



Security Council

Distr.
GENERAL

S/20947
4 November 1989

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

LETTER DATED 4 NOVEMBER 1989 FROM THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE
OF SOUTH AFRICA TO THE UNITED NATIONS ADDRESSED TO THE
SECRETARY-GENERAL

I have the honour to refer to paragraph 11 of your report to the Security Council on Namibia in terms of resolution 643 (1989) (S/20943) in which you advised the Council of claims that intercepted internal UNTAG communications had reported an imminent invasion into Namibia from Angola by SWAPO combatants.

As you are aware, the South African Foreign Minister, Mr. R. F. Botha, addressed the same subject on 3 November 1989 and stated that there was no evidence to the effect that UNTAG was responsible for these messages.

The full text of the Minister's statement is enclosed and I should be grateful if it and this letter could be circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) Jeremy B. SHEARAR
Permanent Representative

Annex

Media statement by the Minister of Foreign Affairs,
Mr. R. F. Botha with regard to SWAPO activities

On the 31st of March this year, the same sources that conveyed details of transmissions about SWAPO activities to the Government last Wednesday, reported that there were firm indications that SWAPO was planning to infiltrate across the border on the night of 31 March 1989 from Angola. The difference is that the report of 31 March 1989 was less substantive than the information conveyed to the Government on Wednesday. It is well-known what transpired on 1 April and the days thereafter in northern South West Africa. If we had not heeded that information, certain steps would not have been able to be taken in time and the whole peace process would have ground to a halt.

Last Wednesday, the Chief of Defence Force and the Director-General of Foreign Affairs sent a note to General Malan and I when we were in a meeting, with an urgent request to discuss an extremely serious development in South West Africa. We left the meeting immediately and met them in the adjacent room. There, a number of interceptions of radio broadcasts were read to us. Defence experts who were present assured us of the authenticity of these transmissions and that they had been broadcast on identifiable wavelengths.

It was clear that these messages had been transmitted between UNTAG stations. I asked whether it was possible that this was disinformation. There is no doubt about the authenticity of the transmissions and the information was consistent with information received from other sources. The information indicated that several hundreds of PLAN fighters were poised to cross the border and that convoys had already been observed at certain points near the border. It was also specified that two trucks carrying fighters had returned empty to Angola.

In the message UNTAG units were warned to remain neutral and fears were expressed that a critical situation was developing.

After further discussion and consideration of various options we decided to bring this information to the attention of Mr. Ahtisaari as soon as possible. I traced him in Ovamboland and informed him telephonically that I had intercepts in my possession containing this information. His reaction was one of disbelief. I reminded him that on 31 March 1989 when I had conveyed similar information he had also not believed it. I said I didn't want to argue with him about the information and that it was in our mutual interest to take the speediest steps to ensure that there wouldn't be another mess in South West Africa mere days before the election. He said he would give the matter his most urgent attention. I would like to add that when I was unable to reach Mr. Ahtisaari in Windhoek initially, I called Dr. De Cuellar in New York and this information was also conveyed to him.

I also invited representatives of a number of Western countries to my office and conveyed the information to them. I appealed to them that their Governments do everything possible to prevent the elections in South West Africa being derailed by violence.

After this, in response to questions from the media about potential obstacles in the way of independence for South West Africa, I released these details at a press conference and said that I was in contact with Mr. Ahtisaari and a number of Western Governments.

Subsequently Mr. Ahtisaari has denied that UNTAG transmitted such messages. A technical investigation team of the Defence Force yesterday established without doubt that these transmissions had taken place. In other words, that which was picked up by our monitoring team was indeed transmitted. In the meantime it has been established that the transmissions were done on a frequency allocated to an UNTAG battalion. I understand that it is still being denied that this battalion transmitted these particular messages. What is strange however, is that when a frequency is allocated, that transmitter should be aware of messages transmitted on that frequency. This is a mystery which I do not feel disposed to try and resolve.

What is of decisive importance to the South African Government is not who is responsible for these transmissions, but that the election in the Territory proceed fairly and freely. If these transmissions are a hoax, I would be the first to be overjoyed. At least it has had the result that everybody has been sensitized to the need to curtail violence or intimidation of any kind whatsoever.

As far as I am concerned, there is no evidence to indicate that UNTAG was responsible for these broadcasts, and the responsibility remains unresolved.

In fact, it has been agreed with Angola that joint reconnaissance teams comprising of South Africa, Angola and UNTAG will patrol the Angolan side of the border with helicopters. This is an important and positive step.

The Administrator-General, at the request of the South African Government, has yet again requested Mr. Ahtisaari's full co-operation to ensure that effective joint patrols are carried out on the South West African side of the border.

The South African Government is encouraged by the code of conduct that was signed by all parties and trusts that the election will proceed fairly and without intimidation. In any case, the Administrator-General has the necessary contingency plans in the event of any unforeseen occurrences.

