

# Mozambique Leader Killed in Plane Crash

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JOHANNESBURG — President Samora Machel, leader of Mozambique since its independence from Portugal in 1975, died in a plane crash on South African territory Sunday night, the South African government announced Monday.

The cause of the crash, which coincided with increasing strains in Mozambique's relationship with South Africa following the virtual collapse of a 1984 nonaggression pact, was not immediately known.

South African authorities said at least 26 persons, including Mr. Machel, 53, died in the crash and 10 survived, one of them thought to be a Soviet pilot. Mr. Machel's body, witnesses said, was almost unrecognizable.

The Mozambique leader's Soviet-made Tupolev jet crashed in a remote area of South Africa, close to the borders of Swaziland and Mozambique.

South African newspapers said it strayed over South Africa in bad weather. The border area is located in hilly country.

Mr. Machel had been meeting in northern Zambia with other southern African leaders to consider developments in the region.

Mr. Machel's powerful personality made him the unchallenged leader of his avowedly Marxist Mozambique Liberation Front, the nation's only lawful political movement. His death, coinciding with turmoil in many parts of southern Africa, announced new uncertainties for the region.

South Africa, which has backed Mozambique rebels seeking Mr. Machel's overthrow, made no mention of possible sabotage when it announced the Mozambique leader's death in a brief statement from the office of President Pieter W. Botha.

But many people beyond Pretoria's frontiers are certain to voice concern that the Mozambique leader's aircraft was sabotaged.

Such assertions seem certain to be reinforced by a threat earlier this month from South Africa's defense minister, Magnus Malan, who warned black-ruled neighbors that Pretoria offered them a choice: "either peace and cooperation, or conflict."

Alfred Nzo, the general secretary



Luc Novovitch/Reuters

President Samora Machel of Mozambique

of the the African National Congress, the most prominent of guerrilla organizations seeking the overthrow of apartheid, said in Copenhagen that the crash was a "deliberately committed crime" by South Africa or its Mozambique rebel allies.

Hours after South Africa announced Mr. Machel's death, Mozambique's officially controlled media had made no reference to his death, telling citizens only that he was "missing," had not returned on schedule from Zambia and that a crash in South Africa was under investigation. The radio began playing solemn music.

[Mozambique officially confirmed Mr. Machel's death Monday night, Reuters reported from Maputo, Mozambique.]

[Marcelino dos Santos, a Politburo member who broadcast a communique Monday morning that the president was overdue on a flight from Zambia, confirmed the death in a statement broadcast by official Radio Mozambique.]

Mr. dos Santos, in the earlier statement, urged Mozambicans to remain calm and "keep vigilant in



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order to neutralize any enemy action to provoke instability and any criminal behavior."

The appeal reflected official fears that guerrillas of the South Africa-supported Mozambique National Resistance, which has claimed major successes after an upsurge of activity in recent weeks, might try to press a perceived advantage.

Mr. dos Santos, along with For- See CRASH, Page 6

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ign Minister Joaquim Chissano and the minister of planning, Mario Machungo, are said by analysts in Maputo to be likely contenders for Mozambique's presidency. Speculation over a successor was rarely voiced before Mr. Machel's death.

The Mozambican Embassy in Lusaka said two cabinet ministers, Transport Minister Alcantara Santos and Deputy Foreign Minister Jose Carlos Lopo, were among the passengers.

South Africa's foreign minister, R.F. Botha, toured the area of the crash on a hilltop just inside South African territory in the so-called tribal homeland of Kangwane on Monday.

"Without Machel," he said in reference to Mozambique's civil war, "one is concerned that conflict will escalate."

South Africa, eager to avoid accusations that it played a role in the crash, said foreign aviation experts would be welcome to assist in any investigations.

[The plane was broken in two with debris scattered across the barren hillside, Reuters reported from Mabuzini, South Africa.]

[Witnesses said Mr. Machel's body was the first to be removed in a coffin.]

Foreign Minister Botha invited Mozambican representatives to inspect the site of the accident in an apparent attempt to pre-empt accusations of foul play either by South Africa or by the Mozambique National Resistance.

The Soviet Union was a principle ally of Mr. Machel during his days as a guerrilla commander before independence from Portugal. Moscow has since supplied military equipment, including combat helicopters to Mozambique.

But Mr. Machel had turned increasingly to the West in the quest for capital to shore up a battered economy and military expertise to combat the nation's 10-year rebellion.

Last year, Mr. Machel paid his first visit to the United States and his country joined the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund.

A combination of South African military and economic pressure forced Mr. Machel to sign a nonaggression pact with South Africa on March 16, 1984, in the hope that his withdrawal of support for the African National Congress would, under the terms of the treaty, sever Pretoria's support for the Mozambique National Resistance.

The nonaggression treaty earned Mr. Machel the opprobrium of black African allies, but his aides depicted it as a matter of survival.

Since its inception, however, the security accord has been beset with problems. Mozambique has ac-

cused South Africa of continuing to support the rebels, while Pretoria has, with increasing stridency in recent weeks, accused Mozambique of renewing its backing for guerrillas from the African National Congress.

Earlier this month, six white South African soldiers were injured in a land mine explosion in eastern South Africa, near the border with Mozambique. Pretoria said the mine had been planted by Mozambique-based insurgents from the African National Congress.

In a mounting war of nerves, South Africa announced a retaliatory plan to expel tens of thousands of Mozambican workers whose remittances are a vital source of foreign exchange for Mozambique.

Defense Minister Malan said then that Mozambique seemed to be tottering on the verge of collapse. The Mozambique National Resistance reported a widespread campaign in several parts of the country, prompting speculation among commentators here that Pretoria was again exerting economic and military pressure on Mr. Machel to force him into abandoning all support for the African National Congress.

According to reports by rebel spokesmen and by travelers in Mozambique, the Mozambique National Resistance has recently attacked and occupied a string of Mozambican towns and has blown up some rail links to Maputo.

The meeting Mr. Machel attended in northern Zambia was apparently called to discuss the possibility of reopening Angola's Benguela Railroad, closed for a decade because of attacks by South African-backed Angolan rebels led by Jonas Savimbi. The railway starts in Zaire, and a Zairean diplomat traveling on Mr. Machel's plane was said to be among the dead.

In Pretoria, President Botha sent a message of condolences Monday to Mr. Machel's family, saying South Africa had lost an influential ally.

#### ■ U.S. Sends Condolences

The White House extended the condolences of the American people Monday to the government and people of Mozambique over the death of Mr. Machel, United Press International reported from Washington.

"President Machel led his people with courage and unflinching determination in the long struggle for Mozambique's independence and nonalignment," the chief White House spokesman, Larry Speakes, said in a statement.

In London, Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher sent a message of condolence and the Foreign Office praised Mr. Machel's ceaseless efforts to bring peace to southern Africa, The Associated Press reported.