

# Administration Sells Out UNITA & FNLA

## Carter Betrays Angolan Freedom Fighters

by Ernie Volkman

To the guerrillas of FNLA and UNITA forces still fighting Angola's Marxist regime — and its 25,000 Cuban "advisers" — eventual victory, while not exactly around the corner, seems at least possible. In the ancient maxim of guerrilla warfare, they can win by simply not losing — and the longer they can inflict casualties on the Cubans and the longer they can keep Angola's economy paralyzed, the better their chances seem to be.

But they're wrong.

What they don't know is that they are now in the process of being sold down the river. And who is selling them out? The United States, which is most responsible for their existence, and which has done the most to encourage them to sacrifice their lives in the name of anti-Communism.

In short, UNITA and FNLA have become pawns in a complicated game of international politics — and those pawns are now being sacrificed in a gambit the Carter administration says will "restore stability" to southern Africa. Officially, the administration's move is called "strategic pragmatism," although the fact



MPLA troops pass in review. Russians have provided MPLA and Cuban mercenaries with continuing stream of modern ordnance.

of the matter is that the United States has decided that anti-Communist guerrillas in Angola have outlived their usefulness.

Basically, here's what's happening:

In July 1978, President Carter sent Ambassador Donald McHenry on a secret

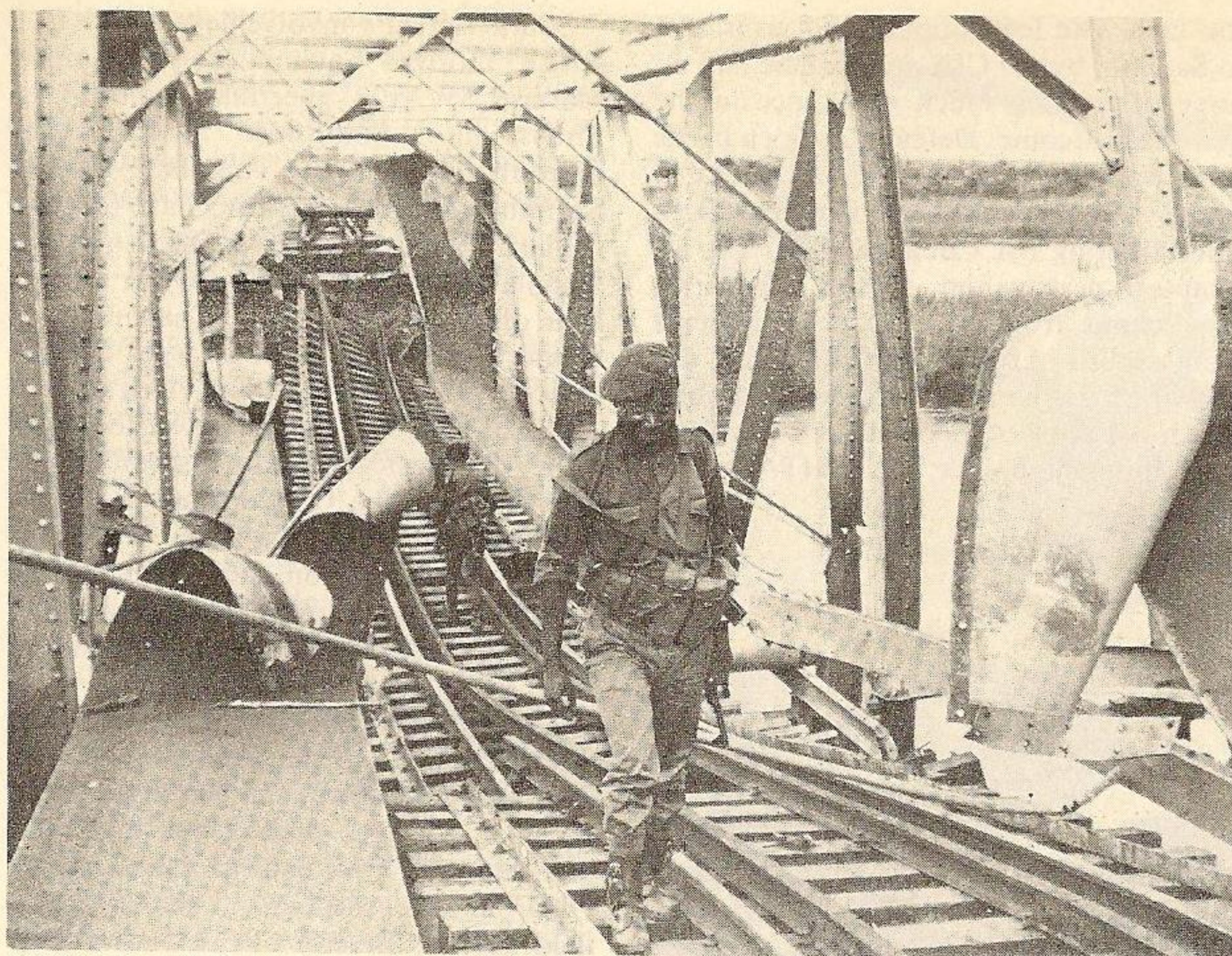
mission to Angola. During talks with Angolan officials, McHenry said Carter wanted "peaceful relations" with that country's Marxist leaders. As a demonstration of "good faith," McHenry told the Angolans, the United States would pressure Zaire to stop supporting FNLA guerrillas under Holden Roberto and move to end support of UNITA guerrillas under Jonas Savimbi. The United States would also negotiate a new agreement with Angola and Zaire guaranteeing each other's borders. Also, an agreement would be worked out between Angola and Zambia, under which Zambia would stop providing help to UNITA.

