

A Claim That Yank Did Fight in Angola

Fresno

A mercenary who claims he recruited Daniel Gearhart said yesterday that the executed American did fight in Angola — contrary to Gearhart's statements.

"He did know what he was doing. He did a very good job fighting and got a commendation," said David Bufkin.

Bufkin, who openly advertised for mercenaries to fight with pro-Western Angolan forces last winter, said he had declined to reveal previously that Gearhart actually had fought there "because his defense was he hadn't fired a shot." That claim was made by Gearhart during this trial in Angola.

Gearhart, who was executed by an Angolan firing squad Saturday, was hired as a mercenary because his other activities and his background made him qualified to serve in Angola, Bufkin said.

That background included previous service as a mercenary, Bufkin indicated.

"He had participated in other activities prior to this," Bufkin said, but refused to provide details.

Bufkin, a crop-duster near this central California city, had reported previously that he made the initial contact to get Gearhart and two other Americans now serving prison sentences in Angola to fight there. The Americans are Gary Acker and Gustavo Grillo.

Bufkin said the Central Intelligence Agency provided the National Front for the Liberation of Angola with money used to hire the mercenaries.

The claim by Angolan President Agostinho Neto that the execution of Gearhart and three Britons would halt mercenary activity has had the opposite effect, Bufkin added.

"I've gotten calls from people all over the world that are volunteering their services to fight against the (national Front) movement and their philosophy because of Gearhart's death," Bufkin said.

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