation is complex with elements on both sides opposed to a military solution. Military means are, however, unlikely to bring peace. More hopeful, is the prospect of a change of leadership in both parties.

Analysis

Origins of the Current Troubles

The current problems have their root in a cocktail of mistrust, access to wealth and personal ambition mixed in with three decades of civil war. Following UNITA's failure to win power in the 1992 election, conflict resumed between Savimbi's forces and the government army — *Forças Armadas de Angola* (FAA). UNITA forces quickly gained control of over 70% of the country, but were gradually pushed back by FAA with assistance from the South African-based mercenary outfit Executive Outcomes.

With international diplomatic intervention, a cease-fire was declared in terms of the Lusaka Protocol, and signed in November 1994. Implementation of this agreement is overseen by a Joint Commission, comprising representatives of the Angolan government, UNITA, and the so-called Troika of observer states (Russia, US and Portugal) under the chairmanship of the UN Secretary-General's Special Representative. Until his death in a aircraft crash in Cote d'Ivoire on 26 June 1998, this position was filled by the Malian diplomat Maitre Alioune Blondin Beye. UN interests are now being looked after by its special envoy, the former Algerian Foreign Minister Lakhdar Brahimi who led UN operations in Haiti.

Since 1994, the progress made towards disarmament, demobilisation and peace has been slow, with the timetable more than a year

behind schedule. After 1994, Savimbi was able to regroup his forces and rearm principally via Zaire. Yet his sources of outside support altered dramatically with the ousting of President Mobutu Sese Seko of Zaire in May 1997 and the subsequent overthrow of President Pascal Lissouba in neighbouring Congo-Brazzaville in October 1997, both partly the result of direct intervention by FAA.

According to the Lusaka timetable, UNITA was to have handed over all territory under its control by 1 April. Yet among the areas still being occupied by that deadline were the strategically-important localities in Kwanza Sul, the diamond-rich Lunda Norte and Malanje Provinces, as well as the UNITA headquarters at Bailundo and Andulo. According to the UN Secretary-General's report to the Security Council on 21 April, 60 of some 344 localities that were to have been returned to the government under the Lusaka Protocol, were still under UNITA control.

Both sides had little more faith in this timetable than the many which have preceded it. In the words of one expert Angola watcher in March, "it seems to be setting the scene for a military confrontation rather than for peace". On 11 March the Deputy Minister of Territorial Administration, Higino Carneiro, noted that as UNITA had formally declared that it no longer had troops under arms, the government would act harshly against any "manifestations of banditry".

Under the terms of the Protocol, following UNITA's and the UN's declarations that UNITA's demobilisation is complete, the FAA is now free to attack any remaining soldiers, deemed as armed bandits — *bandidos armadas*. The country thus moves inexorably to war, along with the conditioning of national and international opinion that UNITA is solely at fault. On 22 July, the Angolan National Assembly passed a motion authorising the government to use all means at its disposal to oblige UNITA to meet its obligations under the Lusaka Protocol.

The peace process has been full of contradictions: on the one hand, UNITA has adhered to key features of the final timetable. On the other, a growing catalogue of armed attacks by UNITA have been launched in territories handed over to the government. At the same time, the government has stood accused of driving UNITA activists from municipalities already surrendered.

The international community has seen fit to punish UNITA for failing to hand over its central highlands strongholds and to complete the demobilisation of its armed forces. On 1 July, the UN imposed severe sanctions on UNITA, freezing the movement's foreign bank accounts, banning its diamond exports and preventing all air and water transport in and out of territories under its control. Despite these moves, it is reported that UNITA is currently receiving up to 20 supply flights daily — highlighting the importance of continued access to the diamond producing areas and export routes as a means of independent support for UNITA, worth as much as US\$500 million annually. War remains good business on both sides — the absence of peace and of government structures cedes influence and control of government budgets to hawks. The import of weapons also offers the opportunity to take a cut on the side.

Troop Strength

Despite the claimed demobilisation of all UNITA combatants under UN supervision, the UN Secretary-General's report to the Security Council on 13 March stated that a total of 27,291 UNITA soldiers had deserted from demobilisation camps. At least 8,000 and perhaps as many as 20,000 of UNITA's best soldiers are estimated never to have participated in

the demobilisation process. Despite critical shortages of diesel and cash, UNITA's military command believes that it will be able to withstand any government offensive. There are also reports that as many as 300 mercenaries, among them South Africans, have signed up to fight for UNITA.

