

Maputo wants further probe into crash signal 14 870124

MAPUTO.

MOZAMBIQUE'S Transport Minister, Lt-Gen Armando Guebuza, stressed this week a fact which illustrates one reason why the Frelimo Party political bureau is demanding that the investigations into causes of the death of President Samora Machel should continue.

That fact was the appearance of signals from a VOR (very high frequency omnidirectional radio) about 10 minutes prior to the crash of the presidential Tupolev-134. It was that VOR which

caused the plane to turn to the south-west.

The factual report signed by the three members of the international commission of inquiry (Mozambique, the Soviet Union and South Africa) contains an annex which is the transcription of the conversation amongst the cabin crew.

According to the transcription, the captain said, "Making some turns, couldn't it be straight?"

The navigator replied "VOR indicates that way". This was a turn of 37 degrees to the south-west, until this point the lane was, in navigation-1 terms, on the correct course.

According to the cockpit voice recorder transcript, in the following 10 minutes, up until the impact, the crew complained that all navigational aids at Maputo except the VOR were not functioning.

At the inquiry in Johannesburg, relations over investigations between Mozambique and South Africa became strained yesterday over a mysterious campsite 150 m from where Cde Machel's plane crashed.

The area had been "intensely" patrolled since

1985 and a battalion had left the area on October 16 last year.

"Mozambique said they could see from their positions across the border military vehicles and trucks leaving the campsite with food."

Col. Desmond Lynch said Frelimo said that there had been a large tent at the top of the hill near to where the plane crashed.

A rural Swazi man, Mr Aaron Mamba, who lives in a village near the crash site and patrols the border fence to make sure it is in good repair, also told the board of a "large tent" on the hillside overlooking the crash site.

The tent disappeared shortly before the accident and reappeared a few days after it, he said. Three soldiers lived in the tent and he saw a ball "the colour of curry" at the campsite.

The former deputy director of civil aviation in the UK, Mr William Young, dismissed allegations that the plane was enticed off course by a "rogue" beacon.

He said he agreed with the theory that the aircraft had tuned their VOR into a Swaziland beacon instead of the Maputo one.

The South African

Foreign Minister, Mr Pik Botha, may have been contravening the Civil Aviation Act by "taking charge" of the site where Cde Machel's plane crashed.

"Who assumed charge?" counsel for the board, Mr Cedric Puckrin, repeatedly questioned the deputy director-general of foreign affairs, Mr Neil van Heerden.

"I suppose he was the first among equals there," Mr Van Heerden eventually conceded.

"An unfortunate allusion to take," chairman of the board of inquiry into the crash, Mr Justice Cecil Margo returned.

Under the Aviation Act the Department of Civil Aviation assumes charge of the site of an accident and no one is allowed to interfere without permission.

Mr van Heerden was "hesitant to express a view" about allegations that police removed documents from the scene and made photo copies of them.

People at the site were "extremely emotional and confused" but throughout Mr Botha insisted that the relevant conventions be adhered to, he said.

Mr Pieter de Klerk, of the South African Civil Aviation Department stated on Thursday that when he arrived at the crash site on October 20 he saw police removing material from the wreckage.

Mr de Klerk reportedly asked one of the policemen what he was doing, and received the reply that the police were carrying out the orders of Mr Pik Botha and Col. Vieira, the then Mozambican Minister of Security. — Ziana-AIM-Sapa.