

MOZAMBICAN CHIEF DIES IN AIR CRASH IN SOUTH AFRICA

AT LEAST 25 OTHERS KILLED

Samora Machel Was Traveling
From Zambia Meeting—
Pretoria Denies a Role

NYT. 21-10-86 p.1

By ALAN COWELL

Special to The New York Times

JOHANNESBURG, Oct. 20 — President Samora M. Machel, leader of Mozambique since it won independence from Portugal in 1975, was killed Sunday night in a plane crash in South Africa, the Pretoria Government announced today.

The cause of the crash, on a flight from Lusaka, Zambia, to Maputo, Mozambique, was not known.

The Mozambican authorities, who withheld a formal announcement while they debated the succession and other issues, confirmed Mr. Machel's death about 24 hours after the crash.

An Anti-Apartheid Figure

The 53-year-old President was an important figure among African leaders opposed to apartheid. His death coincided with increasing strains in Mozambique's relationship with South Africa after the virtual collapse of a 1984 nonaggression pact.

[Mr. Machel led a Marxist Government but was far from being an ideologue who followed a strict Marxist-Leninist line, and in recent years he seemed above all a pragmatic nationalist. *Obituary, page A7.*]

The South African authorities said at least 26 people, including President Machel, had been killed in the crash. Ten people survived, one of them thought to be a Soviet pilot.

No Mention of Sabotage

South Africa, which is backing Mozambican rebels seeking President Machel's overthrow, made no mention of possible sabotage when it announced the Mozambican leader's death in a brief statement from the office of President P. W. Botha.

But the South African Government, eager to avoid accusations that it played a role in the crash, said foreign aviation experts would be welcome to assist in any investigations. Foreign Minister Roelof F. Botha invited Mozambican representatives to inspect the crash site.

There was no word on who would replace Mr. Machel, a bearded former guerrilla commander, as leader of Mozambique.

Returning From Meeting

President Machel was returning from northern Zambia, where he had met the Presidents of Zambia, Angola and Zaire.

Both the African National Congress, the most prominent of the organizations seeking the overthrow of apartheid, and the official Zambian press agency sought to implicate South Africa and the Mozambican rebels in Mr. Machel's death. Alfred Nzo, general secretary of the congress, said in Copenhagen that the crash was a "deliberately committed crime" by South Africa or its Mozambican allies.

The Mozambican leader's Soviet-made TU-134 twin-engine jet crashed



Reuters

Police officers carrying a body away from the wreckage of a jet that crashed just inside South Africa on Sunday night, killing President Samora M. Machel of Mozambique, left, and 25 other people.

Mozambique's Leader Dies in South African Crash

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in a hilly, remote area of Transvaal Province, near South Africa's borders with Swaziland and Mozambique.

The crash site was a few miles from Komatipoort, the border town in which Mr. Machel signed the nonaggression accord with P. W. Botha, then Prime Minister, in 1984.

South African newspapers asserted that the plane had strayed over South African territory in bad weather.

Foreign Minister Botha said the aircraft crashed a few hundred yards inside South African territory after ap-

parently running into difficulties in Mozambican airspace.

The South African Bureau for Information said those killed included two leading Mozambican officials, Transport Minister Luis Maria Alcántara Santos and Deputy Foreign Minister José Carlos Lopo.

Mozambican rebels based in Lisbon said Defense Minister Alberto Joaquim Chipande had been killed in the crash, but there was no independent confirmation of the report. A Zairean diplomat was also reported killed.

The first word of the crash came from Foreign Minister Botha, who announced on the South African state

radio that an unidentified aircraft flying from Lusaka to Maputo had crashed in the border area.

Shortly afterward, the state-run Mozambican radio broke into its programs to announce that Mr. Machel had not returned on schedule from Zambia and that an air crash in South Africa was under investigation. The radio began to play solemn music.

Marcelino dos Santos, a Politburo member and the Secretary of Parliament, urged Mozambicans to remain calm and "keep vigilant in order to neutralize any enemy action to provoke instability and any criminal behavior."

The appeal seemed to reflect official

fears that the Mozambique National Resistance, a South African-backed rebel group that has claimed major successes in recent weeks, might try to press a perceived advantage.

Foreign Minister Botha, touring the crash site, told reporters, "Without Machel, one is concerned that conflict will escalate."

President Machel's powerful personality made him the unchallenged leader of the Mozambique Liberation Front, or Frelimo, a Marxist group that is the country's only legal political movement.

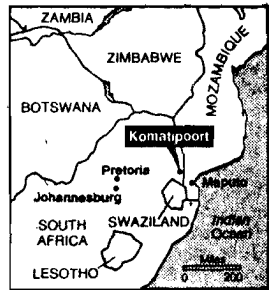
Mr. dos Santos, along with Foreign Minister Joaquim Alberto Chissano and Prime Minister Mário Machungo, are said by analysts in Maputo to be likely contenders for Mozambique's presidency.

Mr. Machel signed 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, end Pretoria's support for the Mozambique National Resistance.

From the outset, the security accord has encountered problems. Mozambique has accused South Africa of continuing to support the rebels, while Pretoria has accused Mozambique of renewing its backing for guerrillas of the African National Congress.

White House Expresses Regret

WASHINGTON, Oct. 20 (Reuters) — The White House expressed deep regret today over the death of President Machel and called him "a voice for moderation" in southern Africa.



The New York Times/Oct. 21, 1986

President Samora M. Machel's plane crashed near Komatipoort.