

# 44 DIE IN MOZAMBIQUE AIR DISASTER

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**FORTY-FOUR** people including senior members of Frelimo died in an aeroplane crash after take-off from Pemba in northern Mozambique on Sunday, said a Mozambican government communique yesterday.

There are five survivors, all seriously injured. Among the dead is Cde Maria Chipande, wife of Defence Minister General Alberto Chipande. Cde Maria was a founder member of the Mozambique Liberation Front, which defeated Portuguese colonialism and transformed itself into Frelimo after independence in 1975.

Seven other prominent figures in the political life of Cabo Delgado, the northernmost of the country's 10 provinces, are known to have died in the disaster.

Among them are the administrators of the three districts in the far north of the province (Mueda, Palma and Mocimboa da Praia) — Captain Joao Chambone, Captain Adriano Missasse, Captain Robati Kaisi. Captain Chambone, a former Frelimo fighter, was a member of the People's Assembly, the Mozambican parliament.

A woman deputy in the assembly, Cde Justina Gaspar, also died, as did two members of Frelimo's Cabo Delgado provincial committee, Cde Jacinto Naimpone and Cde Alberto Mijai, and the party secretary for Nangadzi, near the Tanzanian border, Cde N. Mavango.

Identification of all the crash victims is not yet complete.

The government communique says the crash took place shortly after take-off. The crew of the plane, a Mozambican Air Force Antonov-26, radioed the Pemba control tower, saying they had engine problems, and tried to return to the airport. The plane crashed

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a few hundred metres from the runway and burst into flames.

The communique describes the disaster as "a terrible loss for the whole country". A day of national mourning has been declared for today. — Ziana- Aim.