

# Red build-up report discounted

RH 23/3/78

Herald Bureau

WASHINGTON.

THE Carter Administration does not believe reports from South Africa and Rhodesia claiming that a Russian and Cuban military build-up has started in Mozambique.

The reports, quoting unnamed South African and Rhodesian sources, were broadcast on American national television on Monday night and caused an immediate flurry of interest in Washington.

But in response to questions on Tuesday, a State Department spokesman said similar reports had been received "for the past few months" and that "as far as we are concerned there is no substance to them".

There was no comment on Tuesday from the American Broadcasting Company, whose nationwide network broadcast the reports, and neither would ABC officials dis-

close their sources in South Africa and Rhodesia.

Their broadcasts on Monday night said the build-up in Mozambique included the supply of at least 35 MiG-21 fighter-bombers, 250 heavy tanks, surface-to-air missiles and two fully equipped Cuban infantry divisions.

The ABC report also said a substantial number of East German military advisers had arrived in Mozambique, and that an air base was being built at Nacala, which would be the largest in East Africa when completed.

Military strategists in the United States say that even if the reports were true, the quality of military equipment and the number of troops mentioned could not be compared to the massive Russian and Cuban build-up in the Horn of Africa or Angola.

Some suggest that the

volume and type of supplies mentioned might even be consistent with the defensive requirements of a country like Mozambique, especially in the light of Rhodesian incursions.

American officials are asking why, if the reports of a Russian and Cuban military build-up are credible, there has been no official reaction from either the South African or Rhodesian Govern-

---

**A Rhodesian Government spokesman said yesterday it was not customary to comment on unsubstantiated reports.**

---

ments.

"The reports do, after all, quote South African and Rhodesian sources," one official remarked on Tuesday. "And one must presume that these sources are known to the two governments.

"In the past, even the theoretical possibility of a Russian or Cuban threat has been sufficient to evoke an avalanche of comment from official South African and Rhodesian spokesmen."

Behind all the official pooh-poohing of the build-up reports in Washington there is, however, a good measure of official nervousness.

It stems from the Carter Administration's humili-

ventures in Africa might jeopardise a strategic arms limitation treaty have been met by a derisive Russian response. The warning to Cuba that improved U.S.-Cuban relations, including the lifting of a near total trade embargo, would depend to a large degree on Cuban restraint in Africa, has been rejected with equal determination.

American newspaper commentators and some public representatives have argued that only the serious threat of American military involvement would deter the Russians and Cubans in Africa — but that seems most unlikely to happen in Southern Africa.

The present South African and Rhodesian Governments are unlikely allies for the U.S. — though Rhodesia might eventually become acceptable — and intervention on their behalf would certainly alienate the rest of the continent.

● A London report says there is growing concern there that Russia and Cuba are planning to establish "a spearhead" in Mozambique for operations with terrorists in Rhodesia.

The situation is being watched carefully, according to Hella Pick of the Guardian.

But she adds that so far there has been no independent confirmation of reports, apparently originating in South Africa and Rhodesia.

liating failure to discourage Russian and Cuban intervention in the Horn of Africa and the prospect of this failure being duplicated in the southern part of the continent.

And it stems from the realisation that despite President Carter's get-tough speech this weekend on Russian intervention in Africa, there is probably little the U.S. could do if the Russians and Cubans did intervene in Southern Africa.

The threat from Washington that Russian ad-