

# “ Taking aid from the devil himself”<sup>1</sup>

## UNITA's support structures

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In writing this chapter on UNITA's support structures, their evolution and operations, I am acutely aware of two facts. First, when it comes to Angola there are few solid facts, merely disputed versions of reality. Second, one can only relate to Angola, with some sort of dignity, through first hand experience. This caveat is stated here since the aim of this chapter is to understand the origins and forms that have allowed UNITA to create a sophisticated and workable supply structure that the international community is determined to stop. That this has not taken place seems to imply that the international community is either incompetent or unwilling to strive seriously towards this goal. Rather than assuming this as truth, perhaps it is better to reflect on the possible reasons why the international community has failed. To do this, it is necessary to revisit UNITA's strategy of self-reliance and contrast it with the type of basic support structures and supply lines that UNITA uses today. But this is not enough in itself. It is equally necessary to describe the myopia that prevents the international community from taking efficient action in this regard.

### Unita's strategy of self-reliance 1966–1989

Understanding how UNITA's insurgency strategy shaped its development of support structures; how it operated in the past; is still operating today; and how it will keep UNITA in the bush for as long as it takes to achieve its objective; requires some basic reflection on the events that shaped that strategy.

Insurgent groups use different strategies to obtain their political objectives. The three most common insurgent strategies utilised in the developing world during the 1960's and 1970's were either derived from a Marxist-Leninist, Maoist or Cuban model. UNITA's leadership was trained in, and adopted, the Maoist strategy for its insurgency, which ascribes great importance to popular support, organisation, environment and self-reliance. It is an incremental strategy that consists of several phases, each dependent on the successful implementation of the previous phase, namely, the political organisation or terrorism phase, guerrilla warfare phase, and the mobile or conventional warfare phase.

During the political organisation phase, cells are created to build political propaganda groups to win popular support. Guerrilla units/teams are deployed to intimidate and attack selected targets. Insurgents' stress esoteric appeals, and parallel hierarchies begin to provide social services and mutual assistance programmes. The objective of this phase is to mobilise popular support and build the infrastructure for self-reliance. In the guerrilla warfare phase small units of guerrillas operate in rural areas where the terrain is rugged and government control weak. The famous dictum of this phase is "enemy advances – we retreat, enemy entrenches – we harass, enemy exhausted – we attack, enemy retreat – we pursue".<sup>2</sup> As guerrillas succeed in isolating the population from the government, the so-called parallel hierarchies become more and more important and valuable to the insurgents' strategy. The insurgents stress their own ideology to supplant the legitimacy of the government. The objective of this phase is to consolidate the popular support base and the infrastructure for self-reliance and weaken government influence and the security forces. Finally, the mobile-conventional warfare phase of the Maoist strategy is civil war. Guerrilla forces are regularised, and the forces of the government are confronted in mobile conventional war. At this point, the objective is to defeat the government.

### Laying the foundations of self reliance: 1966 to 1976

The *União Nacional para a Independência Total de Angola* (UNITA), was established in October 1964<sup>3</sup>, and formally constituted on 15 March 1966. UNITA initiated its war dependent on its own devices, a trend that it would develop into an art that remains its mainstay today. On 26 October 1966 UNITA's first trained guerrillas crossed the Angolan border to start a liberation war against Portuguese colonial rule. Savimbi and 'the Chinese 11', as his initial group of trained guerrillas became known, had just returned from training in China, and were starting their war based on promises of support from the Chinese government and important political functionaries in Tanzania and Zambia<sup>4</sup>. Their arsenal consisted of knives, pangas and a single Tokarev pistol – a gift to Jonas Savimbi from Sam Nujoma, the leader of the newly formed South West Africa People's Organisation (SWAPO). Early in 1966, rudimentary support networks had been established by Smart Chata at Muangai, a Chokwe village 250 km from the border of Zambia.

The trained guerrillas split up into two groups (of unknown size), with some going to the forested areas near Cassamba and the rest to Muangai, to start training recruits in the cells prepared by Chata.

Although training started, the promised weapons from China were not delivered because of problems transporting them across Tanzania and Zambia. Co Liang, a Chinese government representative in Dar es Salaam, who was responsible for handling UNITA's affairs, did manage to get some money through to UNITA via Cassamba. Smart Chata was sent to Zaïre to buy weapons and ammunition and he returned with ten 7,62mm FN FAL rifles and some ammunition. Although not an arsenal as such, UNITA decided to press ahead with training.

The theory of Mao's model for guerrilla warfare states that the best source of arms is from the enemy<sup>5</sup> and this is where they turned.

After a few clashes between Portuguese patrols and UNITA's raw recruits, the Portuguese started issuing First World War vintage Mauser rifles<sup>6</sup> to village chiefs to "protect themselves against the bandits"<sup>7</sup>. They issued 15 rifles per village chief. On average five to seven of these weapons per village in the UNITA area (some 67 chiefs) ended up in the hands of the guerrillas.<sup>8</sup> UNITA's first organised military attack took place on 4 December 1966, against Cassamba<sup>9</sup>, a small timber outpost. The attack was such a disaster that UNITA would prefer to forget it. The careful teachings of Chairman Mao on conducting the insurgency<sup>10</sup> had been ignored.

Another UNITA group under the command of Samuel 'Mwanangola' Chivala attacked the border town of Teixeira de Sousa (Luau) on 25 December 1966.<sup>11</sup> Again the tactical gains were few and the losses many, and as in the attack on Cassamba the principles and teachings of Mao were not applied. The UNITA command structure discussed the events afterwards, and came to the conclusion that they would have to re-evaluate the way in which they conducted training, military operations and support structure development. It was decided that they would return to the principles of Chairman Mao<sup>12</sup> and it was a path from which UNITA would never again deviate. The philosophy became: "We stand for self-reliance. We hope for foreign aid but cannot be dependent on it; we depend on our own efforts, on the creative power of the whole army and the entire people."<sup>13</sup> The development of UNITA's insurgent strategy would be consolidated after a second visit to China.

