

**TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION COMMISSION**  
**INVESTIGATIVE INQUIRY : SAMORA MACHEL**

**DATE:** 3 JUNE 1998

**HELD AT:** CAPE TOWN

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**CHAIRPERSON:** Good morning ladies and gentleman. This is a section 29 inquiry; an inquiry which is an investigative probe, and it is held in camera, which means that every bit of evidence that will be taken from witnesses who have been called is confidential, and remains confidential until the Commission decides to release it subject to the requirements of the Act. For that reason only members of the Commission and/or members who have been contracted to the Commission and witnesses and/or their representatives, if any, need and are permitted to be present during the occurrence of the proceedings held in terms of section 29. Ms Terreblanche, I do not know if the formalities have been complied with relevant to Ms Patta.

**MS TERREBLANCHE:** No, I am afraid we have been deserted by our consultant. Ms Patta has graciously said that she will stand in. I think she needs to be sworn in as a member of the staff for the purposes. Unfortunately our lawyer is not here to prepare the contract today, but we will deal with that.

**CHAIRPERSON:** I need a copy of the Act in order to do the necessary. The matter will stand down while she complies with

the - we can't begin until we have done the necessary. If you can let me have a copy of the Act in terms of sec - but maybe in the meantime we can indicate how we are going to be proceedings.

We will take evidence from Col Honwana who I have to welcome. Welcome Col Honwana; we are pleased to have you here and we are pleased that you have been able to come at fairly short notice. We will be taking evidence from you and before we do so, I would like to introduce members of the panel.

My name is Ntsebeza, Dumisa Ntsebeza. I am a Commissioner in the Human Rights Violations Committee, and I am in the investigative unit. To my right is Mr Magadhla who is Head of Special Investigations in the investigative unit. Ms Terreblanche is an investigator who did most of the investigation into the matter in relation to which you are going to be testifying.

Ms Glenda Wildschut will join us later. She is a commissioner and she is in the Reparations and the Arbitrations Committee. Ms Deborah Patta is somebody who you will possibly know, but she will also be assisting Ms Terreblanche and she has done her own investigation and she is assisting the Truth and Reconciliation Commission as a consultant. I do not know whether you are happy to testify in English. I would assume that you are?

COL HONWANA: Yes, certainly.

CHAIRPERSON: I was worried that you might want to testify in Portuguese, in which event we would have had to look for

translators in Portuguese, but I am happy that you will be happy to testify in Portuguese (sic).

JUAN BARNARDO HONWANA: (sworn states)

CHAIRPERSON: You can sit down Col Honwana. We'll have to stand down this matter until Ms Christelle Terreblanche has complied with the necessary. The matter is stood down.

MATTER STANDS DOWN

ON RESUMPTION

CHAIRPERSON: Can I have Ms Patta please? She must stand here, in front of me. You will have to read here. Are you going to take the oath, or are you going to confirm?

MS DEBORAH PATTA IS SWORN IN

EXAMINATION BY MS TERREBLANCHE: Welcome Col Honwana. Col Honwana has written to us, saying that he is a retired Colonel, trained fighter pilot and the former head of the Mozambican Air Force and Air Defence. And he was also part of the aeronautical sub-commission of the Mozambican national commission of inquiry into the accident which called President Samora Machel. He wishes to give us some information from - or his perspective. Colonel, may I just ask have you prepared anything for the attention, written for the commission, or are you just going to make an oral presentation?

COL HONWANA: No, I'll just make an oral presentation.

MS TERREBLANCHE: Thank you very much, you may proceed.

COL HONWANA: Thank you very much Members of the Commission.

CHAIRPERSON: Thank you. Colonel, you can go ahead.

COL HONWANA: Thank you. As you have heard from my letter to the Commission, my primary interest in approaching the Commission was to try and get as close as possible to the truth as to what happened which led to the accident of Mbuzini. And my personal reason for that, as again is stated in my letter, is amongst others one of the people who perished in the accident was my brother. So I have a personal interest in knowing. Obviously my interest is not to seek revenge; it's too late for that and it's useless. But it's just I believe as happens with so many people who have come through you, the need to know as much as possible, the truth, what happened. Who did it; why?

