

Taken from
yesterday's (Feb 1)
Globe + Mail. Maribel
will e-mail you
later this week
re. Dosman's
comment.

Siava

Canada to juggle tasks as head of UN Security Council

Angolan crisis at top of agenda that also includes Kosovo conflict, Iraq sanctions

PAUL KNOX
The Globe and Mail

Canada, which begins a gruelling month presiding over the United Nations Security Council today, has also taken on the formidable task of trying to curb a raging civil war in Angola.

The war is fuelled by gun running and diamond dealing in violation of UN sanctions, and Canada has volunteered to head efforts to identify the guilty parties.

As head of a council committee overseeing the sanctions regime, Canada is charged with investigating reports of violations and pressing other countries to take steps to cut off aid to the rebels.

UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan acknowledges that the sanctions have been ineffective. The rebels are buying guns with the proceeds of diamond sales, he told reporters in Brussels last week.

"The chairman of the sanctions committee is now going to take it very seriously and go to capitals, talk to suppliers, talk to people who buy these things and ask them what are they going to do to work with us to put an end to this," he said.

A Canadian official said Robert Fowler, Canada's ambassador to the UN, would probably visit Angola or the surrounding region to look into allegations of sanctions violations.

"It's certainly something we are considering very strongly, and hope to be doing not too far off in the future," the official said.

The Angola chores are piled on top of the heavy workload assumed by Canadian diplomats at the UN on Jan. 1, when Canada began a two-year term on the council.

UNITA VOWS LONG WAR

UNITA rebels threw down the gauntlet to Angola's government yesterday, challenging President Jose Eduardo dos Santos to all-out civil war.

"Dos Santos has decided that war is the way, so we are going to make a long war, for two, maybe three years," senior rebel commander Paulo Lukamba Gato said.

On Saturday, Mr. Dos Santos shuffled his cabinet, removing the defence minister and replacing him with a hard-line general, Kundy Payama. The day before, Mr. Dos Santos had fired his prime minister, leaving himself as head of state, government and the army.

"From now on there will be a change in the method and style of government," he said.

"Our first priority is the final fight for peace. In other words: we must make war in order to have the conquest of peace."

The government and rebels of the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola were at war for almost 20 years before a shaky 1994 peace treaty, which has now completely collapsed. Military analysts believe UNITA holds the upper hand, aided in part by the fact many of Angola's crack troops are deployed in Congo helping President Laurent Kabila fight a rebellion there. *Reuters*

Canada two weeks ago, will assess

The 15-member council, charged with maintaining global peace and security, is dealing with several African wars as well as a military crisis in the Balkans and simmering conflict over Iraq.

Canada has few historical ties to Angola, a former Portuguese colony of 12 million people in southwestern Africa. It has been mired in civil war for most of the past 25 years.

"I'm sorry that Canada's got itself stuck in this one, because there's no winning formula here," said Edgar Dosman, a political scientist at York University, who is completing a book on Cuba's involvement in the Angolan conflict.

Canada campaigned hard to win election to the council, whose presidency changes every month. Foreign Affairs Minister Lloyd Axworthy says he wants to use the term to make the council less secretive and boost efforts to rebuild war-torn societies, in addition to addressing traditional peacekeeping and security concerns.

He plans a visit to New York this month for an open council meeting on protecting civilians in armed conflicts.

But the council's agenda is dominated by global crises, and is often changed unexpectedly. Much of Mr. Fowler's time last month was occupied by efforts to restart UN inspection of chemical and biological warfare facilities in Iraq.

Inspections were suspended in December after a UN special commission responsible for the task was barred from key sites by Iraqi President Saddam Hussein. In retaliation, the U.S. launched air attacks on Iraqi targets.

The council is deeply split over what to do. On Saturday, acting on a Canadian proposal, the council decided to set up three panels to assess all aspects of Iraq's relations with the UN.

The three panels, proposed by

disarmament, the condition of the Iraqi people under sanctions; and an accounting for Kuwaitis and others who went missing during Iraq's occupation of the oil-rich country it invaded in August, 1990. They will be led by Brazil's ambassador, Celso Amorim.

The plan cast Canada "in a role as bridge builder between apparently irreconcilable positions," noted David Malone, a former Canadian diplomat and president of the New York-based International Peace Academy. "Canada is uniquely placed to help coax the U.S. out of a corner . . . on Iraq."

In addition to Iraq, the council has been occupied with the conflict in the Serbian province of Kosovo and a civil war in another African country, Sierra Leone.

Angola sanctions are aimed at the insurgent National Union for the Total Independence of Angola, led by Jonas Savimbi. UNITA and the government signed a peace agreement in 1995, but UNITA failed to demobilize troops and turn in weapons on schedule.

The council voted last month to cut a UN mission overseeing the ceasefire from 1,000 to 100 members, after Mr. Annan said there was no longer any peace to keep.

UNITA has long been active in diamond-producing areas of the Angolan interior. Its assets and bank accounts are supposed to be frozen and governments are supposed to shun contact with it.

"Yet everything comes in," Mr. Annan said. "Things are sold, diamonds are sold and weapons are going in."

Prof. Dosman said Canada will have to tread carefully in the Angola conflict.

"No one in this area comes without an agenda, and no one comes without baggage," he said. "So you've got to be careful. You can do a lot of damage."