

South African Radio Rejects Accusations Over Machel's Death

Johannesburg in English for abroad 0630 gmt 30 Oct 86

Text of commentary:

As the people of Mozambique mourned the passing of Samora Machel and paid their last respects to their first head of state, petty politics intruded into their grief. A number of prominent African personalities have accused South Africa of being responsible for the air crash in which President Machel lost his life, even though there is not a shred of evidence to support this accusation, and even though South Africa has, at the highest level, emphatically denied the accusation.

It has also been alleged that South African officials delayed assisting survivors of the crash for some hours, being more interested - so it has been alleged - in collecting documents that were in the ill-fated aircraft. This accusation, as well, has been emphatically denied. The factual position is that South African officials gave immediate attention to the survivors. South Africa has demonstrated clearly to those who wish to listen objectively that she wants the true picture - the facts and all the evidence - to be made public, so that all can know exactly what caused the crash in which President Machel died.

To this end, South Africa had earlier accorded immediate access to the crash site to representatives of the Mozambican and Russian governments and had invited these governments to participate in the investigation into the crash and had called for international experts to assist in the investigation. South Africa has acted correctly in this matter. It is a cause for regret that others have sought to politicise an African tragedy.