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Statement by the AFL-CIO Executive Council

on

South African Mineworkers Strike

August 17, 1987
Washington, D.C.

The AFL-CIO joins with the 85 million workers united in the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions in expressing its fullest support and solidarity with the 340,000 black South African mineworkers now on strike for equality, justice, and dignity.

The AFL-CIO deplors the unwillingness of management to negotiate a fair settlement in good faith. The Federation is outraged at reports of widespread arrests of National Union of Mineworkers activists, who are engaged in leading a legal strike supported fully by their membership.

The AFL-CIO urges the managers of the South African mines to meet the legitimate demands of the hundreds of thousands of striking workers whose toil produces South Africa's wealth. We denounce the intervention of the racist government's security services in an effort to intimidate black mineworkers.

The blame for violence at struck collieries must be placed squarely on the shoulders of the gold and coal barons and the government. As events unfold we must be mindful of the words of the NUM's Secretary General Cyril Ramaphosa: "Violence is always provoked by mine management, by using the security forces, and inviting the police to come in."

American workers stand for racial justice and democracy. They deplore the gross inequities inherent in the apartheid wage system, which pays black mineworkers less than one-third the wage of their white counterparts. They stand with the National Union of Mineworkers, the largest affiliate of the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU).

South African Mineworkers Strike

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The most recent manifestation of black South African worker power once again reaffirms the value of free trade unionism, South Africa's principal force for peaceful change and democracy. The AFL-CIO pledges its steadfast material and moral support for that trade union movement.

The AFL-CIO strongly urges its affiliates to support the solidarity strike fund established by the United Mine Workers of America.

Statement by the AFL-CIO Executive Council

on

American Dollars for Foreign-Made Weapons

August 19, 1987
Washington, D.C.

The AFL-CIO has a long record of consistent support for defense spending adequate to the nation's security needs. We also have consistently opposed the erosion of our nation's industrial base and infrastructure, and have warned against the consequences for our national security and military readiness of the disappearance of key U.S. industries.

It is out of these concerns that we strongly protest the Reagan Administration's decision to "contract-out" to foreign companies the manufacture of U.S. military hardware. Foreign arms manufacturers are now cashing in on over \$9 billion in military contracts, with the promise of even more in years to come.

A disturbing case in point is the recent decision by the Reagan Administration to manufacture the "Abrams" M1 tank in Egypt. Not only does the U.S. already provide Egypt with \$1.3 billion a year in military aid, but billions of tax dollars paid by American workers will now be used to expand the arms industry of a foreign power intent on becoming an arms manufacturer to the oil-rich Arab states. The transfer of high technology and techniques of producing state-of-the-art armor-plating to a nation that faces a mounting problem with Islamic fundamentalism and socio-economic instability is a recipe for disaster. And it will result in the loss of thousands of U.S. jobs.

The Egyptian case, bad as it is, is only the tip of the iceberg. Millions in defense contracts go overseas for the production of all types of weapons including the most sophisticated aircraft and missiles. Tens of millions of U.S. defense dollars are used to buy foreign-made cars and trucks for use on U.S. bases. Even contracts for military clothing and shoes are let overseas.

In October, a glittering trade show with over 150 overseas defense contractors will be held near the Pentagon, with the participation of Defense Secretary Caspar Weinberger and other government officials.

Many U.S. defense contracts go to overseas firms which have weakened our national security. Some foreign firms have sold high technology security sensitive products to the Soviet Union and its allies. Kongsberg Vaapenfabrikk, Inc. of Norway-- which with Toshiba sold sophisticated military technology to the Soviets, with adverse consequences for U.S. security that will cost American taxpayers tens of billions of dollars to rectify--will actively participate in the trade show.

Ronald Reagan says he's committed to peace through strength. In the light of the trend to export our defense industry, we have to wonder: whose peace and whose strength?

President Reagan's policy of using U.S. taxpayer dollars to promote the overseas production of arms and weapons needed by our military is a dangerous mistake which weakens national security. It means the loss of American jobs. It contributes to a mounting trade imbalance. It instantly transfers technology and know-how which cost billions of U.S. taxpayer dollars to develop.

The AFL-CIO supports Congressional action to prevent the importing of all Toshiba products into this country and calls for an embargo on all defense contracts with both Toshiba and Kongsberg.

The AFL-CIO calls on Japan and Norway to take significant financial responsibility for the billions of dollars of anti-submarine warfare costs the United States must now incur as a result of their corporations' thirst for profits.

The AFL-CIO calls on the U.S. government to require that foreign governments implement rigorous licensing procedures, with strict financial and criminal penalties, in keeping with the general agreement of Free World nations to restrict the sale of high

technology products that affect national security. The overall umbrella group, the Coordinating Committee on Multilateral Export Controls (Cocom), should be strengthened.

The AFL-CIO welcomes legislation passed by the House of Representatives requiring the U.S. Department of Defense to purchase only American-made "administrative, non-combat vehicles." We regard this as a step in the right direction and call on Congress to extend this principle.

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THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

January 5, 1988

FILE

file

MEMORANDUM FOR REBECCA RANGE

FROM: MAX GREEN *MG*

SUBJECT: AFL-CIO stance on Contra aid

I just talked with Tom Kahn, the Director of the International Affairs Department of the AFL-CIO. He informed me that an AFL-CIO convention resolution called for the termination of U.S. aid to the Contras and Soviet-Cuban support of the Sandinistas. The exact nature of the linkage, if there is one, was left unclear.

Moreover, the same resolution prohibited the AFL-CIO from involving itself in the aid to the Contras debate. Therefore, Kahn would be in violation of AFL-CIO policy were he to agree to my request to schedule a meeting on Central America with a high-ranking administration official.

There is a slight possibility that an affiliated union will do something, and I will check out that possibility. But, frankly, I am not optimistic.

On a brighter note, I was told that in all likelihood the AFL-CIO will endorse the INF agreement.

*Thanks.
Rebecca.*