The Teixeira de Sousa attack did, however, establish UNITA's reputation and brought much-needed African recognition and support. President Abdel Nasser of Egypt sought an urgent meeting with UNITA, and President Kenneth Kaunda and Prime Minister Mainza Chona of Zambia also promised support. The latter tied its support to three undertakings by UNITA: it would not attack the Benguela railway line (crucial for Zambian copper exports), it would staff its office in Lusaka with Zambians of Angolan extraction and it would refrain from recruiting support from Angolan exiles living in Zambia.

The Zambian authorities issued Savimbi with a Zambian travel document so that he could go abroad to seek support. In Egypt President Nasser gave money to UNITA, and promised arms and ammunition through Zambia, if Kaunda consented. From Egypt Savimbi travelled to China, where he had a planning meeting with Chairman Mao Zedong in Yunnan. The end result of the meeting was a plan to win peasant support for UNITA, and the establishment of a new base area in the hills and thick forests of the headwaters of the Lunge Bunge River. He was also informed that a shipment of weaponry and other supplies would be sent via Tanzania, where President Julius Nyerere agreed to accept them.<sup>14</sup> While Savimbi was in China, the 'Chinese 11' in Angola did what they were trained for – guerrilla warfare – and twice blew up the Benguela railway line. This action did not sit well with Kaunda, and Savimbi was arrested on his arrival in Lusaka. It was

only on the recommendation of President Nasser of Egypt, and the insistence of President Nyerere, that Savimbi was allowed out of Zambia and deported to Egypt. During the 16 months Savimbi spent in Egypt he established UNITA's first external mission in Cairo, and developed his strategy for building UNITA on a Maoist model.

During July 1968 Savimbi left Egypt, returned to Angola and started to build UNITA as a self-sufficient people's army. On arrival he found a rag-tag outfit of about 1 500 guerrillas with 300 rifles amongst<sup>15</sup> them, and no other supplies to wage war against the Portuguese. Savimbi set upon organising an armed wing, officially known as *Forças Armadas de Libertação* or FALA, with Samuel Chiwale as General Commander, and Samuel 'Kafundanga' Chingungi as Chief of staff, responsible for finding supplies. Nzau Puna was appointed Secretary General and Political Commissar for the army.

Equipment and supplies were the highest priority on the list, and UNITA embarked on a self-reliance programme that was to serve them well. Attacks were planned and executed against achievable targets that would yield maximum results in terms of hardware returns. The first of many of these attacks was launched against a convoy of four supply trucks where rifles and ammunition were the main commodity looted and the trucks destroyed. The culture of living off the land and re-supplying from the enemy was being created.

1969 brought another ugly reality to Angola. The *Movimento Popular de Libertação de Angola* (MPLA) guerrillas and UNITA guerrillas in the same areas started to fight each other.<sup>16</sup> The competition between the MPLA and UNITA and effective Portuguese counter-insurgency operations meant that the colonial power was well in control of Angola right up to Angolan independence, despite the 12-year-old liberation war.<sup>17</sup> It was the military *coup d'état* in Portugal, that led to Angolan independence and not the military successes of any of its liberation movements.

Unlike the other Angolan liberation movements, the UNITA leadership lived in Angola. They concentrated most of their effort on the political mobilisation of the Ovimbundu people and succeeded in winning their hearts and minds. By 1974 UNITA still had a small army but was successful in garnering local support. The Armed Forces coup on 25 April 1974 in Portugal changed all of that. Widening political rifts between the three main liberation movements made the achievement of a tripartite government impossible and by mid-1975 it was obvious that a civil war was imminent. UNITA had good cause to welcome the proposed elections in October 1975, since it was probably the strongest of the political parties.<sup>18</sup> It was, however, out-equipped and out-gunned by both the MPLA and the *Frente Nacional de Libertação de Angola* (FNLA). Recognising the political reality of his situation, Savimbi turned to South Africa for support – a decision that would have profound impact on both his political party and his standing as an African leader. The ensuing civil war resulted in the loss of countless lives, and political disaster for UNITA.

## UNITA's parallel hierarchies

According to the Maoist strategy, successful insurgencies are not built on military strength alone. Popular support for the insurgency is the life-blood of the revolution and an indispensable ingredient for its success. Guerrillas, therefore, have to develop structures that can serve the population in the absence of government agencies, in order to show the population that the insurgency serves its best interests. In the language of Maoists insurgents these structures are called 'parallel hierarchies'.<sup>19</sup>

Parallel hierarchies can take two forms: use of existing state administrative infrastructure through subversive individuals, or, the creation of new (sometimes clandestine) structures to take over full responsibility for their functions when the political-military situation is ripe. UNITA's 'parallel hierarchies' were created in the absence of functioning governmental and administrative infrastructure.

Despite the fact that Angola was a Portuguese colony for more than 400 years, the Portuguese had little interest in developing that country or its population. In fact the part of Angola where UNITA started to build their popular support was called the "land at the end of the world" by the colonial power, demonstrating Portugal's lack of interest in those parts of Angola where responsibility crossed the divide between profit and commitment.

From the onset, UNITA recruiters and guerrillas entering Angola were instructed to respect tribal custom and authority and to spend their energy on discrediting the Portuguese system of colonialism. In this way the movement integrated with the population, enabling them to instil their doctrine and political agenda to ensure a viable political and military organisation with a broad popular support. The UNITA doctrine espoused African-socialism, self-reliance, and a respect for tribal cultural heritage. By 1976 food production by villages in UNITA controlled areas of Angola started to develop into collective farms, and food storage facilities for guerrilla forces were established at villages throughout the operational area.

## The key to survival: 1975 to 1989

When the Portuguese handed independence 'to the people of Angola' and Commodore Cardoso stole out of Luanda on the 10 November 1975, leaving the Angolans to fight it out, UNITA's political aspirations came to nought. The MPLA installed itself in power in Luanda on the following day. The civil war against the MPLA raged on until March 1976. Earlier, on 12 February 1976, UNITA had declared that it would return to the bush to continue its guerrilla war, this time against a new enemy, the MPLA.

