

# SA backs mercenary force—<sup>3.1.77</sup> Nel

Pretoria News Foreign Service

JOHANNESBURG. — The South African Government is prepared to allow the Electricity Supply Commission (Escom), in co-operation with its Mozambique counterpart, to recruit, equip, train and finance a mercenary force to protect its interests in that country.

Mr Louis Nel, former Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs and now head of the government's new internal information machine, confirmed this in a brief statement today.

Mr Nel was commenting on a claim by an American visiting journalist who said Mr Nel had told a group, of which he was a member, on Friday that South Africa was prepared to send a mercenary force to help Mozambique in the fight against the MNR rebel movement.

This was incorrect, Mr Nel said today.

What he had told the journalists was that the South African government was prepared to allow Escom, in co-operation with its counterpart in Mozambique, to recruit, equip, train and finance a mercenary force to guard Escom's interests in Mozambique.

These interests included the Cahora Bassa Dam, the power line from the dam to South Africa and the power line from Komatipoort to Maputo.

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