

WORLD BRIEFS

ANGOLA, TWO CONGOS RALLY AGAINST TERRORISM

BRAZZAVILLE, Congo (PANA)-Congo, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Angola indicated they were rallying behind international efforts against terrorism, following a meeting of their security ministers. In a statement at the close of the meeting, Brigadier General Pierre Oba of Congo, Mwenze Kongolo of DR Congo and Fernanda Dia Piedade Dos Santos of Angola announced that the three countries intend to get "involved in international cooperation against terrorism." Dos Santos said, "The internationalization of terrorism had reached disturbing proportions that requires increased vigilance and concerted effort against it." The three security ministers expressed satisfaction with the start of talks in DR Congo and the UN Security Council's decision to increase the number of cease-fire monitors in the country. They announced the implementation of measures aimed at developing exchanges between the three countries. The particularly concern was the institution of a common visa, the computerization of travel documents and harmonization of trade and customs procedures. The ministers also announced the conduct of a census of refugees and persons displaced by war in the three countries, in collaboration with the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

NAMIBIA GOVERNMENT DISMISSES AIR NAMIBIA BOARD

WINDHOEK, Namibia (PANA)-The Namibian government of Namibia dismissed the entire board of directors of the loss-making national carrier, Air Namibia, and its managing director, Malaysian national Muhamed Ahmed. The action ended months of speculation over the future of the state-owned airline, which has been at the center of public criticism, opposition parties as well as the government itself. The former managing director has been put on forced leave until Dec. 31, his final day of work, pending final investigations into the operations of the airline by a special commission of inquiry appointed by President Sam Nujoma. A new board of directors headed by former government Attorney General, Vekui Rukoro, will now spearhead the future of the airline, whose debts are now estimated at about \$300 million. Current Governor of the Bank of Namibia, Tom Alweendo, headed the ousted board. The decision to dismiss the board and the company's chief executive is a sequel to a chain of events in the airline since June when 12 senior managers were dismissed in a move seen as a cost-saving measure. This was followed by calls from union leaders urging the government to dismiss the entire board together with the chief executive, believed to be the highest paid man in the country with a monthly check of \$20,000 plus allowances. Members of the Namibian Parliament suggested the closure of the airline, saying it had become "parasitical and blood sucking" firm draining tax-payers' money.

SENEGAL WILL NOT SEND TROOPS IN AFGHANISTAN

DAKAR, Senegal (PANA)-Senegalese Defense Minister Youba Sambou has declared his country's inability to send troops to join U.S. and British forces fighting against the Taliban in Afghanistan. Sambou made the announcement in Thies, about 70-km Northeast of Dakar, during the handover of the national flag to the second Senegalese battalion going to the Democratic Republic of Congo to join the UN Mission in Congo (MONUC). He declared the "Jambaar" (brave men), as the Senegalese soldiers are popularly known, had not received the appropriate training to cope with the Afghanistan operation. "However, Senegal condemns all forms of terrorism and joins the international community in the multiform fight against this phenomenon," the minister added. According to observers, Senegal is unwilling to send troops to Afghanistan because public opinion is resolutely against the ongoing U.S. reprisal attacks against the Muslim country. Senegal sent troops to join the allied forces that combated Iraq during the 1991 Gulf war. Sambou's statement came barely a week after a meeting attended by more than 2,000 Muslims was held at Dakar's main mosque. The participants expressed support for the Afghan people. President Abdoulaye Wade convened a two-day conference in Dakar in October, during which an African Pact against terrorism was adopted. Ten presidents and high-ranking representatives attended the meeting from 28 African countries adopted "the Dakar Declaration Against Terrorism."

INTERNATIONAL

Unrest continues on Zimbabwe farms

HARARE, Zimbabwe (AP) - Wielding axes and sticks, ruling party militants gathered on four white-owned farms and set up camps there Saturday despite recent efforts to end the violent occupations of white-owned farms in Zimbabwe.

The militants beat a black farm worker after he refused to shout ruling party slogans during the unrest in Guruve, said a spokesman for farmers in the town, 100 miles north of Harare, Zimbabwe's capital.

The militants told hundreds of farm workers to stop working, saying they had to make room for new black settlers on the land, said the spokesman, who spoke on condition of anonymity saying he feared retribution.

White farm owners and managers of three of the farms locked themselves in their homes for six hours, he said.

There were no arrests.

Police and government officials were not available for comment.

This most recent upheaval in the farming community comes despite a deal signed Sept. 6 in Abuja, Nigeria, to end the violent occupations of white-owned farms and political violence around Zimbabwe.