Savimbi set off to his traditional areas of support and started to rebuild his organisation. This time the emphasis was much more on creating a sustainable 'state' within south-eastern Angola, and formalising the 'parallel hierarchies' into functional 'official' structures. Simultaneously with the creation of sustainable

structures for self-reliance, UNITA had to maintain its own security and win outside support. By June 1976 UNITA guerrillas were again engaging the government forces in ambushes, hit-and-run attacks to acquire supplies and sabotaging the Benguela railway line. By the end of 1976 UNITA had raised about US \$18 million.<sup>20</sup> This support came mainly from Arab, Iranian and French interests. However, the bulk of UNITA's material support came from and through South Africa.

In an effort to win United States support Savimbi visited New York and Washington DC. In 1979 Savimbi was the guest of the New York based Freedom House. During press briefings in Washington, he lifted the veil on some of UNITA's support structures when he stated that UNITA was mining diamonds in Angola, and selling the diamonds to purchase commodities necessary for its war effort.<sup>21</sup> He also revealed financial and material support from Senegal, Gabon, Sudan, Egypt and Morocco. In November 1980 Ronald Reagan was elected president of the United States, and United States interest in Southern Africa increased. The Reagan administration's policy was that of "constructive engagement" which Chester Crocker, Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs, summed up as follows: "The Reagan administration has no intention of destabilising South Africa in order to curry favour elsewhere. Neither will we align ourselves with apartheid policies..."<sup>22</sup> This provided enough room for South Africa to step up supply and support to UNITA. Military and material support flowed into UNITA, assisting the movement to establish a self-reliance structure unparalleled on the continent.

By the end of 1981 Savimbi again visited the United States to present UNITA's case and garner American political and material support. In arguing his case Savimbi skirted the issue of South African support by listing his main supporters as China, Morocco, Senegal, France, Togo and Côte d'Ivoire.<sup>23</sup> Although successful in charming his hosts, the visit did not yield any substantial support from the United States government, at least not immediately.

South Africa continued to supply UNITA with most of its military needs, while acting as conduit for trade in natural resources such as diamonds, ivory and timber to the outside world. Although Savimbi claimed that UNITA was paying the South African government for providing this assistance, this was a deliberate misinterpretation to justify UNITA in front of its African supporters and critics alike. South African military intelligence was, by the mid eighties, already supporting UNITA with a budget of R400 million a year (roughly US \$200 million).<sup>24</sup> The money for supporting UNITA came out of the South African taxpayers pocket, augmented by profits made by selling ivory, hardwood and the like.

By 1984 diplomatic pressure on South Africa to resolve the 'Namibia issue' was mounting. The United States government, through Chester Crocker, eventually negotiated a schedule for South African withdrawal from Angola, and the independence of Namibia. An initial cease-fire was set for 31 March 1984. A joint military commission to monitor South Africa's withdrawal from Angola was established, and soldiers from both sides joined in patrolling southern Angola.

But, SWAPO and UNITA, the other military forces occupying the same territory, were not represented on the commission, nor were they signatories to the agreement. This led to accusations and counter accusations between South Africa and Angola of cease-fire violations, and non-adherence to the agreement. South Africa accused the Angolan government of failing to exercise control over SWAPO, and the Angolan government in turn accused South Africa of continuing support to UNITA.<sup>25</sup>

The whirlwind of diplomatic activity accompanied by South African and Angolan manoeuvring to serve their respective interests and objectives left UNITA without a solid outside base for support. Adding to this uncertainty was the sudden and real possibility of Namibian independence, which would cut UNITA off from its tested and secure supply routes. It would also expose the UNITA headquarters at Jamba in south-eastern Angola. The relations between UNITA and SWAPO already very bad since 1975, turned into open animosity. While threatening to disrupt the whole process with a major offensive against Luanda if they were not consulted in the process, UNITA launched the first concerted efforts to establish alternative supply lines and support structures to replace the inevitable loss of those through Namibia. Although some support for UNITA, most notably that from France and the United States was channelled through Zaïre, the connections were nowhere near as active as those from Namibia. UNITA started to develop Cazombo<sup>26</sup> as a larger supply base due to its location close to Zaïre and Zambia. This also gave UNITA access to the Indian Ocean via the TanZam railway line, which connected the Zambian Copperbelt with the port of Dar es Salaam.

The negotiation process between South Africa, Angola and the United States on the withdrawal of foreign forces from Angola and the independence of Namibia in terms of United Nations Security Council Resolution 435, were temporarily suspended with the killing of two South African soldiers and the capture of another in Cabinda on 22 May 1985. The soldiers were on a raid to sabotage a Gulf Oil installation – an intention that obviously angered both the United States and the Angolan governments. Negotiations ceased, and several years of careful attempts by the Reagan administration to settle the 'issue of Namibia' and ensure a withdrawal of Cuban troops from Angola, were frozen.

This created a breathing space for UNITA and South African military intelligence to work on creating future support structures for UNITA. Despite the breakdown of negotiations around Namibian independence, the Reagan administration succeeded in getting the Foreign Aid Authorisation Bill passed on 11 June 1985 which again allowed covert support to UNITA.<sup>27</sup> The 'Reagan Doctrine' which followed the passing of the bill, was formulated with Afghanistan, Nicaragua and Angola as key areas of implementation.<sup>28</sup> It took until September 1986, however, for the Reagan administration to obtain approval for covert assistance to UNITA, and until early 1987 for the official launching of the support pipeline through the air base at Kamina in Zaïre. This came just in time for UNITA, which had to engage in a desperate defence against a strong FAPLA/Cuban offensive against

Mavinga and Jamba. What UNITA achieved over the previous 10 years, with ample support from South Africa and other states, was to stand it in good stead during the last years of the Cold War and the years of respite under the umbrella of the United Nations in Angola.