My second reason for coming to the Commission has to do with the belief that I have that in view of my former responsibilities in the Mozambican Armed Forces and particularly in the technical sub-committee that investigated the accident, maybe I might have perspectives, information, knowledge or just ideas that might be useful for the Commission. And that is of course for you to decide.

So what I think I can do is eventually to give you a few comments on how we concluded, or what kind of conclusions we arrived at as the Mozambican technical sub-committee.

First of all it is important to say that we found that it would be necessary to separate between the technical issues surrounding the flight on one hand, including the behaviour and the eventual mistakes that the crew made, from the allegations at the time that there might have been a decoy beacon somewhere in the South African territory, which eventually has lured the aeroplane to divert from its normal expected route into Maputo, to come to the place where it eventually crashed. So this was the first recommendation if you will, or the first conclusion that we reach that we have to separate, what is the technical information that was available to us at the time and the allegations about the decoy beacon.

This is not to say that the decoy beacon was not important. Obviously it would have very critical - at the time specifically it would have very critical political and security implications.

At the time it was not possible for us to establish whether or not there was a decoy beacon. But looking at the flight pattern and going through the evidence which we had access to through the flight data records and the cockpit voice records, which records both the communication within the cockpit and the communication between the crew and the various air traffic control stations en route, it was clear to us that the crew was convinced that they were following the VOR. The Maputo VOR.

CHAIRPERSON: VOR standing for what?

COL HONWANA: VOR standing for Very High Frequency Only Directional Range. Which is, if I may try and explain in simple terms. It is basically a radio transmitter which operates in a given frequency, that the ground stations have the VOR, the transmitter and the aeroplanes have the receptors which they tune into the different frequencies of the different stations. So for example if I want to follow a route from Cape Town to say Joburg, I will have the frequency of Joburg VOR amongst other information, and I will tune it into my receptor. So that I have the indication that this is the direction to Joburg.

And since we are talking about this, the whole theory around the decoy beacon would be basically that somebody would have placed a VOR in Mbuzini, or nearby the crash site which would be transmitting ~~in the same frequency~~ as Maputo and transmitting the same code sign as the Maputo VOR. In order to attract the aeroplane from capturing the signal from Maputo to capturing this false signal.

The intention of this would have been either to make the aeroplane fly over Mozambican Air Defence positions at a very low altitude without prior information, and thereby opening the possibility for the plane to be shot by the Mozambican own air defence units. It would have been to make the aeroplane come into South African air space, thereby open the possibility for the aeroplane to be intercepted by the South African Air Force, or

eventually to bring the aeroplane into flight pattern lower than 3 000 feet and eventually if there were clouds for example - which seems to be the case at the time - the aeroplane could have hit mountains on the route, mountains in the Swaziland territory.

But this was all as we saw it at the time and as I see it now, this was all speculation. Because we could not establish beyond any reasonable doubt that there was indeed such a decoy beacon.

There seemed also to be some evidence on the ground of the presence of South African military and there were some allegations which were investigated at the time not by my technical sub-committee, but by the police and security sub-committee of the Mozambican Commission of Inquiry.

CHAIRPERSON: May I just ask Colonel, when you say there was evidence, was it physical evidence; what form did this evidence take? Was it oral evidence? Oral testimony, reports, information, rumours? What was the nature of the evidence which indicated the presence of South African security forces on the ground? And when you say it indicated this, did it indicate it to have been there at the time the incident happened, shortly before that, immediately after that? If you understand, we would like to get some clarity around some evidence which suggested the physical presence of South African security forces.

COL HONWANA: Yes. First of all let me clarify, I think I said there seemed to be evidence. Not (indistinct).

CHAIRPERSON: Yes. No, no, I take it on that basis then what you would then be supplying.

COL HONWANA: Secondly what to the best of my recollection my colleagues who did the police and security inquiry, they had oral depositions by local people saying that these local people had seen a kind of a military camp either a few days before until the very night of the crash, or at least on the day before until the night of the crash. So there was the presence of a small military unit or a small group of people in uniform. Who raised tents and were doing things or building things or something like that. This is what I recall. I don't have any better recollection.