Farming leaders say they are also frustrated by the continued unrest, saying they have offered to cooperate with the government in resettling landless blacks.

Zimbabwe's farming districts have been convulsed by chaos over the past 18 months, when ruling party militants began occupations of 1,700 white-owned farms, demanding they be redistributed to landless blacks.

The government has since embarked on a plan to seize 5,000 farms - nearly all the farms owned by whites - without paying compensation.

Opposition officials accuse the government of using land seizures to garner support and intimidate opponents ahead of presidential elections scheduled for next year.

Switzerland probes South Africa apartheid links

GENEVA (AP) - Switzerland announced Friday that it is investigating links between its intelligence service and apartheid-era South Africa after reports that the Alpine nation's former spy chief helped the racist government in its plans to develop chemical and biological weapons for use against blacks.

Rumors have circulated for years that Peter Regli, who headed the Swiss intelligence service until the late 1990s, cooperated closely with South Africa's racist regime. However, the government has always insisted that Regli and his agency were not involved.

But new information became public this summer during the trial of the former head of South Africa's chemical and biological warfare program, who testified that he was in close cooperation with the Swiss.

In recent days new reports have surfaced in the Swiss media about links between Regli, 57, and Dr. Wouter Basson, dubbed "Dr. Death" for allegedly committing horrific crimes against enemies of the apartheid government.

Defense Minister Samuel Schmid said Friday that the probe seeks to learn if there had been a secret agreement for Switzerland - which prides itself on its humanitarian standards - to help in the South African warfare program. He said there was no evidence of this to date.

Swiss federal prosecutors also asked South Africa for additional legal aid and any documents that might shed light on the affair. The South Africans handed over documents last year, but nothing conclusive was found.

Basson went on trial in 1999 on charges of murder, fraud and drug trafficking. Witnesses have alleged he

supplied muscle relaxants to kill government opponents and had devised schemes such as poisoning chocolates and clothes, lacing a letter with anthrax and releasing cholera in the water supply at a refugee camp. He worked for the government until the late 1990s as well.

At his trial, which is still ongoing, Basson maintained that he enjoyed good cooperation with Regli and his agency from the mid-1980s until the end of apartheid in 1994.

Why Switzerland would have been involved with Basson wasn't clear, though the country never joined U.N. sanctions against the apartheid regime and therefore could have been involved in selling it weapons. There have been widespread accusations that Swiss banks helped prop up the cash-strapped South African regime.

New media reports surfaced in recent days that telephone records at the internationally renowned biological and chemical weapons research laboratory in central Switzerland showed that Regli personally invited Basson there - a fact that Regli has denied.

Basson at his trial said that Regli and the Swiss intelligence service helped in a secret plan to develop biological and chemical weapons specifically targeted at blacks.

Basson's claims at his trial and in the media reports cast new doubts on the findings of a Swiss official report in 1999 that cleared the former spy chief. Government critics at the time dismissed the report as whitewash.

Regli said Friday that he was optimistic about the outcome of the inquiry.

"I expect that the investigators will be able to carry

out their duties in peace and that the media witch hunt will finally stop," he said in a statement. "I will take legal action in future against anyone who libels me or makes false accusations."

New reports - reluctantly confirmed by the defense ministry - also said that Regli purchased two Russian-made Stinger-type missiles in 1994 and kept them stored in a secret bunker in a forest.

Schmid, the defense minister, said the investigation would examine the exact circumstances surrounding the purchase of the weapons and whether they were destined for South Africa, as well as the systematic destruction of Regli-era documents.

But he reiterated that he had full confidence in the former spy chief and believed that he was "innocent until proven guilty."

Regli was suspended from duty in August 1998 after a former military accountant, Dino Bellasi, stole \$5.3 million over a period of years. Bellasi claimed he stole the

money in order to set up a secret army, with Regli's approval. Regli was exonerated and took early retirement.

The lawyer for the disgraced accountant said Friday that he would press the government on whether there was in fact a connection between the theft of the money and Regli's missile purchase.

The scandal has grabbed headlines for days, spiced by allegations that Regli's agents used prostitutes and drugs to entertain them in their clandestine activities.

But there are wider fears that the chemical weapons allegations may refuel the debate about Switzerland's connections with the former South African government.

"Regli could cost us one billion francs (\$600 million)," the mass circulation Blick headlined earlier this week. It said that apartheid-era victims were joining forces to file class-actions suits against Switzerland - similar to Holocaust victims who forced Swiss banks into a \$1.25 billion settlement in 1998.

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