### Long-term self reliance

During this period, UNITA succeeded in establishing a sophisticated socio-economic infrastructure that effectively amounted to a state within a state. This socio-economic infrastructure was to serve UNITA well, both in times of success and adversity. According to available information, UNITA established 22 secondary schools in the areas they occupied, almost 700 primary schools, with 7 127 teachers and 224 811 students.<sup>29</sup> Dozens of UNITA students were sent abroad to study at universities in the USA, Britain, Portugal, France and Switzerland amongst others. The main focus of the education programme abroad was medical, engineering and agricultural skills, necessary to ensure UNITA's self-reliance and development of parallel hierarchies to sustain its insurgency. Agricultural education and production was probably the most important focus area for UNITA during the eighties and early nineties. In order to sustain its support base and its army UNITA needed to produce enough food and other natural resources. Large crops of irrigated maize, vegetables and protein were undertaken by centrally managed collective farms. By the middle nineties UNITA was operating 53 of these collective farms, totalling some 25 000 hectares.<sup>30</sup> The collective farms took on the characteristics of 'protected hamlets' where populations were moved out of combat zones, and worked together with local populations on the farms. Food production was distributed to the population and large quantities were distributed to the army. Surplus food was stored in underground storage sites for use during the off season.<sup>31</sup>

Students sent to study medicine abroad started to return to Angola from 1985 onwards and enabled UNITA to develop a basic health service to serve the local population and the army. A total of six hospitals were built in south-central Angola and 189 clinics were established to serve the population with basic medical services. Although these facilities were staffed by approximately 2 500 persons, they were under-qualified, and under-stocked. By the late nineties the medical centres lacked pharmaceuticals, equipment and antibiotics. Although not as successful as the agricultural programme to enhance UNITA's self-reliance, they did provide a stopgap service.

Logistical support bases, enhanced with technical support and other engineering capabilities further strengthened UNITA's self-reliance concept. By the middle nineties UNITA's main logistical facility, established at Luenge, incorporated workshops, equipped with the necessary lathes, tools, compressors and electricity generators to repair and service most of UNITA's main equipment and weaponry. Here, captured weaponry was refurbished or cannibalised for spares, vehicles kept operational and basic agricultural tools such as axes and shovels

manufactured from scrap. Apart from serving as one of the main connection points to the outside world, Luenge also incorporates storage facilities for ammunition, fuel, oil, lubricants, commodities and food. By the late nineties this had been supplemented by about 30 smaller logistical bases throughout Angola, that kept the army fighting and supplied. The main facilities moved with the front-line, and some of these facilities, since the government’s 1998 offensive, have been moved to other areas.

## **The extent of the problem: an example of supply**

How is it possible to relate the impressive capacity of UNITA to adapt its strategy of self-reliance to its present supply structures? Although the very sophistication with which UNITA manages to keep these structures open makes them difficult to detect, a few examples should demonstrate the magnitude of the problem, while also serving to reflect the evolution of UNITA’s strategy of self-reliance in the post Cold War environment.

Following the signing of the Lusaka Protocol of 1994, UNITA used the respite provided by the United Nations Angola Verification Mission (UNAVEM) III peace-keeping operation to recover from the losses suffered in the period of intense fighting immediately after Savimbi’s rejection of the Angolan election results of 1992. By the middle of 1998, despite the scrutiny of the United Nations, UNITA had again succeeded in regenerating its war machine – this time without massive support from either the South Africans or United States. The sophistication of the equipment and the amounts available to UNITA surpassed all previous estimates. UNITA mobile conventional units attacked Cuito and Huambo simultaneously in December 1998 in response to increasing operational pressure from the *Forças Armadas Angolanas* (FAA). Equipped with armoured fighting vehicles, long-range artillery and the latest guided anti-tank missiles, it surprised the Angolan armed forces and the international community alike. Not only had UNITA failed to surrender a significant portion of its existing weaponry over the four years from 1994, but had undertaken a multimillion-dollar re-armament programme in defiance of United Nations sanctions.

This had to be one of Africa’s largest ever sanctions circumvention operations, based on a very successful strategy of deception and self-reliance. How was it possible that rearmament of such proportions could have taken place with United Nations scrutiny in place, under the conditions of sanctions and with intelligence agencies of many interested parties focused on the Angolan situation?

UNITA’s ability to build a conventional army, capable of challenging the already impressive FAA, came at a time when the arms market was awash with former Soviet bloc weaponry. The end of the Cold War brought a surplus of new stocks of arms and ammunition to international markets since much had become redundant with the peace in Europe. Strapped for cash, emerging weak states in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union were only too pleased to obtain

some return for these stocks, now surplus to their own security needs. Rather than destroy and convert their materiel and military industrial complex, they commercialised it. Two other factors also came into play: the wish of most of these newly emerging states to join the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO), meant that they also had to adopt NATO standard equipment and calibres. Secondly, large criminal networks emerged in the wake of the collapse of the Soviet state. These networks joined the formal and informal economies being created in the new countries and had easy access to accumulated weapons and the means to transport them to client's across the world. This phenomenon was adequately supported by a wide array of unscrupulous European and African traders, corruption and bribery at different governmental levels, shady intermediaries and unregulated transport companies. The plethora of options and diversity of routes which emerged enabled UNITA to source the range of military supplies it wanted and to bring them to its different areas of control, avoiding over-reliance on any one source or route. The activities of financial institutions and front companies, used to fund the purchase of equipment and supplies broadly followed the same methods and routes as those involved in the existing supply structures. UNITA is alleged to hold accounts with a range of major European and African based banks, including some in Switzerland, Portugal, the Channel Islands, Côte d'Ivoire, South Africa and Morocco.

The roles fulfilled by regional states in these circumvention operations have been threefold: as suppliers, transit points and service providers. Some states provide official support, or at least complicity in these operations, driven by political allegiances to UNITA, regional strategic alliances and for commercial advantage. In other cases, these activities occur in spite of some governments' best efforts to prevent them.

