

U.S. Rejects Castro's Story

Washington

The White House took sharp issue yesterday with Cuban President Fidel Castro's latest account of his dealings with Carter administration officials on Cuba's role in the rebel invasion of Zaire last month.

White House press secretary Jody Powell told reporters that "we are willing to place the records of veracity (of President Carter and Castro) side by side and let the American people decide for themselves."

Powell made his statement and senior White House officials gave additional details of U.S. diplomatic contacts with Castro in the wake of interviews granted by the Cuban leaders Monday to two U.S. con-

gressmen and three American reporters.

The lawmakers, Representatives Stephen J. Solarz, (Dem.-N.Y.) and Anthony C. Beilenson (Dem.-Calif.) said in a news conference shortly after returning from Havana that nine hours of conversations with Castro had raised doubts in their minds about the U.S. version of Cuban involvement in the Shaba attack.

Castro invited the congressmen to Havana to repeat to them his strong denials of President Carter's charges that Cuba was involved in training and equipping the Katangans.

Both men are members of the House International Relations Com-

mittee, where they heard Central Intelligence Director Stansfield Turner present a secret version of the Carter administration's case last week. They called the U.S. evidence "not conclusive," "circumstantial" and "hearsay" but declined to say whether they believed Castro.

Solarz said Castro made "a very compelling case" that there was no Cuban involvement with the Katangans, who attacked several towns in Shaba province early last month. He said that even if Carter proves to be mistaken, this may be due to "a faulty interpretation of circumstantial evidence" rather than conscious misrepresentations.

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