

Jackson Sees Signs of Sabotage in Machel's Death

NYT 4/11/86

By RONALD SMOTHERS

The Rev. Jesse Jackson says there are several indications that South Africa might have caused the plane crash that killed President Samora M. Machel of Mozambique two weeks ago.

Mr. Jackson, the rights activist, also says there are indications that South Africa delayed providing rescue workers and medical aid to survivors.

Mr. Jackson, speaking in a telephone interview from London after having attended the Mr. Machel's funeral, said he based his statements on information given to him by Mozambican officials who went to the site of the crash and talked with survivors and witnesses.

He said the death of Mr. Machel, an opponent of apartheid, along with what he called stepped-up efforts by South Africa to "economically and militarily destabilize" black-ruled countries in the region, had convinced him that the situation "is very grave."

'Another Lebanon' Is Feared

"I plan on asking for an immediate meeting with President Reagan so that I can brief him on what I have learned about this situation, which is a threat to world peace," Mr. Jackson said.

In September, Mr. Jackson met with Mr. Machel and other black leaders. "I believe that the lives of President Kenneth Kaunda of Zambia and Prime Minister Robert Mugabe of Zimbabwe are in real danger and if anything happens to them we have another Lebanon in southern Africa."

The first secretary of the South African Embassy in Washington, Eli Bitzer, called Mr. Jackson's statements "amazing" and said it was part of an effort to brand South Africa as guilty before the facts were known.

"People who have nothing to do with politics will have to clear that up," he said, referring to the Pretoria Government's request for "neutral parties,"

possibly the United States, to aid in the investigation of the crash.

Mr. Jackson said that according to Mozambican officials, more than eight hours elapsed between the time of the crash on Oct. 19 and the time that the South African Government informed the Mozambican authorities. Even then, he said, a Mozambican team was given the wrong location of the crash and did not arrive at the site until 24 hours after the plane had gone down.

Mr. Jackson also said officials told him that in his last radio message, the pilot asked that the Maputo airport runway lights be turned on when they were already on. This indicated, Mr. Jackson said, that the pilot thought he was approaching his destination when in fact he wasn't.

"No emergency services were immediately provided to the crash victims and some survivors said that many had died of exposure and bleeding to death," Mr. Jackson said. "An eyewitness told the authorities that some South African policemen arrived and began searching victims for their papers and money, ignoring their pleas for help."

Kaunda and Mugabe Comment

Mr. Jackson also said that contrary to reports by the South African Government that rain and bad weather had apparently forced the plane down, Mozambican investigators found no evidence of mud-caked crash debris, wet clothing and papers when they arrived.

His charges followed those made last week by Mr. Kaunda and Mr. Mugabe as they ended a meeting in Maputo after Mr. Machel's funeral. The two said there was "sufficient circumstantial evidence to blame South Africa directly for the death of President Machel."

In response, the South African Defense Minister, Magnus Malan, told the two leaders they were "playing a dangerous game" with such charges and adding that "throwing mud at South African cannot be tolerated."

Mr. Jackson, who has criticized the Reagan Administration for "tilting toward South Africa" and turning a deaf ear to Zambia, Botswana, Zimbabwe, Mozambique, Tanzania and Angola, said he wanted to try to persuade President Reagan to agree to meet with the leaders of the six nations.