Zaire became the main transit point for UNITA commodities after the independence of Namibia. Logistical infrastructure situated close to the Namibian border was re-located to other centres in north-eastern Angola to facilitate the delivery of supplies. In May 1997, Mobutu's corrupt regime was overthrown by an armed rebellion with the direct military support of at least Rwanda, Burundi, Uganda and Angola. UNITA reacted swiftly to the demise of one of its staunchest supporters and moved its *entrepot* to Pointe Noire in the neighbouring Republic of Congo. The President of the Congo, Pascal Lissouba, another long time supporter of UNITA, was shortly afterwards faced with an armed insurrection, under the leadership of the previous president Denis Sassou-Nguesso, who eventually ousted him with the direct assistance of FAA. Angola's 'coercive foreign policy' took no chances when it came to UNITA support structures. This is a recent trend, which is creating animosity in the region and is probably contributing to the current reluctance to move beyond mere talk about support for sanctions against UNITA.

After the demise of the Lissouba regime, UNITA supply structures started to use facilities in Uganda and Rwanda, while the longstanding complicity of government and/or individuals in Burkina Faso, Togo, Côte d'Ivoire, Zambia,

Tanzania, Botswana, Swaziland and South Africa assisted in rejuvenating these associations. There are many examples of this phenomenon, some of which have been discussed in detail in recent studies by NGOs and the international community alike. The extent of UNITA supply lines through Africa is clearly illustrated in the Report of the Panel of Experts on Violations of Security Council Sanctions against UNITA Security Council Document S/2000/203 dated 10 March 2000. The extensive roles played by the former Zaire<sup>32</sup>, Burkina Faso<sup>33</sup>, Republic of Congo<sup>34</sup>, Rwanda<sup>35</sup>, Uganda, Togo<sup>36</sup> and South Africa<sup>37</sup> are dealt with accurately. The one country from which UNITA is clearly receiving major assistance, but which continues to evade detailed attention, including that of the Panel of Experts, is Zambia. To illustrate the point, it is important to refer to a typical supply line 'under cover', the controversial 'Zambian connection'.

UNITA's insurgency against the Portuguese started from Zambia in 1966. The first few years of the relationship were turbulent as discussed earlier, because of UNITA's sabotaging of the Benguela railway line. The relationship however improved over time and, by the late eighties, extensive links and supply structures emerged in Zambia to sell UNITA diamonds and to provide the supplies needed for its insurgency. How close UNITA supply structures operate to the Zambian government is an open question. Firm denial from the Zambian government accompanies every press report relating to this issue. However field research and independent monitoring reports indicate that the coincidences are just too close to be comfortable.

In late January 1999 the Angolan government started to release several names of Zambian high officials and influential businessmen, allegedly connected with UNITA supply structures in Zambia. The independent Zambian newspaper *The Post* wrote on 16 February 1999<sup>38</sup> that the son of the Zambian president, Tito Chiluba, conspired with Zambian Vice-President Christo Tembo, Energy Minister Ben Mwila and former Trade and Industry Minister Enoch Kavindele to sell arms and fuel supplies to UNITA. This was not the first claim of the involvement of some of these officials in UNITA supply operations. In 1997, allegations that senior Zambian officials were involved in supplying UNITA with arms and fuel led to the removal of Mwila from his post as Minister of Defence (and re-appointed to the junior post of Minister of Energy). Mwila's business associate Zambian Air Force general Ronnie Shikapwasya<sup>39</sup> was forced to retire.

Ben Mwila is the uncle of President Chiluba<sup>40</sup>, and a relative of General 'Smart' Chata of UNITA.<sup>41</sup> Despite his already busy schedule as Environment Minister, he is also an active businessman who owned 58 companies until October 1999 when he suffered a "slight set-back" and lost 30 companies because of a share holding dispute. Some of the more notable companies in which Mwila owns the majority shares are Chibote Limited, Chibote Meat Corporation, Mazembe Tractor Company, Minestone Zambia, ITM International and Oakvale Limited, registered in the British Virgin Islands.<sup>42</sup> Zambian Independent Monitoring Team official, Alfred Zulu, said that Tembo and Mwila's involvement in supplying UNITA "is with the full knowledge of the government

and the intelligence services".<sup>43</sup> Whatever the evidence and allegations against him, Mwila managed to survive in a ministerial post of some sort until his public attacks on President Chiluba led to his recent dismissal. Whether his evident ambition to become the President of Zambia will be realised is a matter for conjecture.

During early 1999 the relations between Angola and Zambia became extremely tense over the latter's role as a conduit for UNITA, to the extent that the Angolan government planned to plant bombs in Lusaka. The operation literally blew up in their faces when, on 28 February 1999, an explosive device went off on the second floor of the Angolan embassy in Luanda. According to media reports the device detonated while it was being prepared for use. In April 1999, Swaziland helped to mediate a Memorandum of Understanding between the two sides. While this calmed the situation for a while, allegations have persisted that Zambia is still being used to smuggle arms and supplies to UNITA in contravention of sanctions.

The strategic importance of the Zambian connection increased after the Angolan army successfully drove UNITA away from its positions along the Namibian border – which had provided another channel for supplies, such as fuel, food and medicines. The earlier shift in *entrepot* for arms supply from the former Zaïre to Zambia was matched by the sourcing of fuel supplies. The refinery at Ndola in the Copperbelt was cited in numerous reports as providing the bulk of UNITA's fuel, despite denials by the Zambian government. A fire destroyed the refinery in the second half of 1999 and Zambia was suddenly short of fuel. One cannot but wonder if the fuel shortage UNITA suffered during the defence of Bailundo and Andulo at the end of 1999 was connected to the same problem. Perhaps this was another coincidence.

On 17 February 2000, during a debate in Westminster, the UK's Foreign Minister of State for Africa, Peter Hain, named five people, and accused others in high positions in several countries, of aiding UNITA. The Minister stated that: "In some countries, including Zambia, Uganda and Rwanda, people in high positions are busting sanctions. It is imperative that those countries' governments crack down on them immediately... Jan Joubert organises the supply of fuel to UNITA. Until recently, aircraft carrying the fuel flew from Gaborone to Andulo while pretending to fly to Francistown in eastern Botswana. Dennis Coghlan, an Irishman resident in Botswana, owns a warehouse in Gaborone that is used to store fuel and other supplies for UNITA until they can be flown into UNITA-held territory."

