

U.S. Blacks Recruited For Angola

(Newsday, Les
New York) Payne and Ernest
Volkman

The Congress of Racial Equality has been recruiting black American military veterans for service as mercenaries in the civil war now raging in Angola, U. S. intelligence sources say.

CORE Chairman Roy Innis admitted yesterday that his civil rights organization was recruiting black veterans for Angola, but said the men would serve as a "police force" on behalf of the Organization of African Unity's attempts to mediate the Angola war. The organization is a confederation of African nations.

Innis added that he hoped to raise the money for such a force from the black community. He denied that the plan was connected in any way with the U.S. government.

"I have talked with dozens of black veterans in New York, Los Angeles, Baltimore and Chicago," Innis said, "and they are excited about the idea. There are all kinds of people going to Angola to determine the fate of black

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From
slightly longer
story filed Angola.
"There are at least
two other efforts now
under way in the
United States to
recruit mercenaries
for service in Angola,
although the sponsors
of the efforts are
unknown. [One is in
Fresno, California.]"

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Africa. We are proposing that independent Afro-Americans, not linked with the establishment, contribute their skills in economics, politics and the military."

CORE, headquartered in New York, was one of the leading groups in the civil rights struggle during the 1960s. In recent years, however, Innis has redirected the organization's efforts toward a philosophy of "black nationalism" at home and abroad.

U.S. intelligence sources, who revealed the existence of the CORE recruiting plan, said that it was another part of a growing CIA operation to improve the military fortunes of two anti-Communist factions in Angola: the National Front for the Liberation of Angola and the National Union for the Total Independence in Angola.

Both are fighting the Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola, which has direct Soviet support, including advanced weapons. A drive by the two anti-Communist groups three weeks ago to dust the Popular Movement has encountered serious reverses after some early success.

A CIA arms airlift was recently stepped up to bolster the National Front and National Union drives. Both groups also have the support of several hundred mercenaries, including, the sources said, some Americans. Additionally, about 1,000 South Africans are fighting beside National Union forces.

Innis denied that CORE's plan for recruitment of mercenaries was linked in any way to the CIA.

"I would not accept federal funds (for the recruitment program)," Innis said. "The CIA can't be trusted. There is talk that the CIA controls UNITA (the National Front) and the FNLA (the National Union) (Our proposed) force would be interposed between the warring factions, bringing in a truly neutral force that might have an impact on the war."

Innis said the veterans interviewed by CORE were asked about their military experience and their political opinions. The names of those favorably considered for possible service, Innis added, were placed on file for future contact. All the men interviewed were former enlisted men and Vietnam veterans, Innis said, adding that he was also looking for former black military officers.

"I tried to persuade them," Innis said, "that they had been a hired gun for the U.S. in Korea and Vietnam. We were offering them a chance to fight in one just war for black Africa."

Although Innis called his prospective mercenary force a "neutral force" and a "brigade for peace," the CORE chairman also said that he did "not look forward at all to a Soviet takeover in Angola." Innis added that the Popular Movement, which now holds the dominant military position in Angola, was "Soviet-dominated."

"I know the aggressive nature of the Soviets," he said. "They are grabby and pushy. I am discouraged that key military advisers to the MPLA are Cuban or Soviet."

Additionally, Innis confirmed reports that Solomon Goodrich, his chief assistant, was sent to Angola to participate in Angola's independence celebration November 11. While there, Innis said, Goodrich held meetings with the National Union, the most avowedly pro-Western liberation group in Angola with strong CIA connections.

Innis is a close friend of Uganda President Idi Amin, who has strongly protested Soviet involvement in the MPLA movement. Amin is also head of the Organization of African Unity, which has attempted to mediate the Angolan civil war. The organization has also protested what it calls "outside interference" in the war.

"I will offer our services to Amin as chairman of the OAU," Innis said. "The force would be operating under an OAU mandate. We will await the green light from Angola and the OAU before acting."

Innis hinted that he has already recruited a team of former military-medical personnel for service in Angola.

"I would like to send the medical men early next year, sometime before the spring," he said. "I hope that the OAU has decided by then. I'm looking for some good riflemen. . . The key military adviser to the FNLA is a Portuguese colonel, but I think they need some black colonels."