

U.S. Denies Hiring Troops For Angola

Washington

A White House spokesman denied yesterday that any U.S. agency is recruiting or training American mercenaries for service in Angola, but declined to say whether any foreign nationals are being trained.

"There is no agency of the U.S. government using American mercenaries in Angola, nor is any U.S. government agency recruiting, hiring or training American mercenaries," White House press secretary Ron Nessen told reporters.

Nessen had been asked about a report in yesterday's Christian Science Monitor which quoted sources close to the Central Intelligence Agency as saying the agency is "indirectly recruiting American ex-servicemen, training them, dispatching them to South Africa and contributing toward their pay."

The dispatch said 300 Americans have already arrived in Angola and that another 300 are ready to go "as soon as the CIA can obtain further funds."

In view of the report, Senator Dick Clark (Dem-Iowa), chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations subcommittee on African affairs, said he expects his group to recall CIA and State Department officials, who he said, have left senators with the impression that there has been no government

Back Page Col. 1

From Page 1

involvement in recruitment of Angola mercenaries.

While Nessen was firm in his denial that any American mercenaries are being recruited, he said he had "nothing to add" when he was asked if the denial applied to Cuban refugees or other non-citizens, or whether U.S. facilities are being used to train foreign troops.

Nessen said he knew of no U.S. company or contractor hiring mercenaries for combat duty in Angola. Asked if he were implying that military advisers were being hired, he said no, that he just did not know whether some U.S. company might have hired Americans "to stand guard at the gate."

Asked if aid might not be going to Angola through foreign countries, Nessen said it is known that "modest amounts" of aid are going to "some African countries," apparently a reference to \$9 million that is still available to assist Angolan factions fighting the Soviet-backed Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola.

"It is fair to say that no U.S. government agency has any way of knowing how every last penny is spent of that assistance," he said.

Clark figured prominently in the

floor fight which resulted last month in a Senate vote to delete \$82 million for covert aid to Angola from the pending Defense Appropriations bill, which still faces final action in the House. The United States has already spent \$32 million to aid the anti-Soviet factions.

Clark said he attended two briefings on Angola by administration officials who dropped "no hint that this is going on," despite considerable questioning about possible U.S. sponsorship of anti-Communist mercenaries.

One of the briefings was conducted on November 6, he said, by CIA Director William E. Colby and Joseph J. Sisco, under secretary of state for political affairs. He said the other session was a meeting on December 16 with Edward W. Mulcahy, acting assistant secretary of state for African affairs and William Nelson, director of plans and operations for the CIA.

"I couldn't say without looking through the record that CIA or State Department officials perjured themselves at those briefings," Clark said. "But if this report is true, they certainly deceived us."

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