These examples demonstrate the importance of UNITA's supply structures and, by addressing this, the international community can help Angola. By understanding the true nature of the operations and structures that are in place some solutions can be found, but not all. There is an equal need to turn our attention to the international community itself and its inability to cope with this situation. What the international community urgently needs is a change in context and focus when analysing the UNITA equation today.

## Putting the problem in context

Internationally, the Angolan conflict is still regarded as part of the Cold War, where East met West on the battlefield through proxies, and where apartheid South Africa flexed its military muscle in order to contain the spread of communism and defy black nationalism. Nevertheless, although the origins of the Angolan conflict reflect this analysis to some degree, the analytical frameworks of that era are no longer useful to judge or resolve the situation.

The major difficulty in analysing and understanding the Angolan civil war is that we continue to compare UNITA’s insurgency with liberation wars of the past. Many features of this insurgency, as we encounter it today, owe a great deal to past experience, particularly in terms of the military operations and weapons employed. The resultant doctrine has its roots in the long history and development of guerrilla warfare, the fusion of political and military activity into a distinctive insurgency strategy within the rhetoric of the Cold War. But present reality is different. Gone are the ideological walls that divided Angola into proxies of the East or West, the oppression of colonialism that fuelled the liberation war up to 1975 and the ism’s that governed responses to Angola’s birth as an independent nation. With their passing, other factors have come to light such as greed, ethnic politics and corruption that provide a fertile landscape in which the civil war continues to flourish.

The evolution of UNITA’s insurgency against the Angolan government has been driven and influenced by global and local factors that impact directly on how UNITA deploys its strategy and support structures. These factors relate to the post-Cold war environment; the modalities in which the United Nations operates in this environment; the manner in which the insurgency is financed; and the dynamics of the Angolan arms race. The most obvious factor is the demise of the Cold War with its clear-cut ideologies. This dried up the normal assistance, supplies, training, inspiration, and ideological unity, which sustained the insurgency during the Cold War. In a way, all support was easily explained and sourced when looked at from the Cold War perspective. And yet, the end of that turbulent era did not bring a manifestly changed situation where UNITA would now be de-linked from that support structure. A different, less recognisable structure is still empowering UNITA’s operations and allowing it to survive and thrive while the source and motives of outside support are more complex.

The revitalisation of the United Nations after the Cold War assisted the insurgency in a perverse way. At the height of the Cold War, the insurgency tended to be a win or lose proposition. But with United Nations activism in settling the internal conflict in Angola, both UNITA and the MPLA exploited the United Nations mediated peace for their own gain. The belligerents used the relative calm of the consecutive peace agreements to re-arm and re-supply so that they could continue the war, when the perceived gains of peace fell below their own political and material expectations.

This period of time is crucial in understanding the development of UNITA's outside support structures. During UNAVEM II UNITA had to develop support structures to replace past direct support from South Africa, covert support from the United States and officially-sanctioned support from other parts of the world. An independent Namibia made Jamba – the so-called 'Capital of Free Angola' – a less viable proposition as UNITA's headquarters and main supply centre. During the UNAVEM II operation, this infrastructure had to be relocated closer to other allies, such as [then] Zaïre. The consolidation of this relocation and the establishment of commercially based support structures continued throughout UNAVEM III. When the United Nations left Angola in 1998, these two critical measures had been concluded and UNITA was ready to commence with mobile war.

The growing economic cost of the insurgency is also an important factor. With the decline of outside patrons as suppliers, UNITA was forced to purchase arms and other supplies that were previously obtained at minimal or no cost. To do this, they developed other funding strategies and mechanisms to convert resources into cash. Nevertheless, it is important to note that some of the infrastructure in place to dispose of UNITA's hardwood, diamonds, and so on, for hard currency, is also used to obtain other commodities such as fuel, medicine and spare parts.

After nearly three decades of dealing with UNITA's insurgency, the government's pressure on UNITA has consistently increased. The government's skilful management of information, its well designed public relations programmes and the physical removal of UNITA supporters from power in neighbouring countries – such as the former Zaïre and the Republic of Congo – has narrowed UNITA's options and constrained its freedom of action to a significant extent. On the other hand, it has turned UNITA into a master of disguise, camouflaging its suppliers and supply structures to the extent that sanctions and international scrutiny have proven incapable of isolating it from outside assistance.

Militarily, however, the Angolan armed forces seem incapable of learning from the past. Fighting an insurgency with conventional forces has never succeeded, yet the Angolan government is bent on providing its generals with the best equipment available and in abundance. Ironically this gives UNITA the incentive to match the Angolan arsenal, generating an internal arms race. The government should instead school its generals in counterinsurgency strategy, provide adequate equipment to this end, and use the millions of dollars with which they buy conventional arms to improve the socio-economic conditions of the population, who lie at the heart of every insurgency.

These factors go some way in explaining the context in which UNITA sustains its supply lines. The international community should not only look at UNITA activity from the point of view of the past or concentrate its analysis within old parameters when it tries to understand external support. In other words, it must change the context in which it looks at the problem. Nevertheless, this is not enough. Another problem with international analysis of this situation has more to do with focus than with context.

## Putting the problem in focus

Until recently the international community placed most of its attention and action on weapons and ammunition supplies to UNITA, and rightly so. Without these tools of violence UNITA would not be able to conduct its insurgency. In the last three to five years that focus has broadened to include other commodities such as fuel, spare parts and, more importantly, the resources UNITA uses to acquire war material. But, given the constraints of international politics, which by default favour government, the new, broader focus needs to look at the reality within and outside of Angola, and that take into account both formal and informal structures in place to allow UNITA to continue its operations.

