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THE WHITE HOUSE
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MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

SUBJECT: Meeting with Dr. Jonas Savimbi, President of UNITA (U)

PARTICIPANTS: The President
James A. Baker, III, Secretary of State
John H. Sununu, Chief of Staff
Brent Scowcroft, Assistant to the President
for National Security Affairs
Marlin Fitzwater, Assistant to the President
and Press Secretary
Robert M. Gates, Assistant to the President
and Deputy for National Security Affairs
Herman J. Cohen, Assistant Secretary of State
for African Affairs
William C. Harrop, U.S. Ambassador to Zaire
David Passage, Director, African Affairs,
NSC Staff (notetaker)

Dr. Jonas Savimbi, President
Jeremias Chitunda, Vice President
General Antonio da Costa Fernandes, Foreign
Secretary
Dr. Jorge Valentim, Chief Negotiator for
UNITA

DATE, TIME October 5, 1989, 10:30 - 11:15 a.m. EDT
AND PLACE: The Oval Office

The President: First, let me welcome you. I know you've been seeing a lot of people in Washington and that you have a very hectic schedule. I thought I might begin by giving you a bit of a fill-in on my meeting yesterday with President Mobutu of Zaire. I hope there is no question in anyone's mind about our enormous respect for what you've been able to accomplish for peace and for a free and democratic Angola. (U)

Dr. Savimbi: Thank you very much, Mr. President, for your warm words of welcome and for your expressions of support. Let me say that the problems everyone has been discussing about the situation in Angola stem from the three key elements of the meeting at Gbadolite (agreement on a ceasefire, face-to-face negotiations between UNITA and the MPLA, and the commission to monitor and resolve problems associated with the cease-fire). The summit meeting at Harare came up with a document I was asked to sign which had not been seen by me. I said I could not respond to it because I had not seen it, and I did not agree with the idea that I should sign it. (Ø)

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This was an MPLA maneuver, which President Mobutu joined in. Mobutu had always been our friend, and he has always been their friend, but things have changed; he is not mediating impartially now. The MPLA's goal is to cut off all outside support to UNITA. When we asked Mobutu's help to prepare for Harare, he said we should not worry. But when we saw the document we were presented in Harare, there was no mention of the Gbadolite accords. We were simply told to "sign here, and here, and here." (Ø)

Mr. President, there are two key points I would like to make. First, we believe the only way to restore balance to the process is for the United States to become more involved in the mediation effort, to help keep President Mobutu neutral. Of the seven presidents in the working group, six -- Zambia, Zimbabwe, the MPLA, Bongo (Gabon), Sassou (Congo) and Zaire -- include not a single friend of UNITA and, in fact, include our enemy (the MPLA). If there were eight (with the U.S.), it would be more fair. (Ø)

Assistant Secretary Cohen: The seven shouldn't "mediate;" there should only be one mediator. (Ø)

Dr. Savimbi: (Resuming) The second (key point) is that our logistical situation is not good. We are all right for the moment, but looking toward six months from now, we need to get supplies in, and Mobutu -- as you no doubt know -- has refused to permit supplies to come to us through Zaire. (Ø)

The President: I understand. Let me make a few points in response. First, I'm not sure I agree about the U.S. role. It seems to me that the more support you get from other African leaders, the better. This is a process which started with the hard work of Chet Crocker, followed by Mr. Cohen. You may not have many friends among (the seven co-mediators) but we do, and maybe we can influence them in positive ways. President Kaunda has been a friend over the years and even Mugabe has too -- although we have had our differences with Zimbabwe. But it seems to me that the more African involvement you have, the better for you -- and for us. (U)

Second, we continue to support UNITA. We won't allow anyone to dictate to you or to harm your core interests. That includes exile, or integration, or other things that are key to you. If you want "free and fair elections," we want free and fair elections. (U)

But third, we don't see any feasible alternative to working through Zaire, and through Mobutu. Secretary Baker here can take a look at some alternatives, but I don't believe there are any. The range is just too great. (U)

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Yesterday (with President Mobutu), I tried to help smooth over some of your differences with President Mobutu. But I think you've got to figure out a way how to work with him. If he makes unacceptable suggestions, simply don't accept them. (Ø)

