

June 27, 1975

US National Security Council Meeting Minutes on Angola

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Summary:

President Ford is briefed on the situation in Angola and requests possible options that the US could pursue to be made ready.

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NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL (2999)
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20506

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MINUTES

NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL MEETING

DATE: Friday, June 27, 1975
TIME: 2:30 p.m. to 3:20 p.m.
PLACE: Cabinet Room, The White House
SUBJECT: Angola.

Principals

The President
Secretary of State Henry A. Kissinger
Secretary of Defense James Schlesinger
Acting Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff General David C. Jones
Director of Central Intelligence William Colby.

Other Attendees

State: Deputy Secretary of State Robert S. Ingersoll
Defense: Deputy Secretary of Defense William Clements
White House: Mr. Donald Rumsfeld, Assistant to the President
NSC: Lt. General Brent Scowcroft
Harold E. Horan.

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E.O. 12958 Sec. 1.5 (C)

MR. 98-37 # 14, NSC etc 6/12/00

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The President: Bill [to Colby], will you brief us on Angola and related problems.

Mr. Colby: Yes, sir. [Briefed - as attached.]

The President: Cabinda was a part of the Portuguese territories?
[This was in reference to a point in Mr. Colby's brief as he described Cabinda.]

Mr. Colby: Yes, sir.

The President: What are the white areas within the borders of Angola?

Mr. Colby: These are essentially tribal, not military areas. These are additional tribes and I just chose [pointing on the chart] to mention those three. They have different languages and are different socially.

The President: Did the Portuguese do much in combatting illiteracy? Are there many educated blacks?

Mr. Colby: The Portuguese were not forceful in this area. The literacy rate is between 10-15 percent.

Secretary Kissinger: Mr. President, until the coup, the Portuguese had no intention of leaving their territories in Africa and didn't organize them for independence.

Secretary Schlesinger: Most of the educated classes are in Luanda and support the MPLA.

The President: What is the white population?

Mr. Colby: Three to four hundred thousand.

The President: Out of a total population of how many?

Mr. Colby: About 5.7 million.

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The President: Are these mostly white Portuguese?

Mr. Colby: Yes.

The President: Now, Henry, can you give us the options?

Secretary Kissinger: Mr. President, I will be reasonably brief. This is an area where no one can be sure of the judgments. I do question the judgment that control of the capital is not of importance. The history of Africa has shown that a nation's only focal point is the capital, and whoever has the capital has a claim on international support. In the Congo civil war, the reason we came out on top is because we never lost Leopoldville. If Neto can get Luanda, and drive the others out, he will have a power base, and gradually gain support of other Africans.

Mr. Colby: I agree, except to note the importance of the (Benguella) railway and Zaire and Zambia's need for it.

The President: What is the name of the city at the end of the railway?

Mr. Colby: Lobito. There is, of course, always the possibility for fragmentation.

Secretary Kissinger: Soviet arms shipments have reversed the situation. Sheldon Vance has just come back from talking with Mobutu, who has stressed the change in the balance of power. Portugal is tilting toward Neto, and the Soviets are putting important equipment, such as armed personnel carriers, into Neto's hands.

Our understanding from Vance is that this is one reason Mobutu is moving away from Roberto and wants a coalition.

An interagency effort has developed options, none of which I am in wild agreement with. The first is neutrality -- stay out and let nature take its course. This would enable us to avoid a costly involvement in a situation that may be beyond our control; protect us from some international criticism; avoid tying us to any group; and avoid further antagonizing the MPLA. The probable outcome would be that Neto would establish a dominant position. Mobutu might try to go with Savimbi, or adjust to reality; Angola would go in a leftward direction;

