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CIA denies mercenary recruitment for Angola

WASHINGTON (AP) — A spokesman for President Ford denied Friday that Americans are being recruited by the U.S. to fight in Angola — but declined to give the same assurance concerning foreigners.

Press Secretary Ron Nessen denied a report in The Christian Science Monitor that 600 Americans had been recruited indirectly by the Central Intelligence Agency to fight in Angola.

"As far as I know, no private company or contractor is hiring American mercenaries for combat duty," Nessen said. And he gave a flat assurance that no U.S. government agency is recruiting, hiring or training American mercenaries.

However, when he was asked whether any non-Americans, possibly Cuban refugees, were being recruited or trained for use in Angola he said; "I don't have anything to add."

He declined to elaborate or to say whether Ft. Benning, Ga., is being used to train personnel bound for Angola.

The story in the Monitor, by staff correspondent David Anable, said Thursday that 300 Americans are already operating in Angola and another 300 are ready to go when the CIA gets the money.

Sources for the story were described as "senior mercenary officers familiar with the situation both in Angola and the United States," who are "close to the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency."

A spokesman for the CIA has branded the story as nonsense.

According to the Monitor most of the Americans in Angola are in the south with the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola, while one American unit was said to be operating in the north with the allied National Front for the Liberation of Angola.

The two factions are fighting the Soviet and Cuban-backed Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola, which holds the central part of the country.

The newspaper said about 150 of the recruits had refresher training at Ft. Benning.

At the State Department, a spokesman said the United States objects to countries allowing Cuban planes to use their airfields or air space in transporting Cuban troops and equipment to Angola. But the spokesman, Robert Funseth, declined to say what the United States is doing to discourage this activity.