

U.S. Checks Reports of Recruiting by Rhodesia

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WASHINGTON, June 22 (AP) — A State Department official said last night that the department had asked the Justice Department to investigate reports that a Colorado company was recruiting Americans to serve as mercenaries in the Rhodesian Army.

Temple G. Cole, the State Department desk officer for Rhodesia, said there was a possibility that the company, Phoenix Associates of Boulder, Colo., might be violating a law that requires agents of foreign governments to register with the United States Government.

At the same time Mr. Cole said the State Department had no confirmation of a report that about 60 Americans were already serving with the Rhodesian army in its fight against black nationalists.

He said Phoenix Associates had been placing advertisements in United States magazines offering information on opportunities for adventure-eager Americans in Rhodesia, the Middle East and elsewhere.

"We are aware of the Phoenix Association operation," Mr. Cole said. "The whole thing is under investigation by the Justice Department to see if there is any violation of United States law."

Efforts to reach officials of Phoenix Associates for comment on the statement were not immediately successful.

Mr. Cole said there was no indication that Phoenix Associates or its head, Robert K. Brown, was registered with the Federal Government as an agent of Rhodesia.

However, he said that if Phoenix Associates was merely providing information instead of actually recruiting mercenaries for Rhodesia, such registration might be unnecessary.

"Apparently he's been reasonably careful in what he's done so far," Mr. Cole said of Mr. Brown.

Mr. Brown is a former United States Army Special Forces major with extensive combat experience in Vietnam and has said that he worked with vari-

ous Cuban exile groups in the Miami area during the early nineteen-sixties. He could not be reached for comment.

60 Reportedly Enlist

The allegation that about 60 Americans have joined the Rhodesian Army came from Tapson Mawere, a representative in the United States of the Zimbabwe African National Union, one of three black nationalist groups waging a guerrilla struggle against the white-run Rhodesian Government.

Mr. Cole, asked about the report, said, "We do not know of anybody who is over there yet."

He said the State Department had received inquiries from several persons about Phoenix Associates and its Rhodesia program. The department has "strongly discouraged" these persons from going to Rhodesia with the aim of military service, Mr. Cole said. He added that "anyone who did go there for this purpose could endanger his United States citizenship."