

Machel plane parts 'were given away'

KOMATIPOORT. – South African police officers who first investigated the plane crash that killed Mozambican President Samora Machel gave parts of the wreckage to local farmers to evade evidence, investigators said this week.

African Eye News Service reported yesterday that earlier this year some parts of the missing wreckage were dumped at a scrapyard near White River in Mpumalanga, according to evidence before the Truth and Reconciliation Commission when it re-opened its inquiry into the crash.

An investigator, Director Agrippa Mabuzza, said yesterday two wheels belonging to the Tupolev jet which killed Pres Machel and 33 other people were found on a farm near Komatipoort.

"The farmer said the investigating officers gave him the wheels as a gift but did not disclose why he deserved such a contro-

versial present," said Dir Mabuzza.

Another bullet-riddled part of the wreckage was found displayed in the pub at Ngwenya Lodge near Komatipoort.

The spokesman for the special TRC team investigating the crash, Ms Christelle Terreblanche, said it was unfortunate the wreckage was not treated with respect.

She said the commission was considering testi-

mony that a false beacon was used to cause the plane to crash on a hill-top at Mbuzini on the South African side of the border on October 19, 1986.

She said nine people, including former superspy Craig Williamson, had testified in camera before the TRC on June 3 and 4. More testimony was expected before the end of the month.

"The investigation has reached a very sensitive

stage. People like Pik Botha, who was then the minister of foreign affairs, have not yet testified," said Ms Terreblanche.

Mozambican air traffic controller, Mr Antonio Cardoso de Jesus, was suspended on May 5 this year after allegations that South African agents paid him R1,5 million to tamper with the navigational beacon at Maputo Airport on the night of the crash. – Sapa.

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