

Angolans protect fragile, new peace, foil British destabilization effort

by Dean Andromidas

In the first week of April, an *EIR* team was invited to Angola to investigate first-hand the role of the London-based Defence Systems Ltd. and the British-controlled, South African-based Executive Outcomes in destabilizing the peace process, which had been initiated and underwritten by the Clinton administration. *EIR* soon discovered that both DSL and EO are considered deadly tools in the service of British interests in Africa. Sources in Luanda say that DSL's expulsion from Angola in December 1997, was prompted by fears that its activities posed a threat to the country's effort to achieve peace.

EIR was able to learn more about the role of these organizations in destabilizing the region and perpetuating the genocidal civil wars that have plagued sub-Saharan Africa since those nations gained their independence from colonial rule. Our report will concentrate on what *EIR* found with respect to Angola.

Africa's Thirty Years' War

Gazing at Luanda from an island on the opposite side of the bay, the city skyline is a deceptively impressive sight. The buildings along the bay gleam in the tropical sun, and at night the city lives up to the reputation it had earned during colonial times as an African "mecca." But as one approaches nearer, the city's seemingly beautiful sunlit, pastel skyline gives way to the bleak reality of 21 years of devastation during the civil war. It is a devastation caused not so much by the armed conflict—since no fighting took place in Luanda—but by 21 years of neglect. Despite the fact that Luanda's population has swelled to 6 million (some say 9 million), there have been no major construction projects since independence. Angola, with all its wealth in oil, diamonds, other mineral resources, spent two-thirds of its annual national budget and over half of its foreign exchange in the civil war.

Although the Portuguese colonialists founded Angola in 1572, they were unable to declare their possession "pacified" until 1922. It was not until almost the end of the 19th century that the Portuguese considered that the colony could produce exports more lucrative than slaves. Slavery, officially banned by the end of the 19th century, became a system of "forced labor," whose brutality sparked periodic revolts. On the eve

of Angola's independence, not only were the vast majority of the native population illiterate, but so were half of the Portuguese expatriates.

When independence was granted in 1975, Angola was instantly submersed by foreign invasion and civil war, which did not officially end until 1997, and has yet to be consolidated. The civil war was part of the "Thirty Years' War" scenario that then-U.S. Secretary of State Henry Kissinger unleashed in sub-Saharan Africa. These wars, which inflamed Angola, Mozambique, Ethiopia, Zimbabwe-Rhodesia, and other countries, were part of a neo-Malthusian policy aimed at ending any hope for economic development in post-colonial Africa.

By the end of the 1960s, South Africa had the potential for a rapidly growing industrial base, which was subverted by these wars engulfing both its immediate and more distant African neighbors. There was great potential for the rest of sub-Saharan Africa to become economically integrated, through the expansion of transcontinental infrastructure projects radiating from South Africa. Such a development would have underscored how the brutal apartheid system could only be a hindrance to prosperity, a fact that would have become self-evident to the Afrikaner regime.

Instead, the region was thrown into geopolitical surrogate warfare between the Soviet Union and the anti-communist West. The apartheid regime of South Africa was pitted against the nationalist regimes and Soviet client-states, like Angola. The dreams for trans-African development turned into the nightmare of a trans-African killing machine. The gold, oil, diamonds, and plantation products of Africa continued to be extracted for maximum profit.

As soon as Angola became independent, it was dragged into this bloody caldron of war. At the time, an interim government, comprising the three main revolutionary organizations, was to be formed: the Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA), led by Agostino Neto, primarily based in Luanda and other urban coastal regions; the Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA), led by Jonas Savimbi and based in the south and east of the country; and the more tribal-based National Front for the Liberation of Angola (FNLA), led by Holden Roberto, which operated in the north.

FIGURE 1
Angola



The initial agreement collapsed, as “outside players” moved in to play off one group against another.

The Soviet Union, through its Cuban client-state, backed the MPLA. Operating through Zaire’s Mobutu Sese Seko, the West backed the anti-communist FNLA, which, with a force of British mercenaries, launched an invasion from southern Zaire into northern Angola. And then, South Africa, fearing for its interests in Namibia and fearing the establishment in Angola of safe-havens for the African National Congress, threw its support to UNITA.

A similar fate befell Mozambique, the other Portuguese colony, on the east coast of southern Africa, where the Marxist Mozambique Liberation Front (Frelimo) held state power with Cuban and Soviet backing, and fought the Western-backed National Resistance Movement for Mozambique (Renamo).

