

# U.S. Denies It Showed Spy Photos to Pretoria

By Caryle Murphy  
Washington Post Foreign Service

JOHANNESBURG, South Africa, April 28 — A U.S. Embassy spokesman said today "there is absolutely no truth" in allegations that U.S. intelligence agents gave spy photographs of black African countries to South African intelligence agencies.

The embassy was responding to a front page story in today's Johannesburg Sunday Times that said photographs of the capital cities of Angola, Zambia and Tanzania, taken from a plane used by the U.S. ambassador to South Africa, went to the South African intelligence community in exchange for information.

Quoting "intelligence sources," the paper said the exchange was part of a cooperative relationship between the two intelligence communities that has been going on for a long time.

According to the U.S. Embassy spokesman, the only true part of the story is that "the aircraft did make trips to other countries of southern Africa with the permission of the countries concerned," ferrying American officials on diplomatic missions.

The U.S. State Department issued a similar denial in Washington. A spokesman, asked if the plane did take photographs during flights to the black African nations, refused comment.]

Spokesmen at the South African Defense Department and the Department for National Security, which are responsible for South African intelligence gathering, said they were unable to give a definitive comment on the Sunday Times' allegations.

Today's denial worked the first time the U.S. Embassy here has responded to allegations from the government, or in the press about the activities of the 11-seat Beechcraft that was used by U.S. Ambassador William Edmondson.

The South African government two weeks ago accused the Americans of using the plane to take aerial photographs of secret military sites in South Africa. It ordered the plane out of the country and also expelled three American military officials for their part in the alleged aerial spying.

If the latest allegations are true, they could cause serious problems in U.S. relations with the black African countries involved, who view South Africa as their main enemy. The United States already has to overcome considerable distrust by black African leaders about American economic support for the white minority government of Pretoria.

The Johannesburg Sunday Times article gave no details about what, if any, information the U.S. agents were said to have supplied to South Africa. But the allegations were considered specially sensitive because Rhodesia, which is strongly supported by South Africa, has bombed nationalist guerrilla targets in Angola and Tanzania in recent months.

If the leaders of these countries became convinced U.S. intelligence agents were cooperating with their South African counterparts by relaying information on guerrilla movements, Washington's sincerity in efforts to promote racial justice in the white-ruled areas of Southern Africa could be questioned.