

5. AFRICA

Machel Plane Crash: Accusations Against RSA at Foreign Ministry Briefing

(a) Soviet television 1630 gmt 12 Nov 86

Text of report by A. Sturua:

[Sturua] A press conference was held in Moscow today [12th November]. Gerasimov, head of the information department of the USSR Ministry of Foreign Affairs, said at the conference that recently groundless allegations had been made in the RSA concerning the circumstances and causes of the crash of the Tu-134A jet airliner which carried Samora Machel, President of the People's Republic of Mozambique. Comrade Vasin, USSR Deputy Minister of Civil Aviation, said [voice]: The investigation into the crash, which according to the regulations of the International Civil Aviation Organisation, ICAO, has been entrusted to the RSA as the country where the crash occurred, is in fact being blocked by the authorities of that country. They are reluctant to implement the accord on decoding the recordings of the special onboard instruments, which survived [the crash] and are in the RSA, with the participation of the interested sides, which was reached at a meeting of the tripartite commission, in which Soviet and Mozambican experts took part.

[Sturua] Comrade Vasin said that the Tu-134A jets carried out flights to all European countries, as well as to countries of the Near East and Asia, and that they were fitted out with navigation equipment which fully met present-day international standards.

[Vasin] Therefore, there can be only one conclusion, that the jet was deliberately guided to a mountainous area in the RSA by a powerful radio transmitter sited on RSA territory using the Maputo airport communications frequency. The commission regards the following versions as the possible causes for the crash of the jet: shelling of the jet from the ground; an explosion aboard the airliner; deliberate creation of powerful radio [Russian: radiotekhnicheskij] interference.

(b) Moscow home service 1900 gmt 12 Nov 86

Excerpts from report:

... Vasin, USSR Deputy Minister of Civil Aviation, who spoke at the briefing, drew the attention of correspondents to the fact that the investigation into the circumstances and causes of the disaster was effectively being blocked by the RSA authorities. He said, in part [voice]: According to flight navigation data from the RSA's radar facilities, the flight - it is noteworthy - was to all intents and purposes following the set route. However, at a distance of some 100 km from Maputo airport the aircraft turned 35 degrees from the set flight path and continued its flight towards the RSA border, towards mountainous terrain. A natural question arises: Why did the crew change direction of flight? The answer can be as follows: In favourable weather conditions on the flight path and in the area of Maputo airport, the crew could change course only on the basis of readings from on-board radio navigation instruments tuned to the frequencies of the ground-based radio installations of Maputo airport. Thus, there can only be one conclusion - the aircraft was deliberately guided to mountainous terrain on RSA territory by a powerful radio source located on the territory of the RSA and using the frequency of Maputo airport's radio...

[Announcer] Comrade Vasin went on to stress that an objective elucidation of the details of the incident was, in part, being hindered by the reluctance of the RSA government to place at the disposal of the commission, comprising representatives of the RSA, Mozambique and USSR, the special onboard recording instruments which contain information on the nature of the flight, the operating condition of the onboard systems of the aircraft and the radio exchanges of the crew. We believe, Comrade Vasin went on, that the data from decoding the recorders would provide answers to many questions which are obscure today...