

McBride: Machel cover-up

Crash breakthrough reason McBride being in jail?

By JIMMY SEEPE

STARTLING INFORMATION linking the arrest of Foreign Affairs Deputy Director General, Robert McBride, two months ago, to the uncovering of new information regarding the plane crash that killed Mozambican president, Samora Machel, has been made available to City Press.

According to intelligence sources, the investigation regarding Machel's death 10 years ago has uncovered new sensitive information that links several senior Mozambican officials, South African Military Intelligence officials, and Malawian and British intelligence agents, in the death of Machel.

City Press yesterday learned that the investigators for the Gauteng Attorney General's office, who are investigating the Samora Machel plane crash, have been given information that Mozambican officials were involved in Machel's death but so far have not found sufficient evidence to prove it.

□ City Press also learned that one of the senior police investigators who was suspended from the South African investigation team assisting the Mozambican police, Superintendent Lappies Labuschagne, was on Thursday seen in Mozambique.

Labuschagne, who was removed from the investigation team and is now under inquiry by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, was allegedly seen at the South African High Commission offices in Mozambique chatting to a member of the South African Police Service team, based in that country.

SAPS spokesperson in Mpumalanga, Supt Pheo Dubruyn, confirmed to City Press that Labuschagne was in Mozambique this week.

Supt Dubruyn said Labuschagne was in Mozambique "investigating other cases" which he had been involved in.

"He (Labuschagne) is carrying on with other investigations on cross-border crimes which he has been working on with Mozambican and Swaziland government police teams."

There is growing suspicion that Mozambican officials - who may have been involved with South African agents in Machel's death - may be applying pressure to keep McBride in jail, to turn the focus away from a pending Machel breakthrough.

It is alleged that the Machel investigation, which was relaunched two years ago at the insistence of the African National Congress, and was been conducted under the auspices of the Transvaal Attorney General, Dr Jan D'Oliviera, has uncovered new information that could have led to the possible arrest and conviction of Mozambican officials including former South African government ministers and intelligence agents.

The new information has also apparently revealed several pay transactions that could have gone on before, and after, Machel's death.

It is understood the threat of going public with the breakthrough led to MI officials, with the possible involvement of Mozambican government counterparts, drawing up an elaborate plan months ahead to frame a senior South African government official in gun running and plans of a coup plot - and that McBride was the one chosen.

McBride has been languishing in a Mozambican jail on apparently flimsy allegations, similar to those provided in the discredited report compiled by former South African National Defence Force chief, General Georg Meiring.

The Meiring report, which was apparently compiled from the statement of a suspected agent, Vusi Mbatha, was further discredited by a judicial commission of inquiry, headed by Chief Justice Ismael Mohammed.

The commission found the report "flawed" and "without substance".

The Meiring report had claimed that the new SANDF chief, Lieutenant General Siphwe Nyanda, along with senior government and public officials, were conspiring to topple the government of President Nelson Mandela.

According to City Press sources, the arrest of McBride was a well-engineered plan to try and discredit the outcome of the

Machel investigation.

An intelligence source told City Press: "It is clear that the McBride plan was a perfect and elaborate decoy to thwart attention on the pending outcome of new information on Machel.

"The plan was to raise so much suspicion around individuals in the new government that by the time new information on Machel comes out, people will ask as to why such information was being made public now, after the McBride incident," he said.

"The plan is to create and focus public attention on McBride so that any new information on Machel gets discredited," he said.

He added that the MI and Mozambican plan "must have gone astray because of its over-reliance on their discredited source and alleged MI agent, Vusi Mbatha".

"They are now trying to find a leg to stand on to justify the continued detention of McBride, since the cover of their source and alleged agent was uncovered."

There is now suspicion that someone close to people in the Attorney General's office could have tipped off MI agents and their Mozambican counterparts, in working out an elaborate plan to thwart the outcome of the Machel investigation.

As a result, it is alleged that Mozambican justice officials, who are under pressure from MI agents, might be forced to keep McBride for as long as they can in prison to thwart attempts to reveal new Machel information.

Mozambican justice officials recently said they "cannot release McBride" until they find two ambassadors, an American and Cuban, who are thought to have had knowledge "of the conspiracy" to topple Mandela's government.

Both the American and Cuban embassies have denied knowledge of any of its officials in the coup plot, and said they had no such names of officials within their ranks.