Now, here's what everybody got out of the deal. First, Angola, in one swoop, got rid of two guerrilla movements that actually own various parts of the country and prevent any economic progress. Most importantly, the United States was promising to help reopen the Benguela Railway, Zambia's lifeline to the sea across Angola. Used for transport of Zambian copper, the railway is an important source of income for Angola, but has been closed for three years by UNITA

Russian MiG-17s supplied to Communist-backed MPLA at Luanda Airport. UNITA and FNLA have no air capability.







Vital Benguela rail bridge, destroyed during guerrilla war in Angola. This rail line is main route for Zairian copper shipments to Atlantic coast. Sloppy demo job.

guerrillas. In return, Angola has agreed to remove Katangese secessionists from the Zaire border areas (they carried out a big raid in Shaba Province, Zaire, last year, leading to French military intervention: see "Jump into Shaba," SOF, February 1979). Additionally, Angola has agreed to "think about" removing 25,000 Cuban troops from the country.

Zaire not only gets rid of the Katangese problem, but is also promised considerable American aid — recently, Carter approved a \$26-million aid package for its faltering economy. Zambia gets the Benguela railway reopened.

Neither FNLA nor UNITA was consulted on this little deal, of course, and considering the arms, advice, and encouragement the United States has given them over the years, their betrayal at this point is bitterly ironic. They should not be surprised, though, for as the Taiwanese, South Vietnamese, Laotians, and others have learned at terrible cost, there is often a big gap between what America promises and what it ultimately delivers. Cuban exiles, just to cite one example, are familiar with the pattern of being trained, armed, and encouraged to die in the name of American foreign policy, then later being told that the policy has changed, and they are no longer needed.

In the case of the anti-Communist guerrillas in Angola, precisely the same pattern is now being repeated. Like many others before them, they believed what the Americans told them: no matter what happens, the United States will always be

behind you. The betrayal in Angola was especially abrupt, and it might be valuable to take a close look at how it evolved, for it tells us much about how the covert war — or what's left of it — against international Communism has become so totally fouled up.

Dr. Jonas Savimbi, charismatic leader of UNITA, continues to fight primitive guerrilla war with minimum of weapons, supplies.



To begin at the beginning, you'll recall that UNITA and FNLA grew out of the factionalized guerrilla war against the Portuguese colonial government in Angola. That war, which went on for nearly 20 years, abruptly and unexpectedly ended in 1974, when a revolution in Portugal ended colonial rule in Angola. That led to a civil war between the Marxist guerrilla faction, MPLA, and UNITA and FNLA, the pro-Western factions. Thanks to Soviet and Cuban military aid, MPLA gained the upper hand early in 1976. The other two factions have continued a guerrilla war against the MPLA government, propped up by 25,000 Cuban troops.

