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# Trial Gives Peek at South Africa Intelligence Web

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JOHANNESBURG, May 8 — The testimony of Col. Mike Hoare, the mercenary leader who is now standing trial on a charge of hijacking arising from his attempt to oust the Government of the Seychelles in November, has focused attention on the influential role played by Military Intelligence, a branch of the South African armed forces.

It is a subject normally of conjecture and rumor that South African newspapers cannot discuss directly as a result of stringent legislation giving the Defense Ministry a virtual veto on anything that is said about its activities.

But in testifying that his attempted coup had active backing from the Government here, Colonel Hoare appeared to confirm the widespread belief that Military Intelligence has gained a position of primacy in the South African security establishment since P. W. Botha, who served as Defense Minister for 13 years, became Prime Minister in 1978.

In the mercenary leader's account, his contacts with the Government were initially with the National Intelligence Service, a civilian agency analogous to the Central Intelligence Agency. This unit was regarded as being in a dominant position under Mr. Botha's predecessor as Prime Minister, John Vorster, when it was known as the Bureau of State Security. But it was subsequently renamed and apparently downgraded by Mr. Botha.

## Cabinet Reportedly Backed Plan

According to Colonel Hoare, he was informed by the deputy director of the National Intelligence Service, N. J. Claassen, that the Cabinet had approved his plans to oust President France Albert René. But subsequently, Colonel Hoare testified, Mr. Claassen told him that an order had come down from the Prime Minister's office that the operation was to be taken away from the National Intelligence Service and handled by Military Intelligence.

Mr. Claassen then introduced him to two army brigadiers from Military Intelligence, Colonel Hoare said. They said they would require a written authorization from the Prime Minister's office before proceeding. According to Colonel Hoare, that bureaucratic obsta-

cle was apparently overcome, and he was provided with arms and offered a training area in the northern Transvaal.

Military Intelligence, he said, told him he could recruit no more than 15 South Africans and urged him to rely on foreign-born mercenaries.

The Hoare testimony has yet to be denied by the Government, which said it is barred from commenting directly because the matter is before a court of law. In an interjection in Parliament, Prime Minister Botha brushed the mercenary leader's assertions off as "petty gossip stories." Nevertheless, the testimony has provoked a spate of rumors about high-ranking officials in the security establishment who are supposed to be on the verge of losing their jobs because of the embarrassment caused to the Government by the whole affair.

The director of the National Intelligence Service, Niels Barnard, had to issue a statement to say he was not resigning. The rumors do not seem to have touched the head of Military Intelligence, Lieut. Gen. P. W. van der Westhuizen, whose standing with the Prime Minister was publicly displayed last week when Mr. Botha included him in the delegation that sat on the South African side of the table at his meeting with President Kenneth D. Kaunda of Zambia.

## U.S. Involvement Charged

Colonel Hoare, in his testimony in the hijacking trial, also asserted that he had met a representative from the Central Intelligence Agency in Pretoria and informed him of the coup plans. The United States was interested, he asserted, because of "the strategic value of the Seychelles." But he went on to describe the attitude of the unnamed C.I.A. agent as "extremely timid" and never suggested the United States played an active role. Under cross-examination, he acknowledged telling his troops that the C.I.A. approved the plan.

He was apparently not asked how he got in touch with the C.I.A. and offered no explanation. Colonel Hoare is known to have had close ties with the agency in the days when he achieved notoriety as a mercenary leader in the former Congo, now Zaire, but that was 17 years ago.

American spokesmen in Pretoria and Washington declined comment on his testimony in the hijacking trial, saying this was standard practice on allegations of C.I.A. activities. The question of whether any agency of the American Government was in touch with any agency of the South African Government about the Seychelles affair before the attempted coup met the same response.

The United States strongly protested when South Africa released 39 of the 44 mercenaries last December without charging them or even disclosing their identities after they had commandeered an Air India plane to return to this country. Subsequently, the Government reversed itself and charged the mercenaries under its rigorous anti-hijacking law.

## Reagan Position Unclear

The question of whether the United States had prior knowledge of the attempted coup raises the question of what sort of cooperation on intelligence matters exists under the Reagan Administration's policy of "constructive engagement" between South Africa and the United States. There was close cooperation in this field between the two Governments as late as 1975, when South Africa intervened in the Angolan civil war.

There has never been any suggestion that the Carter Administration halted intelligence sharing with South Africa, but with mutual suspicions heightened between the two Governments the intelligence relationship was subsequently said by one American official to have developed an "adversary aspect."

In fact, three American military attachés were expelled from this country in 1979 on charges of spying. General van der Westhuizen visited Washington less than two months after the Reagan Administration took office. His mission produced an embarrassing incident, with the State Department finally issuing a public statement that he had been allowed into the country, despite a standing ban on visits by South African military officers, only because he had misrepresented himself on his visa application.

However, five months later, Gen. Magnus Malan, the South African Defense Minister, cited the visit by his Military Intelligence chief in an interview as an example of the improvement in relations between the two countries. General van der Westhuizen was allowed to visit Washington again this year as a member of a delegation that had come to negotiate on the issue of South-West Africa.