

Mozambican and Swazi Reports on Crash Inquiry

(a) Maputo home service in Portuguese 1900 gmt 28 Jan 87

Text of report (ME/8479/B/3):

Mozambique has delivered a document containing two important pieces of information to the Soviet and South African commissions of inquiry into the causes of the Mozambican presidential air crash on 19th October. One of them deals with the flight path of President Samora Machel's plane as calculated by a computer. The other is the decoding of the black box of the Mozambique Airlines [LAM] Boeing-737 which was over the Limpopo area on a flight from Beira to Maputo some 35 minutes after the crash of the presidential plane.

An official source told AIM that Mozambique handed over the document in accordance with the spirit of annex 13 of the International Civil Aviation Organisation regulations regulations which state that in an investigation of this kind, the parties concerned must exchange all information. The source added that Mozambique would continue to observe all its undertakings. The same source pointed out that South Africa has not always observed the terms of the investigation, giving an example the hearing that was held in Johannesburg until Tuesday [27th January] at which information taken a flight simulator by the South African side was produced. Such information was not given to Mozambique prior to the hearing.

The information on LAM's Boeing-737 flight shows its flight path. The aircraft flew from Beira to Maputo and when it was over Limpopo, it was instructed by the Maputo tower to return to Beira because the presidential plane had not yet arrived in the capital.

Information on the flight path showed that the plane was flying towards Maputo only one degree away from the previously established path within the Beira-Maputo air corridor, on a straight line. It appears that at the Johannesburg hearing this fact was used by Advocate Cedric Puckrin to conclude that it proved the non-existence of a decoy very high frequency omni-directional radio [VOR] in the area. A Mozambique civil aviation expert told AIM that if Puckrin was talking about the Boeing-737 then such a conclusion is false because the LAM Boeing-737's automatic pilot was on a path set by pilot [name indistinct] and the automatic pilot did not follow the decoy VOR; that is, to use aviation jargon, the aircraft did not make use of the VOR (?mode). The pilot said that the path of the presidential plane shows that it indicates the possibility of a decoy VOR in the area.

(b) Mbabane television service in English 1630 gmt 29 Jan 87

Excerpts from report:

Mozambican aviation experts have denied that the aircraft in which President Samora Machel died could have been lured off course by a radio beacon in Swaziland. The plane crashed just inside South Africa last October, killing Mr Machel and 34 other people. . .

In another development, the Ministry of Works and communications in Swaziland issued a detailed statement on air traffic at Matsapha airport on the day of the plane crash. The statement said that the normal hours of operation of the Swazi airport

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are from 0700 until 1730 [local] in the evening, but on 19th October, Royal Swazi National Airways had to operate a second flight to and from Jan Smuts Airport to pick up extra passengers. Flight ZC-992, it said, landed at Matsapha airport at 1859 in the evening, and the airport control tower was closed at 2000.

The statement further pointed out that all the aeronautical navigational aids operated by the airport are left on 24 hours a day, and this was the case on 19th October. The VOR equipment referred to in various statements made by different sources concerning the operations of our airport, it said, was installed as part of the airport's development project. On 5th May last year a Notam, or notice to airmen, was disseminated, informing aviators that the VOR and other navigational aids had been installed and were available for use on test only, with effect from that date until further notice. The statement added that none of the aids should be used for navigational purposes. The Notam is still valid, it said.