

# South Africa Says Mozambique Seized Helicopter

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CAPE TOWN, Dec. 28 — South Africa said today that a South African helicopter and its four crew members had been seized in Mozambique while on the way to join a search for wreckage from a South African Airways jumbo jet at sea.

Foreign Minister Roelof F. Botha said in a statement that the incident had been "resolved in principle" during contacts with the Mozambican Government. The statement said that South African officials would travel to the town of Vilancousos, south of Beira, a Mozambican port, for further negotiations for the crew's release.

Contacts between the two Governments have been badly strained in recent times by the guerrilla war being waged inside Mozambique by an anti-Marxist group, Renamo, that the Mozambican authorities have charged is armed and financed by South Africa. There has been no suggestion from Mozambique that the helicopter was involved in any anti-government activity.

## Search for Wreckage

The craft, a twin-rotor Sikorsky, had clearance from Mozambique to fly through Mozambican airspace en route to the Comoro Islands in the Indian Ocean, according to the South African statement, which said it was to rendezvous there with a South African ships engaged in the search for wreckage from the Boeing 747 that crashed into the sea off Mauritius on Nov. 28, with the loss of all 159 people aboard.

The Foreign Ministry statement said that the helicopter had refueled, by agreement, in the Mozambican capital of Maputo on Thursday. The crew, four civilians working for a Cape Town-based helicopter company, had worked out a flight plan to take them north to Beira, but had not arrived. The Ministry said that the craft had been traced to Bazaruto Island, off the Mozambi-

can coast, on Sunday.

The seizure of the helicopter was the latest setback in the search for the wreck of the jumbo jet, which was en route from Taipei to Johannesburg when it crashed at an estimated distance of about 160 miles northeast of Mauritius.

The search has been hampered by bad weather, by uncertainty as to location of the crash, and by the extreme ocean depth in the search area, about 14,000 feet. A further difficulty confronting searchers is that the "black box" flight recorder aboard the aircraft was designed to emit an electronic signal for only 30 days after a crash, a period that has now expired.

Speculation about the cause of the crash is centered on fire in the cargo hold of the aircraft. In his last radioed

message to the control tower in Mauritius, the aircraft's pilot said that there was a fire aboard, and that he was descending to 14,000 feet. Wreckage and bodies found later indicated that the aircraft hit the water in a dive, and that the passengers had been exposed to extreme heat.

The search, involving a number of South African ships, has been aided by the United States and French navies, as well as by civilian experts from the Federal Aviation Administration in Washington.

One theory to be investigated by the judicial inquiry commission appointed by the South African Government is that chemicals, said in some reports to have included nitric acid, leaked in the cargo hold, igniting the fire.