

Air disaster investigated

The South African Government has asked the United States for assistance in decoding the flight records of the Tupolev jet in which President Samora Machel of Mozambique was killed on October 19.

This follows a request by the Soviet team of experts investigating the accident for permission to take the flight recorders to Moscow.

The Russians invited South African technical experts to accompany them to Moscow for the decoding of the four black boxes, which they indicated could only be done in the Soviet Union.

The Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mr R F Botha, said at a news conference in Pretoria on October 28 that he had asked the South African Em-

bassy in Washington to request the State Department for technical expertise to ascertain whether the decoding of the flight recorder could not be done in South Africa.

He said it was in the interest of all three countries involved — South Africa, the Soviet Union and Mozambique — that the investigation be done in such a way that there is no "comeback".

A spokesman for the Minister's office said that Mr Botha had indicated that this was a particular requirement because of the emotional accusations that had already been levelled at South Africa over the death of President Machel, with many African bloc and other Third World states already having openly

accused the country of being responsible.

Zimbabwean Prime Minister, Mr Robert Mugabe, Zambian President Kenneth Kaunda and Libyan leader Colonel Muammar Gaddafi are among those who have blamed South Africa.

In reaction the Minister of Defence, General Magnus Malan, has repeated that South Africa was not involved in the accident. Accusations, innuendos and propaganda against South Africa is in no one's interest. It is tragic that President Machel's death is used as a propaganda ploy against South Africa, General Malan said.

At the press conference Mr Botha said: "I don't think a responsible government would blame South Africa for the crash."

He said South Africa was not worried that any finding of the investigation would implicate the country.

● Mozambique on October 28 buried President Samora Machel, according him a hero's funeral. 186.

Beeld, October 27. Gerhard Grobler, Tony Stirling, **The Citizen**, October 29.