

AVIATION EXPERTS VISIT MOZAMBIQUE

U.N. Agency Officials Arrive to Help With Inquiry Into Machel's Plane Crash

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By RICHARD WITKIN

Two crash experts from the International Civil Aviation Organization have arrived in Maputo to help the Mozambican Government investigate the crash that killed the country's President, Samora M. Machel. Another expert was to arrive by Monday.

It was not known whether their arrivals would affect the refusal of the South African Government to send flight recorders recovered from the Soviet-built airliner to Moscow so technicians can decode information that might help determine the cause of the crash.

The twin-engine TU-134 jet, flown by a Soviet crew, crashed in South Africa Oct. 19, just 200 yards inside the border with Mozambique. The plane was headed to Maputo, the Mozambican capital, on a flight from Lusaka, Zambia. Thirty-three other people were killed in the crash, and 10 survived.

South Africa has denied accusations by several African nations that it was behind the crash. South Africa has asserted that the crash was a result of pilot error and that some Soviet crew members had been drinking.

Inaction Fuels Suspicion

But Pretoria's refusal to approve arrangements for decoding the recorders has added to suspicions about its role.

South Africa apparently agreed on two occasions to have a three-nation inquiry team sent to Moscow with the recorders. But both times, on Oct. 25 and Oct. 29, Pretoria apparently backed down at the last moment. South Africa later approached Britain and the United States, seeking an independent expert to observe the opening of the recorders and the decoding of the data. Mozambique said it had no objections, but neither Britain nor the United States has accepted the request.

Under rules of the international aviation agency, an inquiry is directed by the nation in whose territory it occurs and is to include the nation where the aircraft was built and the nation that owned and operated the plane.

Officials Sent to Crash Site

Thus, South Africa invited the Soviet Union and Mozambique to take part in the inquiry. All three nations belong to the 156-member aviation agency, which is an affiliate of the United Nations. The representatives from the Soviet Union and Mozambique were sent to the crash site, near the South African border town of Komatipoort.

The crash-resistant recorders that are recognized as the key to the crash inquiry are carried by most airliners. One is a "flight data recorder" that stores moment-by-moment data on aircraft performance, such as altitude, speed, heading and gravity forces. The other is a "cockpit voice recorder" that stores voices of the crew, communication of air controllers and telltale sounds of engines and cockpit devices such as warning horns.

To expedite the inquiry, Mozambique asked the aviation agency to provide technical experts to help its representatives. Assad Kotaite, president of the agency's council, then assigned experts from Finland, New Zealand and Canada. The Finn and the Canadian arrived Friday night. The aviation agency would not identify the experts, but the official Maputo news agency said they were Caj Frosfel of Finland and Bernard Caiger of Canada.

Mr. Kotaite said he did not know if the arrival of the experts would help speed the decoding of the recorders. He also said South Africa had informed his agency of the creation of the commission of inquiry but had made no overtures for special help.

The mission is to be financed with money available to the agency, but the three experts are to work directly for the Government of Mozambique and are to be responsible for reporting only to that Government.