Most of the weaponry and ammunition used by UNITA is suited for guerrilla warfare, which is portable, easy to maintain, and easy to replenish. Although UNITA possesses conventional weapons such as tanks, armoured personnel carriers and artillery most of its forces are equipped and armed for a guerrilla war. This enables one planeload of weapons and ammunition to go a long way in terms of engaging and keeping a much larger and better equipped conventional force occupied beyond what simple numbers and standards normally suggest. An analysis of the dynamics of the arms supply, in this case, should also consider the re-circulation of used arms and captured weapons.

The Cold War battlefields in Africa have been the dumping grounds for literally millions of weapons suitable for use in guerrilla warfare. Existing stocks are circulating from conflict area to conflict area, more often than not under the control of non-state actors rather than governments. Therefore it follows that arms and ammunition invariably end up with those needing them. UNITA has been the recipient of some of these stocks in the past, and will be in the future. Codes of conduct, sanctions, marking and all other measures currently under debate, will have a positive effect on the future control over the flow of small arms and light weapons, but not at present. For most current conflicts, including the civil war in Angola, these will be 30 years too late.

Stocks captured on the battlefield in Angola are rarely considered by the international community as a reason for UNITA's continued survival, but they are an important source of war materiel that is difficult to control from the outside. Therefore, as long as the FAA is allowed uncontrolled arms purchases with its so far unaccounted income from oil, this internal source of arms for UNITA will remain a welcome bonus.

A change of focus would point to a set of more realistic control options. These could include border and airspace control; the building of adequate capacity within the armed forces and police in the region to deal with counter-insurgency operations and illicit trafficking of commodities, the training of custom officials; legislative control and regulation on brokering and shipping activities; and the collection and destruction programmes for surplus and seized weapons. Measures aimed at controlling the flow of existing stocks and reducing the

number of 'ownerless' weapons and ammunition on the continent are critical if UNITA is to be stifled.

As with any other army or guerrilla force, UNITA can not wage war with weapons alone. However basic their force might be (and there is enough evidence to the contrary) UNITA needs a steady supply of other commodities such as fuel, lubricants, spare parts, medical supplies, some foodstuffs, batteries and tyres. Solutions should not just look at arms embargoes but also the placing of controls on the system itself that supplies UNITA with all basic commodities. A shift in focus that allows for this broader system of control is urgently needed but regional realities make this a daunting prospect.

No one country in the region can afford, or has the resources at its disposal, to regulate and control trading commodities. Besides, the whole object of trade is to create jobs, earn foreign currency and make a profit, and the international and regional trend is to allow free trade where possible. Free trade is not, however, unregulated trade. This makes it possible for UNITA to buy what they need for their insurgency on the open market, and sustain themselves for as long as they can 'pay' for these commodities. For example: a dry-cell battery manufacturer in South Africa receives an order for 10 000 batteries from an import agent in Zambia. The batteries are paid for by the importer, and delivered to a warehouse in Lusaka. As far as the manufacturer and the South African and Zambian governments are concerned the transaction is legal. If, six months down the line, 5 000 of these batteries find their way into UNITA's stockpile, it is going to be difficult to relate it back to the manufacturer or the importer, and impossible to control.

The same regional principle is valid for Angola itself. Commodities such as fuel are available inside Angola and are purchased by UNITA from Angolan suppliers, including the Angolan state oil company Sonangol. And, as discussed elsewhere in this book, many of UNITA's resources are converted into cash inside Angola. By focussing on the dynamics, one can see that the key to the solution of the UNITA problem also lies within Angola. The road to that solution can be shortened and straightened through the combined effort of the region, and the international community.

The international community needs to analyse UNITA's support structures if it is to develop viable policy options to constrain its activities. Nevertheless, as long as they do so with the assumption that all states in the region are functional, with competent law enforcement agencies, and with inherently sound policy and law generating institutions, operated by inherently honest government officials, they will not obtain the desired results. By accepting the basic truth that states in the region, most particularly Angola, do not operate under these tenets, the international community will finally strengthen the quality of its analysis and decide on viable policy options for action.

## Conclusion

Whatever the view from New York, UNITA is not a simplistic organisation. Since its conception UNITA deliberately developed the infrastructure to ensure its own survival and support: a comprehensive socio-economic structure that feeds, educates, treats and supports a standing Army of 15 000 to 20 000 regular soldiers, probably as many guerrillas, and close to two million people. Likewise, much of the UNITA's insurgency is largely sustainable from inside Angola. The available information tends to indicate that UNITA is able to sustain its army and popular support base in terms of food and other basic services without much outside support.

Although 80% of the solution to the UNITA problem lies within Angola, and among Angolans, the Southern African Development Community (SADC) region will have to assist the Angolan people to end the war. Extra effort on known porous borders, known problem airfields, and control of neighbouring airspace, will minimise seepage of critical commodities through to UNITA. This being said, such an effort is beyond the capacities of the region and would require a substantive effort by the international community.

The FAA has succeeded in pushing UNITA back from the mobile warfare phase they embarked upon in 1998 to the guerrilla warfare phase of their insurgency. The Angolan government should speedily follow-up on the FAA's success to ensure that it establishes government and social services in the liberated areas. If it responds with the usual reprisals against the population, reluctance to commit resources, and fails to consolidate its position in society as a credible government, FAA is going to fight the same battles again in a year's time.

Whatever is done by the Angolan government and the region, must be undertaken speedily because, in a perverse way, pushing UNITA back to its familiarity with guerrilla warfare, not only allows it to operate from a position of strength but will make it even more difficult to counter. Instead of spending billions of dollars on tanks and other conventional equipment, it might be better for the Angolan government to put its military resources into a properly constructed and supported counter insurgency strategy.

Similarly, the international community must take urgent action. Given the challenges UNITA faces in terms of the environment, its lack of infrastructure and a seemingly hostile sub-region, there seems to be an urgent need to reassess the situation by changing the context and the focus in terms of the way solutions are presented.

UNITA has proven to be a master at adapting to changing circumstances. It is important that as control mechanisms over structures and existing operations are put in place, consideration should also be given to preventing the development of alternatives. This cannot occur without a thorough understanding of UNITA's strategy of self-reliance and its more modern evolution.