Also from the interviews - and I'm just recalling from memory - from the interviews that we conducted with some of the Mozambican survivors, ~~they said that they~~ had seen people from the South African Police going through the wreckage, looking specifically for President Samora Machel; until they found him, they identified him and they made sure that he was dead. And they were also looking for documents. This is what I recall from what the witnesses that we interviewed at the time having said. So that's why I say there seemed to have been some evidence.

What makes this relevant, particularly this information about the evidence of South African personnel at the crash site was that we in Mozambique, as soon as we realised that the aeroplane had disappeared through our security, Minister of

Security channels we did contact as far as I know the South African security forces to try and establish whether or not the aeroplane could have landed or crashed in South African territory.

And the information - initially there was denial from the South African side and the information as far as I can recall only was provided to the Mozambican authorities at around five in the morning. Now the crash took place shortly after nine o'clock the previous night. And if it is true what the survivors said, the South African personnel were at the crash site probably before midnight. So there was a long time for them to inform us what had happened.

So this at the time raised our doubts, our suspicions that there might have been some involvement on the part of South Africa; there might have been at least some bad faith. But of course we were not in a position to have any certainty about this.

And one of the recommendations we made was that this line of inquiry should be pursued. But again obviously as Mozambicans we could not come and do any investigation in South Africa, so we could only appeal to the South African authorities of the time to undertake further investigation to try and establish the truth around this decoy beacon.

CHAIRPERSON: As far as you know was that request made, and if it was made, was it complied with?

COL HONWANA: The request was made both by ourselves as the Mozambican Commission of Inquiry, also by the Soviet at the time Commission of Inquiry, but it was dismissed by the South African Commission of Inquiry. Because the South African Commission of Inquiry was satisfied that they had enough evidence that the accident had been the result of fundamental errors on the part of the crew.

CHAIRPERSON: Right.

COL HONWANA: Maybe I could also mention that another reason why the speculations around the South African involvement in this accident, another reason which gave some credibility to that speculation was that in the few days before, probably during the week immediately before the accident, there had been a lot of hostile signals from the South African authorities, namely from the then defence minister, General Magnus Malan who had come through the Presidents, threatening action against Mozambique. There had been rumours circulated in the South African Presidents as far as I can recall about the fact that President Samora Machel was facing increasing internal opposition, that he had run away from Maputo, from the capital to the island of Inhaca; that his whereabouts were not known. So there was a lot of rumours and information leading to the belief that something was happening or something was about to happen

with regard to the security and safety of President Samora Machel.

This is something that we discussed in Mozambique in the very few days just before the crash and some journalist - I think I recall journalist Carlos Cardozo writing an editorial in one of the newspapers stating that well, this is typical of a situation, this is typical of a preparation for something that is to happen. This is typical of preparing the public opinion should something happen to President Samora Machel. So there is danger. He saw this as an indication that there was an intention to harm the security of President Samora Machel

MS TERREBLANCHE: Col Honwana....

COL HONWANA: Yes.

MS TERREBLANCHE: I would just like to find out from you, were you aware that at the time South Africa was trying to take control of Phase 1 of the Maputo Harbour Project? Do you know anything about that?

COL HONWANA: No, I don't. Not that I remember.

MS TERREBLANCHE: Col Honwana, do you know anything about the threats against Malawi and the conflict between Mozambique and Malawi prior to the Samora Machel crash?

COL HONWANA: Yes, I do. Maybe I have to make a relatively long introduction into this.

CHAIRPERSON: Please do. It will help us to contextualise whatever conclusions we come to.

COL HONWANA: Thank you. From late '85, particularly in the beginning of 1986 Renamo had launched a major military operation in the central area of Mozambique. Unfortunately we don't have a map here. But if you can try and recall the geography of the region, you obviously know that we have a border with Malawi amongst other countries.

