

Machel plane crash must be probed

THE SOUTH AFRICAN authorities, that is the politicians, the police and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, must spare no effort and if need be resources, to get to the bottom of how Samora Machel's plane crashed in our country.

The government has taken an important step to build a monument for Machel in Mbuzini where the plane crashed under mysterious circumstances. An even more important monument to the memory of the Mozambican leader would be to unravel the circumstances of his death.

Many people in Southern African are far from convinced that the plane crashed because of an accident. There is a strong body of opinion which avers that the plane was brought down by apartheid's security forces colluding with some elements of the Mozambican, Malawian and British intelligence forces.

If this conspiracy theory is correct, the task of our investigators is going to be made very difficult. Some of the

conspirators, it is claimed, still hold very senior and strategic positions in the intelligence services of their countries.

If it could be found out that they conspired to kill Machel, the fallout from this would have serious implications on South Africa's relations with many influential countries.

At the time Machel died with several Cabinet Ministers as well as top aides, he was in the forefront in the struggle against apartheid. Many of our people believed that apartheid was being bolstered by the policies of Britain's Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan of the United States.

Recent revelations by the TRC's special commission team investigating the crash indicate that it may not be far-fetched to suspect that apartheid's security forces may have had a hand in Machel's death.

The team has found out that some parts of the plane's wreckage - which might have contained important information regarding investigations -

were given to some locals.

One farmer claimed that the investigating officers gave him the wheels as a gift and another part which had 10 bullet holes was used as a display at a pub near Komatipoort. The pub's manager would not tell the TRC how he got the part.

How the investigating officers deemed it fit to farm out these parts defies reason. And who can blame some people who argue that this could have been part of the bigger plot to remove any evidence.

Mozambican authorities too are not without blemish in this unfortunate situation. It is 12 years since Machel perished in our country and it seems no effort was ever made to retrieve the remains of the plane.

Again, this type of indifference fuels speculation that some senior intelligence officers in Mozambique might have preferred that the plane remained in South Africa and that no further investigations about the crash should be conducted.