FAA currently has approximately 90,000 men at its disposal, though its fighting units are estimated by intelligence sources to be around 12,000-strong, stiffened by 100-plus mainly South African mercenaries. Of this number, 1,500-2,000 are deployed in Pointe Noire and Brazzaville, 5,000 in reserve at Futungo with the remainder at Catumbela, Huambo and Cabo Ledo. Morale is reportedly low, with senior officers not having been paid for the past two months. It is certain that mercenaries will be used again if the FAA should go on a full-scale offensive. FAA is recently understood to have taken delivery of three Czech L-39 ground-attack aircraft to bolster its existing air fleet which is beset with maintenance and serviceability problems.

“War remains good business on both sides”

The Namibian government has agreed to make air bases at Rundu, Omega and Mpacha available to launch airstrikes against UNITA. While this could expose UNITA's rear base areas and make them vulnerable to helicopter-borne air assault operations from the south, it also opens up Namibia to guerrilla operations by UNITA in Caprivi and Kavango.

Mercenaries are also believed to be using sophisticated aerial reconnaissance and electronic surveillance daily to try to track Savimbi, thought to be hiding somewhere between Andulo and Bailundo on the Central Plateau, with the express purpose of trying to assassinate him. There is still apparently a large bounty out on the UNITA leader's head, hence his (unsurprising) reluctance to travel to Luanda. But by being intimidated in this fashion, he is, of course, playing into the hands of the government's hawks who seek a military outcome, and his recalcitrance has led to a split in the movement with the UNITA parliamentary wing based in Luanda and led by **Abel Chivukuvuku**.

Indeed, the current problems have made life difficult for those on both sides working together and has given rise to speculation of splits in the leadership of both parties.

New Leadership?

There are reputedly plans in place to topple Savimbi as UNITA's leader. Mentioned as possible successors are current Minister of Tourism and Hotels, **Jorge Alixerces Valentim**, and former UNITA Secretary-General **Eugenio Manuvakola**, both of whom are critical of Savimbi's strategy. It is unclear what the future holds, also, for the head of the UNITA delegation in Luanda, Brigadier **Isaias Samakuva**, and the FAA Deputy Chief of Staff General **Arlindo Chendo Pena** (known as 'Ben Ben') who is Savimbi's nephew. Despite these problems, it appears that there is broad agreement within UNITA that the party should attempt to renegotiate the Lusaka Protocol which, it is felt, places blind faith in the MPLA without exacting any guarantees in return.

The outcome of the current crisis may be influenced by the fact that it is about more than just inter-party rivalry. A lack of clarity about who will succeed the terminally-ill President Dos Santos has led to an intra-MPLA powerplay. It has been suggested that the likelihood of a new offensive against Savimbi has more to do with Santos' lieutenants trying to prove their credentials than an attempt to seek a military solution to the conflict.

Santos is expected to step down at sometime in the next year, providing he receives the necessary assurances regarding the preservation of his personal wealth. Prime Minister **Franca van Dunem**, MPLA Secretary-General **Lopo de Nascimento**, and the head of the MPLA delegation to the National Assembly and Santos' favourite, **Joao Lourenco**, are front runners to succeed him. In particular, Nascimento is already lobbying hard for support. He is apparently opposed to military action, given that this crisis will result in increased support for Santos.

The offensive has also triggered a new bout of activity by General **Joao de Matos**, FAA Chief of Staff. His commitment to a military offensive might also portend his rise to political power, despite his *mulatto* status. However, it is believed that the General is not in favour of military action. This push is reputedly being made by others, including the **Faceira** brothers, Generals **Kopelipa** and **Cirilo de Sa** (known as 'Ita').

The sharp fall in the oil price alongside a likely rise

in military expenditure will hit the government hard. Already there has been a 26% cut from the original US\$3.8 billion government budget.

Significance

The Effects on Angola's Neighbours

Some (notably Congo-Brazzaville and the former Zaire) have already felt the effects of Luanda's new approach to implementing a *cordon sanitaire* to keep UNITA isolated from its supply routes.

