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DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Washington, D.C. 20520

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February 22, 1974

TO : AF - Mr. Donald B. Easum
FROM : AF/C - Herman J. Cohen *HJC*
SUBJECT: Sale of M-16s to Zaire - ACTION MEMORANDUM

On February 14, Andre Navez and I discussed with Deputy Secretary Rush the question of selling M-16s to Zaire. The Deputy Secretary said that the only objection he saw to such a sale was that it might complicate the current Azores lease negotiations, in which we are resisting certain Portuguese arms requests. He asked us to consult with EUR.

We have spoken with the Portuguese desk, arguing that sale of M-16s to Zaire might be made palatable to the Portuguese if: 1) we were to limit the sale to a number of weapons which could reasonably be used by the Zairian army itself; 2) we were to require of the GOZ a formal pledge not to pass any of the weapons to the GRAE; and 3) we were to point out to the Portuguese that if Zaire doesn't get M-16s from us it almost certainly will obtain comparable weapons from another source, communist-country or private dealer, which will impose no restrictions on their use.

After consulting with Deputy Assistant Secretary Stabler and others in the Bureau, the Portuguese Desk has informed us that EUR would oppose sale of M-16s to Zaire at the present stage of our negotiations with the Portuguese. If and when we are able to offer to the Portuguese an arms package which satisfies them, M-16s for Zaire will pose no problem. Whether we will be able to come up with something which will satisfy the Portuguese, however, is an open question. Even if we can, that stage in the negotiations may not be reached for several months.

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AF's options now are to take the question back to the seventh floor, where I think EUR's argument would probably prevail, or to leave the question in abeyance until negotiations with the Portuguese reach a point where a sale to Zaire would no longer complicate them. While the latter course risks losing the Zaire market to other suppliers and forfeiting the influence with the Zairian military which the sale would give us, I believe it is the one we should follow.

Recommendation:

1. That AF decide in principle to approve the sale of M-16's to Zaire.

Approve _____

Disapprove _____

2. That we continue to maintain a negative posture with respect to the Zaire Government on M-16's until such time as the Azores negotiations are completed or have progressed to a point where they would no longer be adversely affected by a sale of M-16's to Zaire.

Approve JS 2-25-74 _____

Disapprove _____

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