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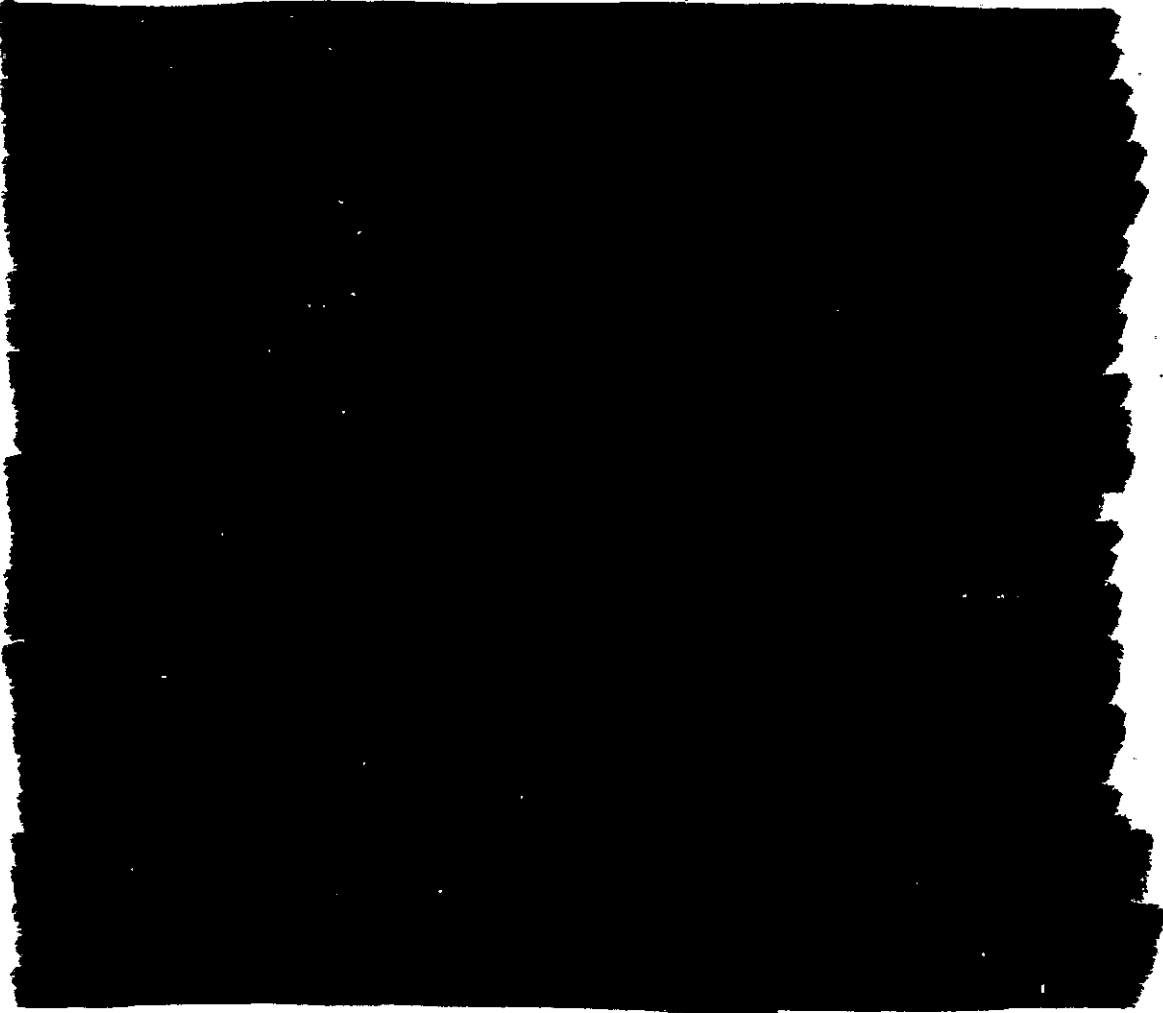
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and Zaire would conclude we have disinterested ourselves in that part of the world and move towards anti-Americanism.

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As for the second course, my Department agrees, but I don't. It is recommended that we launch a diplomatic offensive to get the Soviets, the Yugoslavs, and others, to lessen arms shipments to the MPLA, get Portugal to exert its authority, and encourage cooperation among the groups. We could have direct dealings with the Soviets or get African states to do it. If we appeal to the Soviets not to be active, it will be a sign of weakness; for us to police it is next to impossible, and we would be bound to do nothing.