Everyone, except, of course, the Angolans, got their share. The West continued to get its oil, which was pumped by Gulf and Chevron oil companies from Cabinda province. The Angolan government’s share of oil revenues went to pay for Cuban troops and other East bloc personnel, of whom there were some 50,000 men, at the height of the war. Today, driving through Luanda, one sees that the only new construction since independence was the apartment buildings thrown up for the Cuban troops. Now they are occupied by Angolans. UNITA financed its weapons purchases through the sale of

diamonds that it mined in areas it controlled.

It would be historically comfortable to say that Angola simply became a battleground for the surrogate war between East and West, as well as the anti-apartheid struggle in South Africa and the Rhodesian-Zimbabwe war. But, a look at the British role throughout this period, shows the old Empire playing off all sides against each other. In 1986, the U.S. Congress and the Reagan administration approved military aid to UNITA, justifying the move by pointing to the presence of 50,000 Cuban troops in Angola. At the same time, in neighboring Mozambique, Defence Systems Ltd. received its first British Army Training Team (BATT) contracts to train two special forces battalions for the Marxist government in Maputo, in order to crush the putatively anti-Marxist Renamo. Back in Britain, the Conservative government was firmly in power, whose Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher could always be called upon to attack the Soviets’ “evil empire.” That same year, DSL would receive its first contracts for industrial security in Angola.

The same contradictions can be seen in the arming of the contenders within Angola: For instance, one of UNITA’s major arms suppliers to this day is reported to be the British military equipment company J.&S. Franklin. One of its directors, Marc Franklin, sits on the board of directors of Nord Resources, a mining company controlled by British subject and former employee of Anglo American Mining company, Jean Raymond Boule. Boule also owns America Mineral Fields, which currently has a diamond mine concession in Angola. Boule became well known for giving Congolese genocidalist Laurent Kabila \$50 million to overthrow Zaire’s President Mobutu, in return for a huge mining concession there.

Promise of peace betrayed

When the Berlin Wall collapsed in 1989, heralding the end of the Cold War, the world was presented with the opportunity to end these genocidal conflicts. Seeing which way the wind was blowing, the MPLA in 1990 officially dropped its Marxist ideology (it had joined the International Monetary Fund as early as 1987). In 1990, Portugal brokered an initiative—building on an earlier attempt in 1989 by Mobutu—which brought the MPLA’s José Eduardo dos Santos and UNITA’s Jonas Savimbi face to face. The result was the initialling of the Bicesse peace accord in 1991, and by May of that year, the last Cuban troops had been withdrawn. In 1992, multi-party elections were held, with Dos Santos receiving 49.57% and Savimbi 40.07%. Savimbi, not without good reason, declared the election fraudulent, and the country soon degenerated once more into civil war.

Without strong U.S. backing, any agreement was doomed. President George Bush was not interested in peace deals. According to U.S. Marine Col. Cody Purdom (ret.), Bush came from the old school in the CIA, whose motto was

“If everyone is confused, then we can control them.” Colonel Purdom, who carried out on-the-ground reconnaissance of the Angolan political-military situation for an unnamed U.S. government agency, told *EIR* that Bush’s lack of interest in peace agreements stemmed from his self-interest: “They were making too much damn money to bother negotiating peace agreements,” Colonel Purdom said. He added that the United States was advised on the ground by the British, most likely DSL, which had the largest foreign security operation in Luanda at the time.

All sides found little problem in supplying themselves with weapons. The MPLA continued to finance its purchases through the sale of oil being pumped by Western oil companies. Savimbi was able to finance his military operations through the sale of diamonds to multinational diamond buyers in Antwerp.

The Clinton initiative

The 1992 defeat of Bush’s Presidential ambitions offered renewed opportunity, which the Clinton administration seized upon. In May 1993, after trying for four months to achieve a peace agreement, the White House changed tactics; it moved to recognize the MPLA government, and ended its support for UNITA. According to one retired South African intelligence officer with many years’ experience in Angola, the time was ripe in 1993 for a negotiated agreement, because the fighting had reached a stalemate.

“It was precisely at this moment that hard-liners in the

MPLA signed a contract with Executive Outcomes,” this source told *EIR*, during a briefing on the Angolan situation in South Africa. Although EO’s intervention, through training and introduction of ground attack aircraft, played a notable role in the MPLA’s decisive military victory, it also gave the MPLA enough success to nurture the illusion that they did not have to negotiate with UNITA.

