

Neither Fish nor Fowl(er)? Peace Efforts in Angola

Robert Fowler, Canada's UN Ambassador, presented the UN Security Council with a 14-point plan on 8 June 1999 designed to strengthen sanctions against the Angolan rebel movement, the *National Union for the Total Independence of Angola* (UNITA). This plan aims to reduce UNITA's ability to wage war by denying it access to fuel and arms, and its most important source of revenue, the international diamond market. What is the likelihood of success of sanctions against UNITA — and of peace in Angola?

The Current Situation

Currently the war rages on. In late-May, a government army (FAA) General Sa Miranda, commander of the eastern military command area and decorated veteran of Cuito Cuanavale, admitted the situation in Lunda-Norte Province, the major diamond-producing area in the north-east, is critical following the beefing up of military operations by UNITA. Rebel forces have cut road links between Dundo, an interim seat of the provincial government, and other cities by destroying major bridges while launching attacks on major mines.

Sporadic, low intensity fighting continues on the *planalto* and in the Uige province. *Jornal de Angola* reported on 2 June 1999 that FAA units recovered Cuima, 50km south of Huambo, and Chindjenje, to the west of the provincial capital. The newspaper also referred to operations against UNITA's 'Sumy' base, in which a quantity of matériel was captured. Provincial government officials in Uige have indicated that UNITA blew up a bridge over the Luchanga River on 2 June, bringing to eight the number of bridges destroyed in the province since April 1999.

Elsewhere, the government-held city of Malanje, some 450km east of the capital, Luanda, has been the scene of sporadic shelling for nearly four months during which time the city has been crammed with tens of thousands of internally displaced people. According to a UN Integrated Regional Information Network (IRIN) report of 7 June, humanitarian officials in Angola have said that they were growing increasingly worried about the situation in Malanje because shelling by UNITA rebels had made it impossible to conduct a humanitarian assessment mission and had also brought a halt to emergency food deliveries.

The key strategic question in the Angolan conflict at present concerns the capacity of FAA to launch its planned offensive against UNITA, and the scale and timing of that attack — put simply, if and when it will

take place. There are indications that the offensive, already twice delayed — and most recently planned for the last week of June and early July — might be postponed yet again, perhaps until September. It is, of course, possible that this is disinformation, intended to mislead UNITA's command and give the FAA the benefit of an unexpected strike, but there are a number of factors that suggest the contrary:

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For one, the delivery of at least some of the new weapons and equipment ordered by Luanda has been delayed, due apparently to pricing disputes following the transfer of responsibility for purchasing arms from General Viera Dias 'Kopelipa' to General Joao de Matos. Moreover, FAA troops are reportedly unready to launch an all-out offensive. Unwilling to risk

another defeat, Matos has therefore resisted pressure from President José Eduardo dos Santos and Defence Minister Kundi Paihama to move against UNITA's bases on the Central Highlands. UNITA's high morale, its presumed ability to strike against Soyo and in Cabinda, and to undertake stand-off bombardment of Luanda with its North Korean-supplied Frog 7(a) surface-to-surface missiles allegedly possessed by UNITA (see *SAIIA Intelligence Update April 2/1999*), counts against the FAA concentrating the great majority of its forces in an assault on UNITA bases at Bailundo and Andulo. An in-depth attack on multiple fronts is General Matos' preferred strategy, but it will take some time before he is in a position to launch this.

Although a rudimentary missile with no in-flight command-and-control capability, with a range of 80km it has been rumoured that the Frog will be deployed as a terror weapon against Luanda or foreign nationals at oil installations at Soyo and in Cabinda. Security at the offices and residences of high-ranking officials in Luanda has also been stepped up against the risk of sporadic attacks by UNITA. Given the threat posed by UNITA, senior FAA officers are apparently developing plans to improve area defences around Soyo and in Cabinda.

