



NOT FORGOTTEN A Mozambican soldier pays his respects at the memorial on the Mbuluzi hillside of Mpumalanga where Mozambican president Samora Machel and 24 others were killed in a 1986 aircraft crash
PHOTO BY ALEXANDER JOEL/AFP

TRC called for further investigation Times 12/12/12

KATHARINE CHILD

THE Truth and Reconciliation Commission's inquiry into the Samora Machel plane crash ended without clear answers and a recommendation that further investigation be attempted.

The inquiry, which began in 1998, found that "had there not been an intention to bring the aircraft down, the South African authorities

could have prevented the incident".

The TRC said it could not rule out the possibility of a false beacon directing the plane off course before it crashed into mountains at Mbuluzi, near Komatipoort.

Machel was returning from a Lusaka summit.

Twenty-five people were killed.

The report said that, though the aircraft was

monitored, and had entered military airspace and was off course, it was not contacted by the authorities.

The TRC findings did not support the conclusion of the Margo commission, which blamed pilot error for the crash.

It found that "circumstantial evidence collected, however, questioned the conclusion reached by the Margo commission"

The TRC heard testimony by Machel's wife, Graca, who "confirmed assassination attempts" had been made on her husband and that there had been attacks on their homes.

The TRC report said a large number of South African Defence Force members had gathered at Komatipoort the night before the accident for a braai.

Many of them went to the

crash site the next day.

At the site, Foreign Minister Pik Botha expressed sadness at Machel's death.

The crash happened after "cabinet [recorded] that tensions between the two countries [South Africa and Mozambique] were increasing"

Botha admitted to the TRC that documents had been removed from the scene of the crash.