

'Spy Plane' Case Widens In S. Africa

U.S. Said to Give Pretoria Photos Of Black States

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JOHANNESBURG, April 28 — U.S. intelligence agents gave their South African counterparts aerial photographs of hostile African states taken by a hidden camera in the U.S. ambassador's private plane, a newspaper reported here tonight.

Quoting "intelligence sources," the Johannesburg Sunday Times said the Americans gave the South Africans photos, taken over the capitals of Angola, Tanzania and Zambia, in exchange for secret information from the South Africans. This was only one instance of a close cooperation between the two spying communities which has continued for several years, the paper's sources said.

While earlier Pretoria charges of U.S. spying with the plane in South Africa have strained relations between the two countries, today's allegations could seriously affect American ties with the black African countries, said to have been photographed. All consider South Africa their major enemy, and each could be the target of military activity resulting from intelligence that South Africa allegedly acquired.

The white-dominated government of Rhodesia, which receives support from South Africa, has bombed both Angola and Zambia in recent months.

It was speculated here that the latest allegations, leaked to the Sunday Times, may have been made public precisely to damage the Carter administration's carefully nurtured ties with black Africa.

[The State Department would not comment on the Johannesburg newspaper's report.]

South Africa expelled three U.S. military personnel April 12 and ordered out Ambassador William Edmondson's 11-seat plane after charging that a secret camera was used to photograph strategic sites in South Africa.

In retaliation, the U.S. government ordered two top South African defense attaches to leave United States.

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The ambassador's plane was used to ferry Edmondson and other U.S. officials, including the Ambassador to Zambia, Stephen Low, to Rhodesia and to several black-ruled states. These include Angola, Zambia, Tanzania, Botswana and Mozambique—the Front-Line states that support Soviet-armed guerrillas fighting to bring down white rule in Namibia (Southwest Africa) and Rhodesia.

The Sunday Times did not say whether the alleged photos were supposed to have proved valuable to South Africa. The white-minority government is prohibited from flying its own planes over most of black Africa.

Most observers here have long assumed that American and South African intelligence operatives worked closely together, especially in tracking Soviet activity. It was not clear, though, why the South Africans were acting in a way that seems bound to wreck any such relationship, in expelling the Americans and making the spy charges.

It has been conjectured that the Americans were learning more about South Africa's nuclear program than Pretoria wanted them to know.

Another possibility is that the intelligence received was not as important as the advantages to be gained by alienating the United States from many black African states.

The black leaders may well question U.S. sincerity if they believe Washington engages in such close ties in its opposition to South African apartheid cooperation with the South African intelligence service.

While it was not stated in the Sunday Times' article tonight, in all likelihood the intelligence sources quoted are South Africa.

The idea is to discredit the Americans, discredit the West, to show that they [the black states] cannot trust the West," said one South African. The aim of this tactic is to undermine American-led diplomatic initiatives to find negotiated solutions to the region's racial conflicts, according to this reasoning.

This is in line with a shift in Pretoria's foreign policy posture in the last two months away from cooperating with Western negotiation efforts. Instead Pretoria has appeared to be seeking to lead a regional bloc of anti-Communist countries.

The emergent "fortress" strategy would replace the West's attempts to work out compromise solutions with South African military protection for black-ruled states in the area that might fear Soviet incursion.

Prime Minister Pieter W. Botha's "television diplomacy" in the embassy plane incident was regarded by the U.S. government as an attempt to trigger an altercation with Washington in order to justify Pretoria's withdrawal from the U.S.-led negotiations in Namibia. Only hours after Edmondson had been called in by Foreign Minister Pik Botha and told about the expulsions, the prime minister went on television to announce the action and to demand an apology from the Americans.

The affair brought relations between the two countries to their lowest point and the U.S. government said it "had nothing to apologize for" in its intelligence gathering in South Africa. An embassy spokesman here pointed out that the South Africans had long known about the existence of the plane's "Secret" camera.