

Air-traffic controller in Machel case suspended from duties

STAFF REPORTER

The Mozambican air-traffic controller who was on duty at Maputo's airport on the day Samora Machel died in 1986 has been suspended from his duties.

His suspension, which has been effective from May 5, has nothing to do with the TRC investigation into the air crash in Mbuzini, says Felismino Charas, the director-general of Aeroportos de Mocambique, according to the Mozambican newspaper Savana.

Antonio Cardoso de Jesus is alleged to have been paid R1,5-million by South African agents to cripple the navigational beacon at the airport in Maputo so

that the South African Defence Force could lead Machel's Russian-built Tupolev astray, causing it to crash in South Africa.

"If I had received so much money I would not be leading such a miserable life and I would not be in Mozambique today," Cardoso told Savana.

He refused to say anything further without approval from his superiors.

Regarding the accusations, Charas said it was technically impossible for an air traffic controller in the tower to have meddled with the beacon.

The navigational beacon at Maputo did not register any sort of malfunction on the day of Machel's death, according to the records, he added.

Charas said Cardoso had been suspended due to health, and not disciplinary, reasons.

"When someone with Cardoso's responsibilities begins to show abnormal behaviour which can manifest itself as excessive nervousness, irritation or even physical weakness, they must be suspended from their job temporarily."