

Claims mount on SA role in Machel's death

Staff Reporter

ANTI-SOUTH AFRICAN fervour has reached new heights in Africa and elsewhere following the death of Mozambican President Samora Machel.

Senior government officials, newspapers and, in Zimbabwe and Zambia, demonstrating locals are blaming SA for the popular leader's death.

Reports in Johannesburg newspapers quoting the Soviet pilot, Mr Vladimir Novosselov, as saying "I was shot down" have been given splash treatment in the African press.

The SA authorities have gone to extraordinary lengths to ensure a full and fair inquiry and yesterday the Portuguese news agency, Noticias de Portugal, quoted Mozambican civil aviation authority sources as saying the pilot's last report at 9.20pm on Sunday said the plane would land within five minutes. But it was still at least 60km away from Maputo airport at the time — an impossible distance to cover at its then speed, the sources said.

From Moscow, Sapa-Reuter reports that the official Soviet news agency, Tass, suggested the plane was shot down by Renamo rebels with SA support.

□ Zimbabwean Information, Posts and Telecommunications Minister Mr Nathan Shamuyarira said in a BBC interview yesterday that all evidence pointed to a South African implication in the crash.

□ From Accra, Sapa-Reuter reports that Ghana's two main official daily newspapers alleged SA was behind Mr Machel's death and referred to the remarks allegedly made by the pilot.

□ A survivor who has since returned to Mozambique, Mr Fernando Manuel Joao, has been quoted by the Aim news agency as saying "it seemed that the plane was shot at".

Meanwhile, Sapa-Reuter reports from Maputo that Mozambique has postponed the lying-in-state of late President Samora Machel and has suspended voting in general elections.

Late yesterday, the government announced it had appointed a high-level commission, headed by politburo member Mr Armando Guebuza, to investigate the crash of the Soviet built Tupolev TU-134 just inside South African territory on Sunday evening.