Both FNLA and UNITA were covertly supported by the CIA, along with South Africa (which provided arms to UNITA), Zaire (which provided sanctuary to FNLA), and Zambia (which provided low-level logistics aid to UNITA). But the aid was nothing near the massive amounts of arms, including tanks and missiles, provided the MPLA by the Cubans and Russians, and not surprisingly, the MPLA got the upper hand. And even that low relatively low amount of support for the pro-Western factions was cut off by the U.S. Congress in 1976 after it found out about the secret CIA aid.

To be fair about it, Congress had a point: if we were going to help the pro-Western factions against all the military might shipped in by the Russians and Cubans, then a secret \$20-million aid program to UNITA and FNLA was half-assed and a waste of money. Either really help those people or get out.



And half-assed the CIA program was. In fact, Angola amounts to one of the agency's worst performances. Ineptitude was apparent from the beginning: in 1967, despite the fact that Angola's mineral wealth and location on the African sub-continent make it one of the most vital strategic areas in that area of the world, the CIA had a grand total of one man watching over things. And that one man was removed later that year when CIA headquarters didn't see much value to what he was telling them about Angola.

In 1970, The CIA suddenly realized that Angola might be important and sought to establish links with pro-Western guerrilla forces. Initially, CIA interest was focused almost exclusively on Holden Roberto's FNLA; Roberto was put on the agency payroll to provide information on the guerrilla situation. Incredibly, Roberto's duties included reports on UNITA, whose leader, Jonas Savimbi, was his rival. Naturally, Roberto's view of UNITA was somewhat jaundiced — at one point, he described Savimbi falsely as a "thief" who had stolen \$50,000 from FNLA after quitting Roberto's movement. At the same time, Roberto didn't bother telling the CIA that he was receiving arms aid from the Chinese and North Koreans.

For that reason, the CIA tended to underestimate the UNITA movement, despite the fact that Savimbi's followers were concentrated among Angola's Umbundu tribes, which form over a third of Angola's population and control the country's central highlands and southern plateau agricultural region. The CIA did not seem to understand that nobody could control Angola without the Umbundus — and it was Savimbi who controlled the Umbundus.

The agency was badly misled by numbers. By July, 1974, when the Portuguese revolution dramatically changed things in Angola, Roberto had 24,500 troops and Sam Savimbi only 3,000 — although Savimbi had greater popular support among the people in areas he controlled. Thus, the CIA bet most of its chips on Roberto, whose ill-trained troops proved to be no match for tanks and other modern weapons. And not surprisingly — FNLA troops were used to guerrilla warfare, not slugging matches using conventional tactics. The CIA made a second mistake: it assumed that Savimbi was militarily helpless, and when the Angolan transitional government took control on January 30, 1975, Savimbi's request for a mere \$100,000 in aid was rejected by the agency.

Savimbi turned to the South Africans for aid, with later disastrous consequences; hated by black Africans, the South African connection left a stain on Savimbi's movement from which he never recovered politically. By July, 1975, when the CIA realized it had made a mistake by betting exclusively on the FNLA, it was

too late. The few supplies and arms sent to Savimbi by the CIA at that time had no hope of making much difference in the eventual outcome. Defeated in open battle — as was the FNLA — Savimbi retreated to his southern bastions, and has been since fighting off Cuban and MPLA attempts to destroy him. Almost all his arms now come from clandestine shipments from South Africa, with the tacit approval of the United States and Zambia, which has allowed its border to be used as transshipment points for UNITA movements.



Youngsters start learning art of war at early age.

As for Roberto, he operates out of sanctuaries in Zaire, with aid provided by Zaire's president, Joseph Mobutu. The arrangement works well for Mobutu, who also supports a small guerrilla movement called FLEC (Front for the Liberation of the Cabinda Enclave), which is trying to take control of a small strip of Angolan land rich in oil wells. Mobutu has used FNLA, primarily, as a counterweight to Angolan ambitions and the ever-present danger of invasion by Katangese separatists now covertly trained and armed by the Cubans at camps in northern Angola.

South Africa's involvement also has a selfish motive: Savimbi helps dampen Marxist SWAPO guerrillas, who make forays into Southwest Africa from hideouts in southern Angola. Without Savimbi, the South Africans have felt, the Cubans would then move into southern Angola and organize SWAPO for a takeover of Southwest Africa. That, in turn, would form the base for a larger Cuban-directed effort against South Africa itself.

All of this, which amounted to something of a Mexican standoff, seemed to be just fine with the United States — until, that is, several months ago, when the Carter administration moved to change things. And that move may have awesome consequences, not only for Angola, but all of southern Africa as well.