So Renamo had made a major military operation into central areas of Mozambique and at the time we had information through our intelligence units that they were being supported by Malawi. They were using Malawi as the point of departure for this invasion as we saw it. The intention being to cut the country along the Zambezi River Valley, which basically would make for one part of Mozambique from the northern margin of the Zambezi River would be one part of Mozambique and the rest of the country would be south of the Zambezi.

As I said, Renamo increased its operation in the Zambezi province in the Mozambican side, in Tete, which is another province and Manica and Sofala. At the time we as Mozambican armed forces found it extremely difficult to respond to this. The one side of things because the operations were raging on all over the country. We had operations in the south, in the centre and this major thrust in that area.

There had been some contacts between the Mozambican authorities and the Malawian authorities, whereby Mozambique was trying to convince Malawian authorities to suspend their support for Renamo and for Renamo's operations. And once these contacts failed the line of action - at least in terms of declarations - the line of action which was taken was basically to say well, we will take the war back to those who are bringing it into Mozambique. In other words we will take the war back to Malawi. Because this major thrust is coming from Malawi so what we have to do, is to take the war back to Malawi.

And as a result of that - I can't recall exactly the month, but by mid 1986 President Samora Machel visited our province of Tete which is one of the provinces which borders with Malawi. This was a visit in his capacity as commander in chief, much more than a visit in his capacity as the president of the country. So the main point of his visit was to assess the level of readiness and the capabilities of the military units in that province, particularly those units near the border with Malawi.

And in the meetings which took place in those units and in the villages, in the local villages near the border with Malawi I recall from things that my colleagues who were present told me, that President Machel spoke very strongly against Malawi in what could be interpreted as very direct threats. That if Malawi does not stop supporting Renamo, we may invade Malawi; we may

bring the war back into Malawi. I'm not sure about the exact terms, the exact words, the exact expressions which were used. But in the interpretation of the people at that time this was the sense of what President Samora Machel was saying at the time.

So obviously this raised immensely the tension between Mozambique and Malawi. This was followed by a series of demonstrations, manifestations in a number of places, both in the provincial capital of Tete, and particularly in Mozambique. I remember that there was a manifestation organised by the Mozambican Youth Organisation, the Mozambican Youth League if you will, in front of the Malawian Embassy in Maputo, expressing rage, expressing disappointment, expressing anger, frustration with the fact that Malawi was supporting Renamo. And Renamo's effort to divide Mozambique along the Zambezi Valley.

So probably it was on the basis of this that the impression was created that Mozambique was preparing to invade Malawi. Having been at the time very involved with operational planning, I am not aware of any specific plan of invasion to Malawi, beyond this if you will political posturing. There was no - to my knowledge, obviously there might have been things that I didn't know about - but to my knowledge there was no operational plan to invade Malawi.

CHAIRPERSON: Do you still recall who was Defence Minister at that time in Mozambique?

COL HONWANA: At the time the Defence Minister was General Alberto Chepandi. But it must be said that since probably 1983 or '84 - I'm not sure - General Chepandi was accumulating the function of Defence Minister with the function of Provincial Governor in the northern province of Captain Delgado. And he would divide his time between Phemba which is the provincial capital, and Maputo.

And increasingly the President took over military affairs, assisted by the then Chief of General Staff, General Sebastian Homobad and of course other military chiefs.

CHAIRPERSON: Now I recall that Gubuza was once Minister of Defence. Was it before or after this event?

COL HONWANA: Gubuza was once Deputy Minister of Defence, but it was before this event.

CHAIRPERSON: What position was he holding at the time of the incident?

COL HONWANA: Gubuza had held a number of positions. I think - and at the time I must say that my perception at least was that his relationship with the President was very tense. There had been rumours that Gubuza was preparing a special force. I think his latest position had been that of Minister of Interior and there had been rumours that Gubuza was preparing a special force,

eventually with the aim of overthrowing President Samora Machel. As a result of that Gubuza was transferred from being the Minister of Interior to being - I can't recall the name but it was if I may say so, a very awkward designation. He was the Minister for something in the President's office. The Minister for - I don't know, Co-ordination of Economic Development or Co-ordination of Corporation, something like that which was basically which meant nothing.

