

Botha wants probe to prove his innocence

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By Waghied Misbach

FORMER foreign affairs minister Pik Botha has called on the Government to set up a judicial commission of inquiry into the death of former Mozambican president Samora Machel to put to rest claims that he was involved in a plot to kill Machel.

Botha was responding to a startling new claim made by General Tienie Groenewald – the retired former defence force official – that Botha knew about the plot to assassinate Machel, as allegedly did Mozambican president Joaquim Chissano.

Botha has previously vehemently denied any knowledge of a plot to kill Machel.

The circumstances surrounding Machel's death are being investigated by the Scorpions.

Botha yesterday told *Sowetan* that Groenewald's claims were "ridiculous"

and challenged him to reveal any information he had to prove his claims.

"I believe that we should just reopen this whole issue and set up a commission of inquiry, and let all those who are making these allegations go there and testify under oath," Botha told *Sowetan*.

"That's the way we can clear up all this nonsense."

Groenewald was making these allegations to get back at him, Botha said.

"If you look at it psychologically, it is a feeling of revenge. There are a number of those like him who want to take revenge. If you look at his history, it will show that he opposed me politically all his life," he said.

Botha said that Groenewald had opposed him on a number of issues, including plans to end the war in Angola. He said that Groenewald could not be taken seriously.

"The fact that he is suggesting that

even Chissano knew about it shows how ridiculous this is," Botha said.

"Why did Groenewald not go to the first inquiry and testify?"

Justice Department spokesman Paul Setsetse said yesterday that to set up a judicial commission of inquiry would require presenting the department with "compelling new information", which would have to be considered by Justice Minister Penuell Maduna.

Scorpions spokesman Siphon Ngwema said yesterday that there was an "ongoing investigation" into the incident.

The investigation was started based on "pieces of information received from various sources", Ngwema told *Sowetan*.

He could not confirm whether Groenewald had approached the Scorpions about the allegations he levelled at Botha.