Defence Minister Paihama sounded an uncompromising note in an address at the meeting of Ministers of Defence of the *Comunidade de Países de Língua Portuguesa* (CPLP — Community of Portuguese Speaking Countries) at Praia in Cape Verde on 25 May. He pledged that the FAA would destroy 'Savimbi's war machine' and ruled out talks with UNITA, promising a 'final war'. Having travelled to Lisbon after the Praia meeting, Paihama then sought and reportedly secured Portugal's commitment to 'strengthen its role in the training of Angolan military personnel ... within the framework of the accord on technical and military training between the two countries'. The Minister has referred specifically to training for a Special Forces battalion and company commanders.

Paihama ended his visit to Portugal with the claim that the *Movimento Popular da Libertacao de Angola* (MPLA) government would have stabilised the situation in the country by the end of the year. After the FAA offensive in which UNITA's forces would be weakened, Paihama said, there would be '...a general cleansing operation, in which I think our population will choose to participate'.

These observations are not dissimilar to those made by Foreign Minister Joao Miranda in South Africa in May, or of Roberto de Almeida, President of the National Assembly, in the course of his visit to the United Kingdom. UNITA Secretary-General Paulo Lukamba 'Gato' was, by contrast, quoted on 2 June 1999 as saying that 'if [President] Jose Eduardo dos Santos wants to return to the logic of peace and dialogue, Dr Savimbi is ready. We even have an agenda prepared'. Can UNITA be trusted? Gato, for one, has a hardline reputation, and there is widespread doubt both inside and outside Angola about Savimbi's reliability, particularly after the events of 1992. Yet many of the younger members of UNITA are war-weary and apparently ready to sue for peace.

But while many MPLA officials on the periphery of power apparently believe that negotiations are the better course, this option is sharply rejected by those in the presidential circle. And while UNITA's rhetoric still makes provision for negotiations, it has gravitated towards an acceptance of the likelihood that more fighting will precede new negotiations.

The Fowler Plan

Robert Fowler's report notes that 'a significant number of Southern African Development Community (SADC) members' are allegedly involved in smuggling to UNITA, though this was mostly 'as a result of private interests acting without the knowledge of their governments'. Among his recommendations is to deploy UN inspectors at

suspected trans-shipment points. By way of example, he said, 'such inspectors might usefully be deployed in and around the following areas' with a mandate to report on alleged sanctions violations: Ouagadougou in Burkina Faso; Abidjan in Côte d'Ivoire; Tahikapa, Dilolo, Kolwezi and Lubumbashi in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC); Nampula in Mozambique; Rundu in Namibia; Durban and airfields in northern South Africa; Dar-es-Salaam in Tanzania; Lomé in Togo; Entebbe and Kampala in Uganda; Mansa, Mongu, Ndola and Livingstone in Zambia; the Angolan capital Luanda and other Angolan ports; and Kiev, Ukraine.

Here the agreement signed on 10 June between Zambia and Angola and brokered by King Mswati of Swaziland should be viewed in the context of Fowler's report. Lusaka and Luanda have agreed to 'forget all past disputes' and put behind them the growing deterioration in relations over Angolan allegations of Zambian assistance to UNITA.

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Fowler also proposes consideration of the use of air surveillance and interdiction assets of members of SADC to prevent UNITA's resupply. His report suggests that nations in the region provide his committee with intelligence on UNITA purchases and trade so as to curb the flow of arms, oil and money to the rebels. He also recommends an air embargo and travel curbs on senior UNITA officials.

The recommendations are also intended to cut off UNITA's major source of revenue through diamond sales which, it is now estimated, may have generated as much as US\$3-4 billion for the rebels since 1992 and US\$200 million in 1998 alone. Such action, however, will require collaboration among diamond producers and buyers to identify and confiscate UNITA diamonds, and would involve the location of a small number of monitors at major international diamond exchanges. He has also recommended a system under which diamond-producing countries introduce 'standardised and credible' certificates of origin.

Fowler's plan is not designed to be punitive, but instead to foster conditions for a resumption of political dialogue between UNITA and Luanda. Two expert panels working under his committee will, under the terms of his proposals, look into further measures and monitor progress. The sanctions committee would continue 'to review UNITA's willingness to engage in political dialogue and calibrate Council-imposed sanctions accordingly'. Fowler has said that he plans to follow up his African tour with a visit to European nations.

