

Frank Borman adds 'right stuff' to crash probe

Special Correspondent

NEW YORK — As the bitterness escalated and charge and counter-charge were flung first by one side and then the other in the controversy surrounding the Machel air crash, a bright spot emerged for South Africa.

MEMBER OF SPECIAL BREED

It was the appointment this week to the South African board of inquiry of a man who truly possesses the "right stuff".

"The Right Stuff" was the title Tom Wolfe gave to his book on the early breed of astronauts brought together by the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (Nasa).

Colonel Frank Borman, commander of the Apollo 8

space flight that in 1968 circled the moon 10 times on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day, was of that breed.

The celebrated test pilot is the typical all-American hero. Everything he has done bears the stamp of authority.

Though he was finally ousted in a takeover bid earlier this year, as president of Eastern Airlines for more than 10 years Colonel Borman was single-handedly responsible for rescuing the company from dire financial straits.

Within three years of his appointment as president in 1975, Borman reversed the carrier's losses which had totalled \$114 million between 1960 and the year he took over, pulling it back from the brink of bankruptcy. In all he was with the company for more than 15 years.

As the wrangling with Soviet and Mozambican authorities continued it was announced that Colonel Borman would join Sir Edward Everleigh, a former Lord Justice of Appeal in Britain, and Mr Geoffrey Wilkinson, CBE, a retired chief inspector of accidents in Britain's Department of Transport, on the commission set up by Mr Justice Margo.

PLAQUE ON HIS DESK

In his years with Eastern Airlines, a plaque stood on Colonel Borman's desk. On it were the words:

The truth is incontrovertible. Panic may resent it; ignorance may deride it; malice may distort it. But there it is. — Sir Winston Churchill.