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# Supplying Illicit Arms and Air Transport to African Conflicts: Victor Butt and His Network

December 2000

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# Summary

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- ◆ Victor Butt has been the largest supplier of illicit arms and air transport services in sub-Saharan Africa since the mid-1990s.
  - His ability to attract a large clientele is based on the large scale of his operation and the breadth of services he provides:
    - \* Has about 60 aircraft, 200 personnel, facilities in several countries.
    - \* Brokers sales, delivers arms and combatants.
  - USG attention to Butt is based on:
    - \* His role in supplying several of Africa's bloodiest military conflicts.
    - \* His flaunting of UN efforts to halt these conflicts through sanctions.

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# UNITA Sanctions Violations

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- ◆ Since early 1997, Butt has been supplying weapons to UNITA, which has been under an arms embargo since 1993.

- Butt was flying UNITA arms <sup>1.4(c)</sup> from Bulgaria.

- <sup>1.4(c)</sup>
- <sup>1.4c</sup>

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# Angola Government

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- ◆ Ironically, Butt also has freighter aircraft working with the Angolan military in its fight against UNITA:

1.4c



- ◆ Butt's planes continue to flying for the Angolan military.

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# Support to DROC Rebels

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- ◆ <sup>1.4(c)</sup> [REDACTED] Butt sets up Centrafrican Airlines
  - Airline registered in Central African Republic
  - Many of the planes are in Kigali, Rwanda and others are based in Ras al Khaimah and Sharjah in the UAE.
  - <sup>1.4(c)</sup> [REDACTED] flights <sup>1.4(c)</sup> [REDACTED] carry small arms, ammunition, and troops for the DROC rebels.

# Liberia: Weapons Embargo Violations

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- ◆ <sup>1.4(c)</sup> [REDACTED] Butt has been working to deliver military cargoes to Liberia, despite an arms embargo on Monrovia that has been in effect since 1992.
  - In July 2000, Butt delivered several helicopter gunships and associated rockets to Liberian President Taylor.
  - Also in July, Butt and his associates shipped air defense equipment, bombs, and ammunition to Monrovia.
- ◆ The ultimate recipient of some weapons is the Revolutionary United Front rebels in Sierra Leone.

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# Trafficking in Illicit Diamonds