But if his recommendations are adopted by the Security Council, will it stop UNITA getting outside

funds and military equipment and hasten an end to the war?

Put simply, these measures may make more difficult UNITA's sale of diamonds and delivery of arms but, given the porosity of Africa's borders and the money to be made, will not cut them off altogether.

For example, a recent report by Human Rights Watch entitled *Money Talks — Arms Dealing with Human Rights Abusers* alleges that in the mid- to late-1990s, Bulgaria 'exported, transported, or trans-shipped arms to conflict areas, particularly in Africa, and its weapons continued to make their way to abusive military forces, including government forces and rebel groups'. Arms sales in the Southern African region have, apparently frequently been brokered by South African middlemen.

During the Cold War the report notes that Bulgaria's arms industry was the 'cornerstone of the national economy'. To maintain hard currency flows and avoid job losses, either covertly or through legitimate sales, Bulgaria's export orientated arms business has attempted to cash in on international conflicts. Human Rights Watch claim that Bulgaria has supplied both the Angolan government and UNITA with arms. The report notes that UNITA delegations travelled to Bulgaria in 1998 and in January 1999, 'purportedly for "sightseeing" purposes but in all probability to arrange arms deals'.

But Bulgaria is not the only origin of UNITA arms: Ukraine, Rumania and North Korea are all allegedly key suppliers. But Angola remains a major source of arms and equipment, much of which has been, in turn, obtained originally from, among others, Russia and Brazil.

The Fowler plan presumes that the international community will fund the cost of monitors at a variety of locations. The recommendations also presuppose a degree of political unity and selflessness until now lacking not only in the SADC region but also in Angola itself. For one, this would make more difficult the sale of Angolan government diamond production, some of which is in the private hands of senior government officials, particularly the military. Thus while the UN is seeking to establish a system of certificates of origin for all diamonds produced in Southern Africa in a new bid to curtail the main source of revenue of UNITA, this presumes a degree of organisation and will in Angola itself.

Prospects for Peace?

The options for Angola are not necessarily mutually exclusive:

- first, for the government to continue fighting and trying to kill Savimbi and defeat UNITA;
- second, to try to resolve the situation through conflict resolution and negotiations while the fighting goes on;
- third, for the international community to step up its activities and contain one side (or both) through sanctions limiting the ability to wage war, and set up a negotiation framework; and
- fourth, for a military stalemate to continue, in which the majority of Angolans suffer but their leadership continues to prosper financially.

The latter scenario is, unfortunately, the *status quo*. The question thus remains: what is the most useful way forward in breaking the Angolan war impasse?

For peace to triumph over war, it is clear that both sides, the MPLA and UNITA, will first have to be convinced that a military solution is neither possible nor desirable. Containment of both sides will not only convey this message, but will have the impact of reducing the ability to wage war.

Second, a route has to be found to build common ground and trust externally and internally. This is unlikely to be that proposed by Fowler's report to which UNITA has already responded with predictable alarm and rejection noting, *inter alia*, that the Ambassador should 'not come to our country ... dripping with the blood of the native people of Canada, whom you murder on a daily basis'.

A strategy of containment along with conflict resolution of both sides offers a win-win scenario. In this, both UNITA and the MPLA will have to be given the necessary reassurances that not only will their personal physical security be guaranteed (certainly a major concern for UNITA and Jonas Savimbi who continues to have a bounty on his head), but that their personal wealth will remain secure. For if containment of the MPLA is not exercised, not only will it believe that a military solution can be engineered, but also in doing so will provide UNITA with a source of resupply.

Containment and conflict resolution can only, however, be achieved through concerted international action involving the good offices of the UN and its Security Council. It will invariably contain political costs and involve great energies which the international community has, until now, been reluctant to expend further on Angola. Most important, such a strategy will require a champion: could this be Thabo Mbeki's South Africa?