There is now evidence of the various Great Lakes opposition movements working closely to co-ordinate a joint strategy in a group known as the Alliance of Democratic Forces (ADF). Involving principally former Mobutuists (prominent among them a number of young Colonels), UNITA, Cabindan secessionist groupings, former Rwandan Armed Forces (FAR) personnel including Interhaumwe/ Hutu militia, and members of the Front for Democracy for Burundi (FRODEBU), this group has reportedly established arms smuggling and training networks throughout the region. The use of South African, Zambian and Tanzanian territory is key in the co-ordination of their activities, though these remain principally in the Great Lakes region. The ADF is involved in the renewed fighting in Uganda in August 1998.

There have been allegations that UNITA has set up bases in Zambia following the disruption of its Zairian supply lines. President **Frederick Chiluba** has denied Zambian complicity, though his regular liaisons with Dr. Savimbi would appear to suggest otherwise. UNITA has already been accused by the MPLA of attacking and occupying the Cazombo salient in Moxico province on the Zambian border. On 4 March, the Angolan Ambassador to Zambia, **Augusto Emanuelle**, warned Lusaka to halt support for UNITA or face military action. Sources indicate that these remarks were intended to justify attacks by FAA's 16th Regiment against targets in Zambia, prior to it striking against UNITA deployment areas in the central highlands. Elements of UNITA ground forces are believed to be deployed in Western Zambia, and established road logistical supply routes exist. Kitwe and Solwezi are also used for air supply. Use of Zambia in this manner is likely to continue given its highly profitable nature.

For SADC and South Africa

This raises interesting questions for South Africa, not only as the regional powerhouse (and expected stabiliser), but also as the chair of the Southern African Development Community (SADC). Following a meeting of SADC leaders in Swakopund, Namibia on 26 July, Deputy President **Thabo Mbeki's** spokesman, **Ricky Naidoo**, admitted "the SADC felt that it is just beyond their ability to deal with it".

Angola illustrates perfectly that mediation is only successful in Africa when at least two conditions are met: first, there is a real basis for an internal settlement. Here a way has to be found in which the major conflicting parties can both get essential elements of what they want at the same time. If a settlement merely puts off the day of reckoning (as in Angola), then mediation efforts are not going to progress far.

Second, successful mediation requires a reasonably united international community, in which different outside parties can bring pressure on the rival domestic parties to settle.

The past dialogue between SA officials (including President Mandela) and UNITA is viewed unfavourably by Luanda, and seriously jeopardises the chance of Pretoria's honest brokerage in the current *impasse*. However, continued diplomatic efforts will, at the very least, make a formal transition to war more difficult, as neither side can afford to say that it went to war because it was not prepared to meet the other.

Likely Scenarios

Scenario One — Fighting Erupts:

If full-scale war does resume, there is likely to be no clear victor. Without considerable mercenary input, the FAA does not have the capability to force a military solution. Even if hard-pressed, UNITA will most likely revert to what it knows best, a guerrilla campaign — despite UN sanctions funded by international sympathisers principally in the US and Europe, and with assistance from a range of African

actors (notably Togo). Sanctions are unlikely to be effective against UNITA given that its diamonds are easy to smuggle and do not reveal their country of origin. The creation of the regional Alliance of Democratic Forces may prove an ominous development, and could lead to a greater spill-over of the effects of conflict than anticipated.

This is the most likely scenario.

Scenario Two — Peace is Negotiated:

This demands a number of events: first, Savimbi not only places faith in the Angolan political system and settles for a reduced role, but that his security and access to business (diamond) interests are guaranteed by Luanda; second, constructive dialogue between the protagonists, involving outside powers and agencies such as South Africa and the SADC, occurs. Indeed, to stave off conflict,

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Pretoria will have to engage with Angola both bilaterally and through the SADC in a manner that makes clear that, first, all regional parties are united in their condemnation of military action by both sides and, second, that South Africa will not tolerate any further attacks on Angola's neighbours, whatever the strategy and reasoning behind it. In doing so, South Africa will have to

be prepared to incur political costs in its relationship with its SADC rivals and with the Angolan government.

This is obviously the most preferable scenario but an unlikely one. Even if a meeting can be arranged between Savimbi and Santos, it is uncertain what lasting, long-term settlement this will bring.

Scenario Three — New Leadership?

This may prove to be the one which results in a dramatic alteration of the Angolan *status quo*, but which will lead to continued uncertainty especially in the short-term. Savimbi's increasing isolation from the UNITA parliamentary caucus in Luanda and President Dos Santos' failing health may, in this way, prove to be the breakthrough for peace.