

Graça Machel before TRC

Sanetum
23/6/95

By Pamela Dube

THE Truth and Reconciliation Commission will today hear testimony from Mrs Graça Machel on her late husband Mozambican president Samora Machel's air crash.

Machel was killed in an air-crash in 1986 together with 35 other people, including Mozambican cabinet ministers, at Mbuzini near Komatipoort.

TRC investigations head Mr Dumiza Ntsebeza said yesterday that Mrs Machel was to share information on the circumstances surrounding her husband's tragic death at a closed inquiry in Johannesburg. -

Ntsebeza added that over the last decade Mrs Machel "has made her own inquiries into the death of her husband, and hopes to share this with the panel".

The panel consists of TRC chairman Archbishop Desmond Tutu, Ntsebeza, Ms Glenda Wildschut and Dr Fazel Randera.

Also expected to give testimony is Dr Abdul Minty, deputy director-general: multilateral affairs in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ntsebeza said.

Before returning from over 30 years of exile, Minty worked with

the British Anti-apartheid Movement and had also researched and written on Machel's death.

Ntsebeza said Minty's testimony was needed as "an expert on the former government's military capability" and because of his own investigations into the 1986 plane crash.

So far, Ntsebeza said, the TRC investigative unit had questioned nine people on their knowledge about the crash, including Craig Williamson, a former Military Intelligence and security police operative.

Pilot error

However, Ntsebeza said the names of the other eight witness who have appeared before the commission were being withheld "to protect" them.

Machel's death was first investigated by the apartheid government-appointed Margo Commission of Inquiry, which concluded that the crash was "caused by pilot error".

However, an independent investigation by a former Soviet team concluded that a decoy beacon caused the plane to stray off course before it crashed into the mountains at Mbuzini.