

A MIDNIGHT Exclusive:

CIA Financed Angola

Mercenaries

By BERNARD GOULD
MIDNIGHT Staff Writer

American taxpayers, through the secret manipulations of the CIA, paid the huge tab of every mercenary soldier on the U.S.-backed losing side in Angola's civil war, MIDNIGHT learned exclusively.

Not only did the CIA channel pay to American mercenaries — a relative handful in number — but to hundreds of British and Portuguese as well, a top mercenary recruiter told this newspaper.

The total CIA shell-out came to \$50 million in pay and equipment, he estimated.

Surprisingly, though, many of these men were literally risking their necks for \$500 a week, according to his figures. And some for a lot less.

The astounding account comes from David F. Bufkin, the admitted chief recruiter of U.S. mercenaries for Angola.

Bufkin, an erstwhile crop-duster pilot, said he himself took part in combat as a flight officer for the U.S.-backed National Front for the Liberation of Angola — known there as the ENLA.

He was one of the few American mercenaries to escape death or capture by the winning Russian-Cuban-backed Popular Movement (MPLA), he said.

Bufkin laid bare the CIA's operation in the African nation in an exclusive MIDNIGHT interview from his Kerman, Calif., home, where he lives with his wife and three children.

He said he had done work for the Central Intelligence Agency in the past, "directly or indirectly," adding:

"Just a few months ago, I acquired some military equipment for the CIA... equipment from overseas they were interested in examining. I was paid directly by them."

Bufkin, a 39-year-old Army veteran, said he began mercenary recruitment for Angola's FNLA forces shortly after civil war broke out last November.

Admitting the recruitment "wasn't too successful," he said he personally signed up "less than 15" Americans.

One was Daniel Gearhart of Kensington, Md., who was executed by the Angolans for being a mercenary.

"It wasn't because the men weren't available," Bufkin noted.

"At one time there were approximately 200 people that were going to be accepted. It was because of a total lack of communication between FNLA headquarters and the continental United States... a lack of organization."

Then, in one of his most startling revelations, Bufkin declared: "Everyone who has served in Angola worked indirectly for the CIA. The CIA fronted the money for the FNLA — a little more than \$25 million in cash that I know of, in addition to arms. About \$50 million altogether."

"The CIA money was paid to the FNLA, and the FNLA paid the mercenaries," he explained.

And not just the American mercenaries, he made clear.

"The CIA was paying for all the FNLA mercenaries — British and Portuguese, too," he asserted.

"I'd say there were 200 British mercenaries (with the FNLA), maybe a dozen Americans and approximately 300 to 400 Portuguese."

The CIA, Bufkin pointed out, prefers to recruit foreign mercenaries. "The CIA is not prone to hiring American mercenaries."

He referred to trials in Angola of 10 British and three American mercenaries, captured while fighting for the losing side.

One of those defendants,

British mercenary leader Tony Callan, admitted ordering the massacre of 14 of his own men — an incident which "sourred" further recruitment, Bufkin said.

And which apparently upped the ante for recruits.

The American mercenaries — including the three who went to trial — "were originally offered \$1,200 a month, plus all expenses" incurred

on the trip over to Angola, Bufkin said.

"But when I got them there, I got them \$2,000 a month.

"British and American mercenaries got paid the same — every two weeks — in brand new, uncirculated U.S. \$100 bills," Bufkin went on. "The Portuguese got paid hardly anything — and in Angolan dollars."



ANGOLA MERCENARY David Bufkin claims he recruited soldiers for the war using secret CIA funds.