

19 Feb 81

'A-BLAST' *Telegraph* SEEN OFF S. AFRICA

By HUGH DAVIES
in Washington

ANOTHER mysterious flash of light over a remote area of the South Atlantic has increased suspicion in Washington that either Israel or South Africa is secretly testing nuclear devices.

An American spy satellite monitored the flash on Dec. 15 in the same general area off the Cape of Good Hope as a similar and still unexplained explosion 15 months ago.

Reports on the new incident all say United States intelligence officials strongly believe it was a small nuclear explosion. One intelligence source said that while Israel and South Africa could have been responsible, Russia was now being included in the list of suspects.

The theory was that the Russians may have fired a low-yield atomic device from a submarine or trawler simply to test President Reagan and his verification devices for detecting small nuclear explosions.

South African denial

OUR JOHANNESBURG CORRESPONDENT reports: The South African Government reacted to intelligence reports of the latest incident saying: "It's the same old story." A Department of Foreign Affairs spokesman said the claims were evidently a repetition of previous baseless allegations.