

BRITON RECRUITING FOR ANGOLA GROUP

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1,000 Mercenaries Sought
for Faction in Civil War
—U.S. Denies Any Role

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Special to The New York Times

LONDON, Feb. 2—At least 1,000 Britons are being sought to fight in Angola against Soviet-supported forces, a key recruiter said today.

John Banks, a 30-year-old former paratrooper, who described himself as "military adviser" to the National Front for the Liberation of Angola, one of the factions supported by the United States, said that mercenaries would be paid in dollars and that "the money and the men are available."

Mr. Banks said in a telephone interview that he had received \$86,000 in cash for the wages and fares of 116 Britons sent last week to fight in Angola's civil war. Mr. Banks accompanied a group of the mercenaries on a commercial flight to Brussels and placed them aboard a charter for Kinshasa, Zaire, which borders Angola. Zaire also supports the National Front.

Cash From 'White Courier'

Mr. Banks, who has been in Angola and Zaire several times in the last three months, said that cash for the mercenaries was supplied by a "white courier" from Zaire.

"I don't ask where the money comes from," Mr. Banks said. "I ask him for the money and he gives it." Mr. Banks declined to give the nationality of the courier.

He said that another contingent of Britons would leave later in the week, and that a total of 1,000 mercenaries would be sought by the end of the month.

The United States Embassy denied a report in The Observer, a London Sunday newspaper, that Maj. James E. Leonard, an assistant Army attaché, was helping to recruit mercenaries. An embassy spokesman said that "neither Major Leonard nor the Embassy has been involved in the recruitment of mercenaries in any way."

Embassy officials said that Major Leonard had spoken to "people off the street" and others telephoning the embassy to ask about working as mercenaries in Angola. He told them that the embassy was not employing mercenaries for Angola, officials said.

Mr. Banks, asked about the report, said, "I know Leonard," but declined to say where he met him. Mr. Banks said that Major Leonard was not recruiting mercenaries. Major Leonard's office said he was not working today and was unavailable.

Served as Mercenary

Mr. Banks, who last year tried to recruit white mercenaries to help black Rhodesian nationalist guerrillas, said that he had fought as a paid soldier in Biafra as well as with the Australians in South Vietnam, the Kurds in Iraq. He said that he had been swamped with inquiries from men wanting to sign up and fight in Angola.

The bulk of the applicants, he said, come from the 8,000 soldiers demobilized last year under army cutbacks and from the 1.4 million unemployed.

Mr. Banks said that the men were being paid \$300 a week in cash, and that each man was being offered a bonus of \$10,000 for any Russian captured. Mercenaries are under six-month contracts, he said. Mr. Banks added that the mercenaries' passports were collected and held when they reached Angola.

Mr. Banks indicated that there had been disputes within Security Advisory Services, the company in Camberley, Surrey, 30 miles from London, that has been supplying mercenaries to the National Front. He said that the contract between S.A.S. and the F.N.L.A. had been terminated. "They've done a good job," he said.

He said that he had now severed his links with Security Advisory Services and that he was working alone for the Angolan National Front to recruit mercenaries in Britain.

U. S. Denies Involvement

Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, Feb. 2—The White House and the State Department issued statements today denying reports that the United States Government was financing the recruiting in Britain or elsewhere of mercenaries to fight with western-backed forces in the Angola civil war.

Ron Nessen, the White House spokesman, said: "The United States is not giving any money to Britain to recruit mercenaries for Angola." He added:

"The United States is not, and no agency connected with the Government is recruiting or hiring or training American mercenaries."

John Trattner, spokesman for the State Department, said in reply to a question at a press briefing: "No United States funds are directly or indirectly there to recruit, hire or deploy mercenaries."

A spokesman of the Central Intelligence Agency, replying to an identical question, told a caller: "That one is not on us."