The move began last spring, in a corridor of the U.S. Senate building. Senator Dick Clark of Iowa, the leading African expert in Congress and author of the law that cut off CIA aid to UNITA and FNLA in 1976, was buttonholed by Stansfield Turner, director of the CIA. Turner said he wanted to talk to Clark about Angola, and showed the senator a typewritten piece of paper stamped TOP SECRET. On the paper, Clark read of a plan to covertly send arms shipments to UNITA and FNLA forces via France. The arms list included Redeye surface-to-air missiles for use against Cuban jets operating in Angola.

Turner's conversation with Clark, an attempt to get the senator to support a new CIA effort in Angola, was the culmination of a fight that had raged for months within the Carter administration. On one side was Zbigniew Brzezinski, the President's security affairs adviser, Secretary of Defense Harold Brown, and Turner. Alarmed at growing Cuban influence in southern Africa, they argued that only covert American intervention against Cuban forces in Angola would force the Cubans out. Brzezinski noted that UNITA guerrillas, though vastly outnumbered and outgunned, were tying down thousands of Cuban troops in the wilds of southern Angola. Both Brzezinski and Turner argued that American aid to UNITA — and to FNLA guerrillas fighting a low-scale war in the north — would turn Angola into "Cuba's Vietnam," ultimately costing them so many casualties, they would simply quit.

The argument was a supreme piece of cynicism, of course. As Turner and Brzezinski well knew, UNITA had no hope of decisively defeating the Cubans — but they hoped UNITA would be willing to sacrifice their lives in a war of attrition that would cause the Cubans large casualties and lead to their withdrawal from Africa.

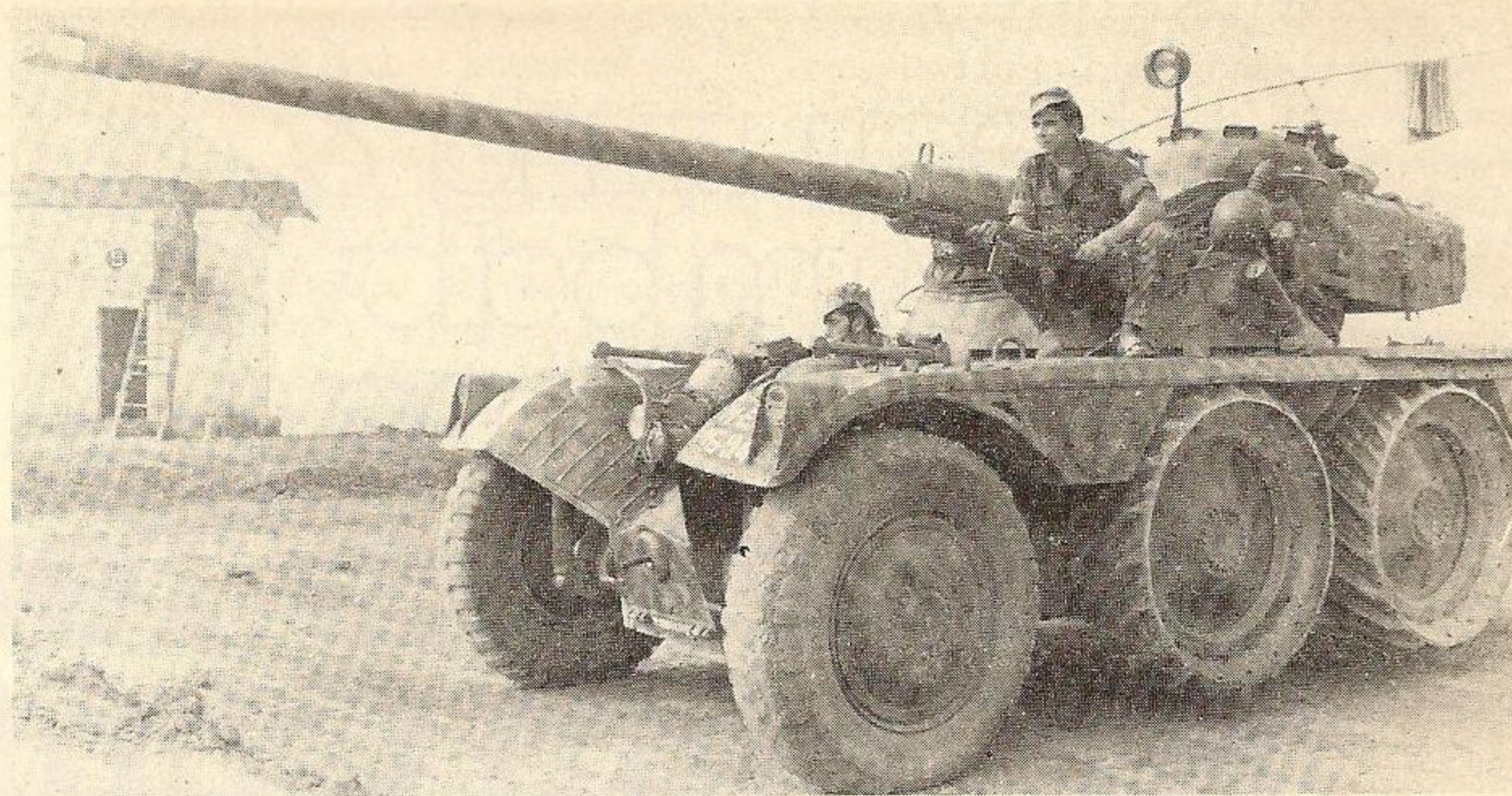
On the other side, Secretary of State Cyrus Vance and others argued that the plan wouldn't work — the Cubans would