Under U.S. pressure, the Lusaka peace accord was signed in Zambia in 1994. Although organized under the auspices of the United Nations, it was and continues to be overseen by a Joint Commission comprised of the United States, Russia, and Portugal, and is chaired by the special representative of the UN Secretary General, Alioune Blondin Beye. Nonetheless, the end to the fighting was not in sight, until EO was forced out of the country in 1996 under U.S. pressure. EO is quick to claim that its contract was completed, but it was also obvious that it was not allowed to renew it.

One of the principal demands of UNITA was the withdrawal of all mercenary troops. The Cuban “Marxist mercenaries” were withdrawn by 1991, but were replaced by Western mercenaries in the guise of security companies. These security companies, under the cover of protecting oil and mining concessions, were led by former special forces drawn from elite units of the British, South African, and French foreign legions. They were leading relatively well-trained military operations, armed with everything from assault rifles and machine guns to artillery and T-72 tanks.

These mercenaries of the 1990s should not be confused



The Luanda harbor. Despite Angola’s vast oil and mineral wealth, living standards are abysmal; for most of the last 21 years, a civil war has raged, and foreign mercenaries and corporate looters have used Angola as their playground.



The DSL compound in Luanda. DSL was expelled from Angola in December 1997, apparently because of the threat they posed to the peace effort.

with the “dogs of war” images in political suspense novels, out for hire to the CIA or some petty dictator. More likely than not, the local dictator has been replaced by the economists of the International Monetary Fund, who order African governments to grant mining concessions to foreign private companies, in return for writing off some pittance of their foreign debt. If the state in question doesn’t control the concession area, the “global marketplace” can provide a privately financed military operation. In the 1990s, just such operations proliferated throughout Angola, particularly in the diamond-mining and oil concession areas which were contested between UNITA and the government troops.

In an apparent response to the UNITA demand that all mercenaries be expelled, Luanda created two Angolan private security companies: Teleservices and Alpha 5. Both companies aimed at becoming the sole providers of industrial security to the diamond-mining and oil firms. Nonetheless, it was not until recently, as the peace process began to take hold, that the security companies began to dominate these areas.

In September 1997, in order to force UNITA to recognize the cease-fire agreement, the Clinton administration agreed to UN-imposed sanctions. This had the effect of forcing a cease-fire and negotiating a timetable. The agreement calls for the legalization of UNITA, the establishment of a government of National Unity, and granting the post of vice president to Jonas Savimbi, a position he has yet to take up. The protocols call for systematic demobilization of UNITA, which will turn over its controlled areas to the authority of the central

government, under the governorship of appointees approved jointly by UNITA and Luanda.

DSL: the Queen’s fifth column

Despite the agreement, no progress in its implementation was made throughout the autumn of 1997. Then, in December, the government issued an expulsion order, forcing Defence Systems Ltd. to leave the country because of fraudulent business practices.

Why?

In an article that enjoyed wide circulation, *EIR* (Aug. 22, 1997) exposed Defence Systems Ltd. as the British establishment’s most important private paramilitary security company. That study documented how DSL and Executive Outcomes, along with other British corporate bodies, such as Crown Agents, and City of London financial institutions and Commonwealth-based mining companies, have imposed neo-liberal policies of globalization and privatization worldwide, in order to resurrect a new form of the British Empire.

Both DSL and Executive Outcomes operated in Angola. Both were forced out of the country for what appears to be the threat they posed to the peace effort.

Take the case of the British-controlled Executive Outcomes. In contrast to the popular media’s characterization of EO as a South African outfit, it is one of the most despised operations in South Africa, and that hatred spans the full political spectrum, especially among the security establishment, black African and white Afrikaner alike.

“We need peace in Angola. It’s a country that has every-

thing South Africa has, but also oil and plenty of water,” commented a South African expert on Angola. He continued, that Angola’s relatively small population, rich soil, and water resources are indispensable for the successful expansion of southern Africa’s economies, including that of South Africa. With its large population and advanced industrial base, South Africa offers Angola an important market for not only oil, but also for its hydroelectric power-generation capacity, once that is developed, as well as its tremendous agricultural potential. This expert pointed out that it was EO that destabilized the potential for peace.

