

Need to end Machel death riddle

It is common knowledge that the death of former Mozambique president Samora Machel has been shrouded in mystery ever since the tragic incident happened.

Twenty-two years later, the real circumstances surrounding his death have yet to emerge.

The most enduring claims have been that he was assassinated in a plot involving South Africa's apartheid-era government acting in cahoots with some senior officials in the Frelimo government of Mozambique.

Initial reports and the subsequent findings of the apartheid-appointed inquiry chaired by Judge Cecil Margo suggested that the plane crash in which Machel and 33 others perished was the result of the pilot's error.

But the Margo commission findings were later discredited amid claims that security operatives who appeared before the inquiry deliberately pulled the wool over the eyes of the unsuspecting judge.

In other words, official evidence presented to the inquiry was tainted by lies and subterfuge.

Now new claims point to premeditated murder by apartheid-era security operatives. They have been made by two apartheid security operatives who have confessed their role in the plot.

One of them, Richmond Mundingi, has allegedly confessed his role in the shooting down of the plane.

Machel was killed when their Tupolev -134 plane crashed in Mbuzini, Mpumalanga, in 1986.

The startling confessions by Mundingi and Hans Louw, a former Civil Cooperation Bureau operative, need to be investigated as urgently as possible.

The most intriguing development is former apartheid minister of foreign affairs Pik Botha's support for the reopening of a judicial investigation into the plane crash.

He is the most senior official from the apartheid government to have expressed support for the move to date.

The current government must act swiftly to reopen the inquiry to help solve one of the greatest political mysteries of our time.