

SA hits back over claims

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**From Patrick Laurence,
in Johannesburg**

South Africa's Minister of Defence, General Magnus Malan, yesterday warned neighbouring countries to stop voicing "vicious accusations" of South African culpability for the death of President Samora Machel.

Addressing himself specifically to President Kenneth Kaunda of Zambia and Mr Robert Mugabe, the Prime Minister of Zimbabwe, General Malan said: "They are playing a dangerous game. What they are trying to do to South Africa is not child's play... Fanning of suspicion, hate and doubt is to nobody's honour or advantage. It is destructive and even provocative."

General Malan's remarks at a South African air force parade in the Transvaal town of Pietersburg, were made off-the-cuff. He had not intended to refer to the charges, but was clearly stung into replying by the "flood of sick propaganda."

He repeated the denial of South African involvement that he made at the weekend before the burial of Machel. "South Africa was not involved in the crash. Let that be clear to everyone now."

Gen Malan went on to deal with a report in the Zimbabwe newspaper, The Herald, that Machel was alive after his plane

crashed just inside the South African border but that he had been refused treatment by South African officials. The report was based on an article published in the South African Zulu language newspaper, Ilanga, which quoted residents from the village near the scene of the crash as saying that Machel was alive.

Gen Malan dismissed the accusation as "too absurd to react to," saying: "The man was so mutilated that he had to be identified by his teeth." He rejected a charge that Machel's plane had been lured off course by a portable radio beacon as a "transparent attempt to blame South Africa and its army and air force for the crash."