In a world where one man’s mercenary is another man’s security guard, DSL has vigorously denied that it represents the elite formation of the “dogs of war.” Although it denies any “corporate links” to Executive Outcomes, this “Chinese wall” can be easily knocked down. For example, according to evidence presented before an official parliamentary hearing in Papua New Guinea, that government first approached DSL in an attempt to hire mercenaries to deal with an insurgency. But, the project apparently conflicted with DSL’s “prestige image.” This did not prevent DSL from contacting Sandline Ltd., a London-based mercenary outfit operating out of the same office as Executive Outcomes. That relationship parallels DSL’s and EO’s true sponsors: British Empire mining companies, banks, financial interests, and so on. DSL has among its clients, mining giants DeBeers, Anglo American, and Rio Tinto—that is, the seniors, since it is the “top dog of war.” The “underdogs of war,” on the other hand, such as Sandline Ltd., serve companies like Branch Energy, Ranger Oil, and Diamond Works, the “juniors,” which work in areas where the senior companies are not ready to take the risks.

“If you looked at DSL’s operation in Luanda alone, it became obvious why they had to go,” *EIR* was told by one Luanda-based security expert. Indeed, DSL was operating behind the cover of an “industrial security company,” providing rather poorly trained Angolan security guards to protect such clients as the U.S. and other embassies, multinational companies, and the private residences of the expatriate business community. In addition to these 1,600 Angolan security guards, it employed no fewer than 72 “ex-Gurkhas,” from the British special forces Gurkha Regiment, as well as 20 to 30 ex-SAS troops from Britain’s elite Special Air Services regiment and the Parachute regiment. It also had 50 armed Angolan police officers on its payroll. These substantial forces were backed by state-of-the-art communications and transportation capabilities, centralized out of its Luanda headquarters.

On Dec. 24, 1997, the office of President Dos Santos issued its *force majeure*, an order expelling all DSL “London” and expatriate personnel by Jan. 16. Although the official reason was that DSL was conducting its operations in “a fraudulent manner,” one source who was close to the situation, reported that police raided DSL headquarters, seizing computer disks which one Angolan state security officer said

“contained evidence that DSL was running an espionage operation.”

As soon as the expulsion order was announced, DSL’s chief executive officer, the Hon. Richard Bethell, arrived on the scene, hoping to have it revoked. After several fruitless days, Bethell was advised by expatriate businessmen to take a more flexible approach with the Angolan authorities, and ascertain what terms they wanted in order to allow DSL to continue operating, even if it meant substantial changes in DSL operations. Bethell flatly rejected the advice, “You can’t operate that way with these Angolans,” he allegedly declared. He then went about his attempt to “organize,” so to speak, the right personalities who would revoke the *force majeure*. Even as Bethell rejected this advice, the Angolan police were picking DSL’s Gurkhas up off the street and taking them to Luanda Airport to put them on the first flight out. Two days later, Bethell himself was escorted to the airport.

Bethell left behind chaos, as DSL’s clients, including the U.S. Embassy, were not informed of the state of affairs, leaving them to scramble for replacement security. Furthermore, DSL left behind hundreds of Angolan guards, who were unpaid, but still in possession of their weapons.

Another telling effect of DSL’s untimely departure was the arrival of personnel from Control Risks, the London-based private security intelligence and risk analysis counterpart of Britain’s paramilitary firms, called in by none other than Branch Energy, the London-based chief sponsors of Executive Outcomes. Control Risks was rushed in to conduct a “risk analysis” of the new situation.

Almost at the same time that DSL was expelled, a new timetable for the final stages of the peace process was issued. Although this timetable has not yet been fully met, UNITA did begin to pull out from all the diamond-mining areas it had occupied, as per the agreement. Such a move would have had to include hard guarantees that UNITA would get some form of monetary compensation built into the agreement, otherwise the pullout would make little sense. It is hoped that the targets set by this timetable, including the demobilization and legalization of UNITA, and Savimbi’s taking up his post in Luanda, will be accomplished soon.

Although peace continues to be fragile—and, people even speak of renewed war—those close to the scene doubt that the country will slide into renewed conflict. These sources point to strong diplomatic pressure being exerted by the United States, as well as a strong commitment to the agreement by American oil companies, particularly Chevron. The United States is joined by France, which is said to be making its presence felt in Luanda, where a new embassy compound is being constructed. The French oil company Elf Aquitaine is second only to Chevron, and has expanded its facilities in Luanda as well. “You would not see this type of construction going on by the French and the others, if they felt the war was going to restart,” was the comment of one Luanda-based South African security expert.