simply send in more troops, and the Russians would send in bigger weapons. Vance said that the only possible solution to the problem of Cubans in Africa was political: the United States would have to negotiate some sort of a political settlement in Angola. And if that meant the end of UNITA and FNLA, that was just too bad.

Carter was in the middle of the argument, and while trying to make up his mind, ordered Turner to draw up what he described as a "contingency plan" for CIA aid to UNITA and FNLA. It was at this point that Turner took a copy of the plan to Clark. When Carter found out, he was furious, suspecting — rightly — that Turner was trying to force his hand. For that indiscretion, simply the latest in a long series of CIA blunders in connection with Angola, Turner lost the argument; Carter opted for the Vance plan for political negotiation.

And so we come to the diplomatic mission mentioned earlier in this account. Obviously, the American offer was attractive to Angolan Marxists, since it required them to give away very little. In exchange for curbing the Katangese — who had gotten the Angolans into hot water with the French and other Western European nations anyway, because of excesses during last year's invasion of southern Zaire — the Angolans got rid of two festering guerrilla problems. The United States agreed to pressure the South Africans to stop aiding Savimbi and to convince the Zambians to close their border to UNITA movements. At the same time, the Amer-



Most of FNLA and UNITA armored capability, such as this obsolescent Panhard armored car, have been destroyed. White mercs pictured here have long gone.

icans agreed to curb the FNLA by telling Mobutu that one condition of a new American aid program to get his economy straightened out was an end to support of the FNLA.

And what about the Cubans? The Angolans made vague promises about asking them to leave the country — someday, maybe. Since this was the ostensible reason for the whole American idea of political negotiation, selling FNLA and UNITA down the river without getting a firm guarantee of Cuban withdrawal seems a bad bargain. It seems even more so when you consider the fact that the

Angolans have claimed all along that the only reason they have Cuban troops in the country is to battle anti-government guerrillas.

So here's how the deal now looks: Zaire and Angola, under American prodding, have established "normal relations." Zaire has stopped support of the FNLA and FLEC. That latter group will now have to stop guerrilla operations, which threatened the safety of the oil-drilling complex operating there by Gulf Oil, whose \$500 million annual concession fee to Angola forms that government's major source of foreign exchange. Zambia has also established "normal relations" with Angola under American sponsorship, and the Zambians hope soon to begin shipping the huge backlog of copper ore that has been waiting for the Benguela Railway to reopen. Angola has disarmed and moved the Katangese away from border areas. The Southern Africans are being pressured by Washington to end support for Savimbi, in exchange for which the United States will support a political settlement in Southwest Africa that excludes SWAPO. Meanwhile, the Cubans remain.

And what about UNITA and the FNLA? As noted earlier, they have become expendable pawns. They will either have to make a political accommodation with a Marxist government they detest or fight on in the jungles against impossible odds.

Either way, they will die.

As is typical of communist countries, youth are introduced to art of war at early age.