If these considerations are taken care of, the Angolan government, the region and the international community at large would learn to judge UNITA for what it is and not for what they want it to be. UNITA is an organised and efficient

insurgent movement and must be treated as such. Only then will the Angolan government, the region and the international community be able to restore peace in Angola. The Southern African region owes it to the Angolan population to at least give it a try. And, if we are serious enough about it, to create the circumstances for the Angolan population to also decide on their own political future, free from the current tyrannies of oppression, corruption and civil war.

## Endnotes

- 1 "That people fighting for their independence will take aid from wherever they can find it is clear. To win our independence we should even take aid, as they say, from the devil himself" Agostinho Neto, in a broadcast, August 1969. D Basil, *In the eye of the Storm: Angola's People*, Penguin, 1999, p 290.
- 2 Mao Zedong, The Present Situation and Our Tasks, *Selected Military Writings*, 2nd ed, 25 December 1947.
- 3 F Bridgeland, *Jonas Savimbi a Key to Africa*, Macmillan, Braamfontein, 1986, p 66.
- 4 Savimbi's close friends in both Tanzania (Foreign Minister Oscar Kambona, Planning minister Abdulrahman Babu and then junior minister Benjamin Mkapa) and Zambia (Rupia Banda) will influence the fortunes of UNITA for many years of its existence. Their support was vital for UNITA's survival in the early years.
- 5 "Replenish our strength with all the arms and most of the personnel captured from the enemy. Our army's main sources of manpower and materiel are at the front." Mao Zedong, The Present Situation and Our Tasks, *Selected Military Writings*, 2nd ed, 25 December 1947, pp 49–50
- 6 6,5mm Mod 1904 Mauser-Veruegeiro. Some were converted to 7,92mm during the 1930's, and it was not possible to determine if the ones issued to the village chiefs were of the original calibre or converted calibre.
- 7 Bridgeland, op cit, p 71.
- 8 Interview with a former South African Liaison Officer to UNITA, Pretoria, 25 April 2000.
- 9 J Marcum, *The Angolan Revolution, Volume II: Exile politics and Guerrilla Warfare (1962 – 1976)*, MIT Press, Cambridge, 1978, p 212.
- 10 Mao Zedong, The Present Situation and Our Tasks, op cit.
- 11 Ibid.
- 12 Bridgeland, op cit, p 94.
- 13 Mao Zedong from: We Must Learn to Do Economic Work, 10 January 1945, *Selected Works*, vol III, p 241.
- 14 Bridgeland, op cit, p 75.
- 15 Ibid
- 16 Marcum, op cit, p 429.
- 17 The MPLA is accredited with the organisation of the first militant action against the Portuguese with an attack by Africans from the Luanda slums on a police patrol, the Sao Paulo prison, the military detention barracks, a police station and the local radio that took place on the 4th of Feb 1961. The attackers were armed with clubs and knives, and the suicidal mission cost them 40 dead. In the ensuing reprisals by the Portuguese 3 000 Angolans are believed to have died. The UPA launched the opening

of the guerrilla war in the rural areas with attacks on the 15th of March 1961. 250 – 400 Portuguese citizens were killed within the first two days of the attacks, and almost 750 within the first three months. By October 1961, an estimated 20 000 Angolans died because of military action by the Portuguese. The majority of these were non-combatants. (Although contemporary claims put the figure of non-combatant casualties on 50 000, it is difficult to establish a true figure.)

- 18 “Portuguese official here conceded that the MPLA, once thought to be by far the most important of the liberation movements, is not so well supported as they thought. Western diplomats, for the most part, predicted that UNITA would win 35 to 45 percent of the vote, the MPLA 25 to 35 percent, and the FNLA 15 to 25 percent.” J Borrell, *The Observer*, 7 December 1974.
- 19 O’Neill, op cit, pp 12–13.
- 20 WM James, *A political History of the Civil War in Angola, 1974 – 1990*, Transaction Publishers, New Brunswick, 1992, p 146.
- 21 C Gershman, Jonas Savimbi’s War for a free Angola is not Lost, *New York Times*, 18 December 1979.
- 22 CA Crocker, South Africa: Strategy for Change, *Foreign Affairs*, Winter 1980/81, pp 323–351.
- 23 China denied any support to UNITA after Savimbi’s allegations. Gong Dafei, Vice-minister for African affairs was quoted by Collin Legum to have said “ If Savimbi said we help him, that is for reasons of his own propaganda”, *Africa Report*, March – April 1983, p 22.
- 24 J Breytenbach, *Edens Exiles: One soldiers fight for Paradise*, Queillerie Publishers, Cape Town, 1997, p 247.
- 25 ANGOP, 15 June 1984.
- 26 Interview with a former South African Liaison Officer to UNITA, Pretoria, 25 April 2000.
- 27 Congressional Record – Senate, 10 June 1985, S7816 – S7850, and Congressional Record – House, 10 July 1985, H5418 – H5427.
- 28 The main gist of the doctrine was to fight ‘leftist’ governments throughout the world.
- 29 James, op cit, p 98.
- 30 Ibid, p 101.
- 31 Bridgeland, op cit, p 320.
- 32 Report of the panel of experts on violations of Security Council sanctions against UNITA, Security Council Document S/2000/203 dated 10 March 2000, par 18.
- 33 Ibid, par 21.
- 34 Ibid, par 23.
- 35 Ibid, par 25.
- 36 Ibid, par 32.
- 37 Ibid, par 27.
- 38 Angola names Chiluba’s son, *The Post*, No 1168, 16 February 1999.
- 39 Angola – UNITA’s supply routes cut, *Jane’s Intelligence Pointer*, 1 May 1998.
- 40 Chiluba may discipline Zambia’s presidential hopeful *Africa News Service*, 18 January 2000.
- 41 Zambia: Opposition questions Chiluba’s knowledge of alleged arms supplies to UNITA, *BBC International Reports (AFI)*, 10 February 1999.
- 42 Ben Mwila loses 30 Companies, *Times of Zambia*, 27 October 1999.
- 43 *BBC International Reports (AFI)*, 10 February 1999.