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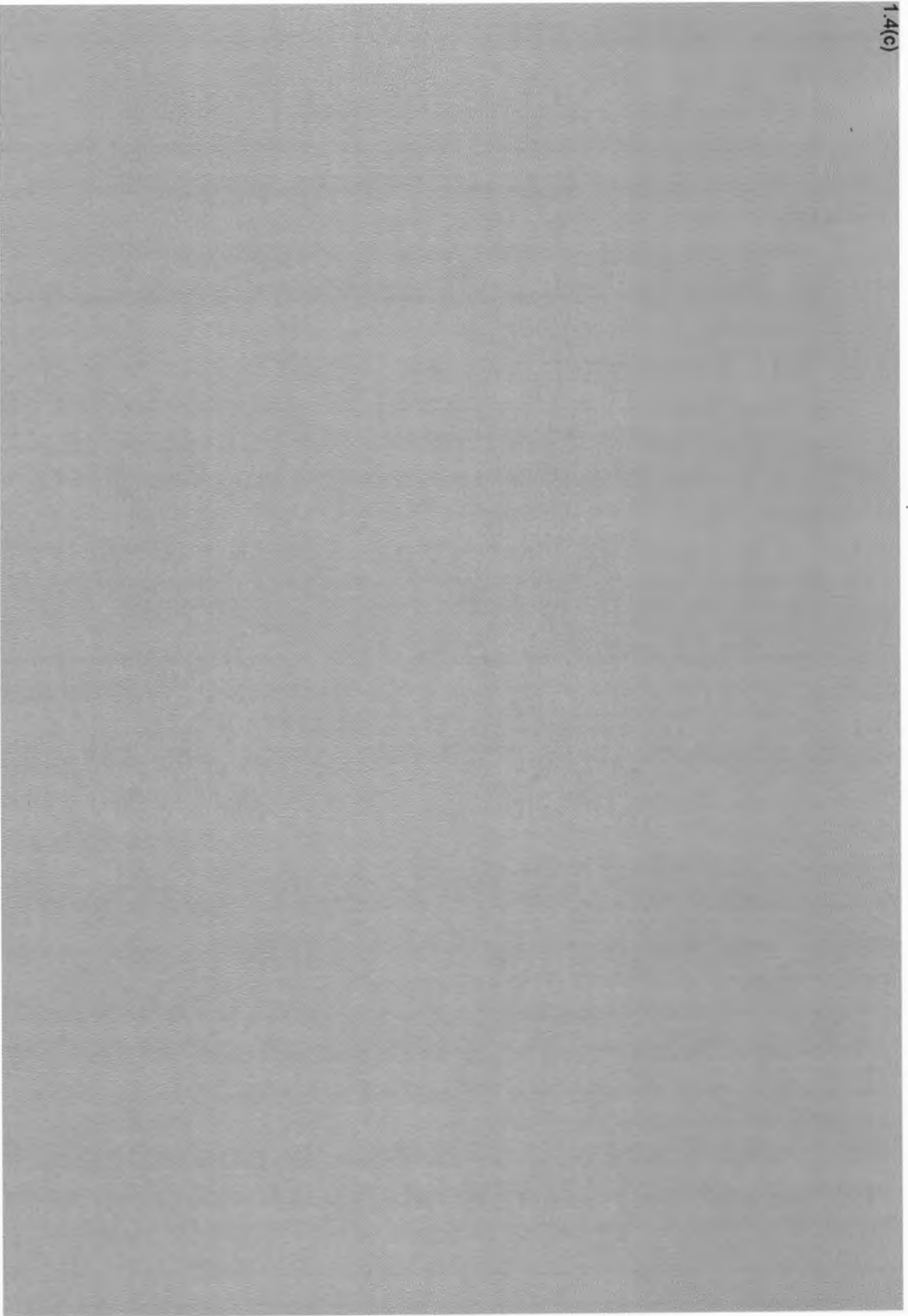
- ◆ Butt has become a key player in smuggling African diamonds, illustrating involvement in a disturbing trend that the UN seeks to counter by working with the legitimate diamond industry.

1.4c



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# Exploiting Africa's Bloodiest Civil Wars

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- ◆ Butt's actions in Africa prolong the carnage associated with the fighting in Angola, the DROC, and Sierra Leone.
  - Since the mid-1990s, the Angolan civil war has resulted in some 300,000 deaths and displaced 2.3 million people.
  - In Sierra Leone, civil conflict has forced 850,000 people from their homes; the main rebel group is notorious for torturing and mutilating civilians—including children.
  - Since mid-1998, some 6,000 combatants have been killed in the DROC and 1.6 million people have been made homeless.
- ◆ Butt has armed combatants in Angola, the DROC, Liberia, and Sierra Leone; transported troops to the front in the DROC.<sup>1.4(c)</sup>


1.4(c)



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## Size of Butt's Organization: A Vulnerability and a Strength

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- ◆ Operates about **60** aircraft.
- ◆ Has at least **200** employees.
- ◆ Operating about **half a dozen** firms.
- ◆ <sup>1.4(c)</sup> 
- ◆ UAE facilities are the most important.
  - Loss of license to operate there would be a crippling blow.

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# Unlikely To Withstand Official Scrutiny

- ◆ Aircraft registration often acquired by bribery:
  - Butt in 1997 bribed a Swazi CAA official for a license and to register 50 aircraft...license and registrations revoked in 1998

- 1.4(c)

1.4(c)

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# Butt's Firms

1.4(c)

## ◆ Main Firms

- Transavia Travel and Cargo
- Air Cess
- Centrafrican Airlines
- San Air General Trading

1.4(c)

1.4(c)

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