

Portuguese report cites "navigational error" as likely cause of Machel crash (Excerpts)
Reporting from Maputo, the Noticias de Portugal news agency correspondent Augusto de Carvalho quotes a source at the Mozambican Civil Aeronautics Authority to the effect that navigational error was very likely the cause of the crash that killed Samora A team of Soviet aviation experts has arrived in Maputo to take part in the examination of the aircraft's black boxes, currently still being held by the South African authorities. The source quoted in the Noticias de Portugal report, who asked not to be identified, said that the presidential plane, a Soviet Tu-134, contacted Maputo air traffic control for the last time at precisely 2120 local time. According to the source, the pilot said then that he was at 3,000 feet - about 1,000 metres - and would be landing in five minutes. It was at that moment that Maputo air traffic control lost touch with the plane, which is thought to have crashed immediately afterwards. Judging by the site of the crash, the plane must have been between 60 to 70 km away from Maputo, flying at under 300 km/hour. Therefore there was no way the Tu-134 could have reached Maputo airport in five minutes, the source stressed, pointing out that these facts would seem to point to navigational error as the cause of the crash. . .

Speaking to the Mozambican news agency AIM, a US Air Force specialist who asked not to be named said that a plane can be made to stray off course by electronic means. The US officer, who said he was very familiar with the Tu-134, added that the South African military have the necessary technology to interfere with a plane's navigational system and create a fictitious alternative course. . . (Lisbon home service 0000 gmt 23 Oct 86)