

Machel death: Soviets accuse SA of sabotage

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LUSAKA.

SOVIET experts are now convinced the plane crash that killed Mozambican president Samora Machel last October was the result of South African sabotage, Deputy Civil Aviation Minister Ivan Vasin said.

In an interview with the Novosti Press Agency, Cde Vasin said evidence gathered by Soviet experts on the tripartite commission investigating the crash together with Mozambique and South Africa showed the plane had been drawn off its course to crash on South African territory by Pretoria's armed forces.

"The circumstances of

the plane crash leave no doubts that it was as a result of sabotage." The deliberate use of effective ground radio engineering facilities outside Maputo airport led to the plane's deviation from the prescribed course and to its collision on South African territory, he said.

The aircraft had apparently been lured to its tragedy by powerful radio equipment at a temporary South African military camp near the crash site.

It should be added that in South Africa at the site of the Tupolev-134's fall the tripartite commission discovered traces of a camp of an army type. It was located roughly 150 metres from the plane's debris. Wit-

nesses say the camp was left one day after the crash.

Cde Vasin, meanwhile, described South Africa's attempts to cover its role in the saga through an "independent commission" of British and American experts that had recently declared Pretoria had had nothing to do with the crash.

He noted that the team which had been given wide publicity by the Western agencies and media had not taken part in the initial investigations carried out by the Soviet Union, South Africa and Mozambique according to the International Civil Aviation Organisation regulations and thus missed out

on vital evidence.

He has accused South Africa of sabotaging the work of the tripartite commission by leaving it just as it was to begin work on a final report on the incident.

He deplored Pretoria for giving wide publicity to the work of the so-called "independent commission" which claims it did not have a hand in the matter.

The findings of the inquiry into the plane crash are expected to be completed this week, a spokesman of the inquiry team Mr Justice Cecil Margo's office said yesterday.

"I doubt the findings will be made public at this stage," she said. — Ziana-Pana.