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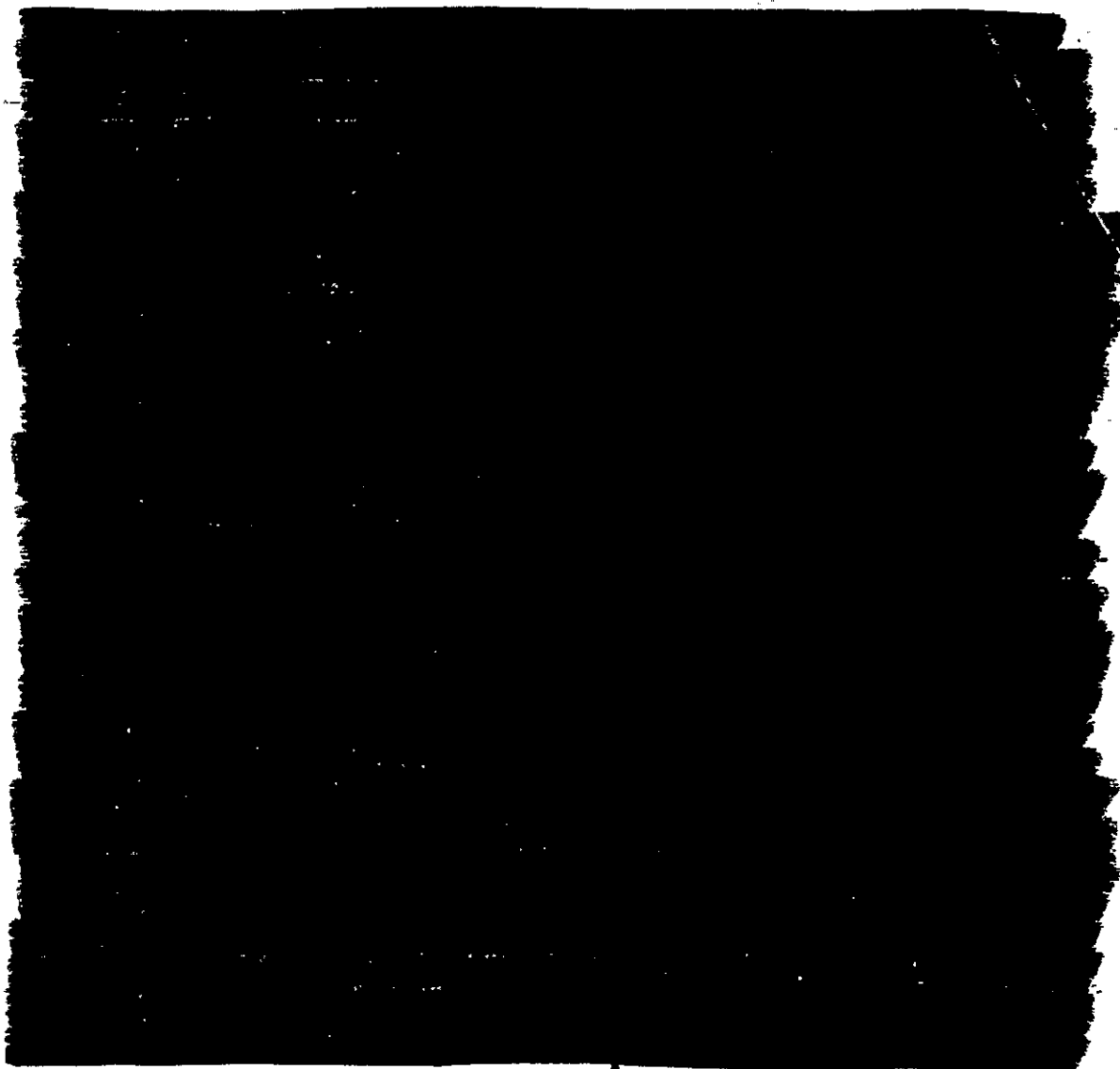
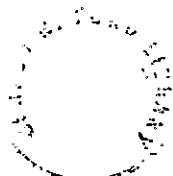
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The President: Is there a specific proposal from the group on grants in the arms area? I don't want to make a decision now, but I didn't see any proposals in the briefing papers.

ojo | Secretary Kissinger: The Forty Committee has met twice to discuss the situation. The first meeting involved only money, but the second included some arms package. I recommend a working group make a more systematic study of this option and return to you.

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The President: At dinner he was very forceful on this. He said that it was important to get his man in first, and then he will win the election. I asked him if there were not going to be elections, and he said yes, and that was why it was important to put Savimbi in first and then he would win.

Secretary Kissinger: Kaunda was giving the President a lesson in political science. [Laughter.]

[REDACTED]

Secretary Kissinger: But the reverse of that is that if we don't do something they would be suppressed.

The President: Once the Popular Movement takes over you can write it off.

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Secretary Schlesinger: We might wish to encourage the disintegration of Angola. Cabinda in the clutches of Mobutu would mean far greater security of the petroleum resources.

Mr. President, may I follow up -- if we do something, we must have some confidence that we can win, or we should stay neutral. Roberto is not a strong horse. The fact that he stays in the Congo suggests he doesn't have the tenacity to win.

The President: It seems to me that doing nothing is unacceptable. As for diplomatic efforts, it is naive to think that's going to happen, and the proposals on Portugal sound amateurish.



Mr. Clements: I agree with this. Doing something now and keeping the two parties afloat may well be encouraging Mobutu. Whatever happens in November is not final, and it's important to keep Roberto and Savimbi viable and keep the options open. Give Mobutu some help and let him channel it.

Secretary Kissinger: In the first instance we could activate Mobutu and inform Kaunda.

The President: He [Kaunda] was talking at dinner about getting together with someone. Who was that?

Secretary Kissinger: With Savimbi and Mobutu.

The President: Let's get some options prepared, Bill [to Colby]. When can you have them?

Mr. Colby: By mid-week.

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Secretary Schlesinger: [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] The FNLA has a weak capacity to enforce discipline and we should look to see whether the Congolese (Zairians) can be used for instilling discipline. And then there's the question of the degree to which we can bring Roberto and Savimbi together.

The President: Those are some of the things that have to be in the study. I think we need something for a week from Monday, so let's set something up.

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