I guess the bottom line is that we support the peace process; we support the need for a cease-fire. (U)

Secretary Baker: Let me say, Mr. President (addressing Savimbi), that this morning, President Mobutu had a conversation with Hank Cohen and he agreed to re-open the supply pipeline. He made it clear that he was responding to the request the President put to him yesterday afternoon. But he wants to meet with you and said he would be glad to do so in Nice on October 14th. Hank Cohen can join you. (Ø)

The President: Yesterday, President Mobutu told me he would put past events behind him and move toward the future. He proposed that you and the MPLA meet with him in Kinshasa on October 25th, alone (i.e. without the other 6 African presidents), and sign a cease-fire -- after you've met him in Nice, and after he's re-opened the supply pipeline. The agreement would be based on the three principles from Gbadolite. (Ø)

Secretary Baker: As the President mentioned, we want as much additional support from the other Africans as possible. But you need to keep President Mobutu on board as the mediator. We think this is an offer in good faith, and hope you'll pick it up. (Ø)

The President: Perhaps someone can type this out (the points from President Mobutu's conversation that morning with Assistant Secretary Cohen) and get it to Dr. Savimbi. (Cohen undertook to do so.) (Ø)

Secretary Baker: President Mobutu may not have come here with this agreement in mind, but after the President leaned on him pretty hard yesterday afternoon, this is what he agreed to do. (Ø)

The President: I don't want to prejudice your thinking. I know you need time to think about it and study it. But if you have a reaction to it, it would be helpful to us to have. (Ø)

Dr. Savimbi: I have to make clear to you my concern that with President Mobutu as both the mediator and having a role in the supply of logistics to UNITA; it puts us in a very difficult position. He is in the position of a mediator who puts his views on the table, but is in a position to cut off supplies to one side if it doesn't agree with him. (Ø)

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The President: You mustn't overestimate our leverage with him. Still, we may be able to help out here a bit. (Ø)

Dr. Savimbi: We have studied possible alternatives (to supply through Zaire); although we're OK for now, we hope you'll take a look at them. (Ø)

Secretary Baker: We'll be glad to take a look at them. (Ø)

The President: (To Savimbi) You're meeting with Secretary Baker tomorrow? (Ø)

Secretary Baker: (To Savimbi) Give me your thoughts when you see me tomorrow. (Ø)

The President: Let me give you a thought -- and this has a bit to do with "pride." We all know President Mobutu is a proud man. But he has a right to be proud. He's the leader of a mighty nation. He has withstood the challenges of communism for more than 20 years. He feels a bit wounded by some of the attacks he has seen on him in the press. I think there's a bit of a need to salve some wounds right now. You (Savimbi) didn't like going to Gbadolite and sticking out your hand toward Dos Santos and not having a photographer there to record it. I think maybe the argument has become a bit too personal. I've dealt with President Mobutu over a period of many years -- a long time. I think there's a need to make some amends. (Ø)

Dr. Savimbi: Allow me two points, Mr. President. First, it is very important that there be a steady and firm position from Washington. After the Gbadolite summit, we (UNITA's senior leadership) travelled to five different African countries to ask for their understanding and help: in each one, they asked "what do the Americans think?" (Ø)

The second is the importance to us of elections: we would like your support on our call for elections. (U)

The President: Well, we can certainly help in that respect. And I hope that all these pictures (taken between the President and the UNITA leadership) will help. (U)

Secretary Baker: We're passing the word to everyone we talk to, all around Africa and elsewhere, that we support you. (U)

Dr. Savimbi: Finally, Mr. President, let me ask your views on what I should be saying to the press -- who will probably be waiting for me just outside the door. (Ø)

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The President: You should feel free to say anything you want to say. You can certainly say that we support you completely. I think probably the only area you might want to be a bit careful is about representing what President Mobutu and I talked about, and what President Mobutu said he would do. (Z)

Secretary Baker: You should say you have our unswerving support. (Z)

The meeting ended at 11:15 a.m. (U)

-- End of Conversation --

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