And also in that period there had been meetings of Frelimo Polit Bureau, there had been meetings of Frelimo - specially the Polit Bureau, to discuss this whole issue around Gubuza. And according to what I recall there had been very tense exchanges between Gubuza and President Samora Machel.

So what I'm trying to say is that the rumour was that there was a great deal of tension between the two of them, and Gubuza was basically sidelined at the time.

My understanding at least - and I think this was shared by many of the people who were not particularly knowledgeable of the details - but my understanding was that he did not have a function consistent with his prior responsibilities within the structure of Frelimo.

MS TERREBLANCHE: Col Honwana, in August 1986 the South African Cabinet had a meeting where they say that their sources had told them that Machel had lost control over Mozambique.

Were there propaganda inside or at any way that you know of that could have led to such communiqué or would it have been propaganda inside South Africa?

COL HONWANA: Well, I think to a large extent it was propaganda. First of all because I mean it was not - the way I see it, it was not Machel having control over Mozambique. It was Frelimo having control over Mozambique.

Secondly there is a measure of truth in that, saying that Frelimo had no control over Mozambique, because of the event of the war. Because obviously we had no control over substantial parts of the country which were controlled by Renamo.

If you will, it is also true that there were tensions within Frelimo, which I think is nothing extraordinary, given the circumstances. There would be personality clashes, there would be other clashes; differences in approach to policy, differences in strategy, and so on and so forth. But that to my mind did not mean that Machel was threatened of being challenged from within. At least not openly.

That is my assessment. But you must understand that obviously I was not - as I am not now - in possession of all the details of the situation.

CHAIRPERSON: H'm. If just if I come to you, it is better to continue the original line of questioning, but if it was so that there were tensions between Gubuza and the late President, and if

we extend that and suggest that there may well have been a conspiracy with the South Africans for either President Machel, his government to be toppled, or for him to meet the fate that he did; do you know of any floating of that sort of theory, conspiracy theory that possibly did take place within Mozambique, especially after these events?

COL HONWANA: No, I don't really. Apart maybe from declarations made to the Presidents by - I'm trying to recall a name here - I can't remember. But this is an Italian national who lives in Mozambique I believe, who made some declarations to the Presidents to that effect, that there would have - I mean there was the connivance of some Mozambican officials, office bearers of very high rank in Mozambique with the South African authorities at the time, to topple or to cause this accident or somehow to change the political situation in Mozambique by removing President Machel.

So this is - but there was not much substance so it was not made public or I'm not aware of it, to that theory.

Now if you want my opinion, it would not surprise me. I mean it would not be the first time in the case of Mozambique. Those are things that happened in those kinds of situations. But obviously I could only speculate. I don't have any....

CHAIRPERSON: H'm. Ja. And lastly there was at the time of the crash a pronouncement that was made by Minister Pik Botha

who announced to the world that the South Africans had managed to pick up documents at the crash site which confirmed in his view that the Mozambicans were on the point of attacking Malawi. Are you aware of those pronouncements which were made by Min Pik Botha as he then was?

COL HONWANA: Yes, I'm aware of those pronouncements.

CHAIRPERSON: Ms Patta?

MS PATTA: I think you've answered the stuff about Malawi, but maybe just to continue about the generals. Were you aware of the late President Samora Machel having any plans to sack some of his generals on his return from the trip to Zambia? Obviously he died in the crash, so he never returned to Mozambique.

COL HONWANA: Yes. In fact I was present at a meeting, probably on the Thursday. I think the crash was on a Sunday evening. On the Thursday President Samora Machel called a meeting with the senior military command at his office in State House if I can call it that, in Maputo. At this meeting the President announced that General Mobote, who was then the Chief of General Staff, was being replaced by the then Lt General Armando Pangene who is currently the Mozambican High Commissioner to South Africa. The reason given was that General Mobote was to go to Cuba to further his military training.

Secondly the President had been conducting a series of visits to military units around Maputo and elsewhere in the country in the couple of weeks immediately before the crash. And in his intervention the whole point that he made was that he had been unaware first of all of the gravity of the military situation. He implied that he had been misled to believe that we, the armed forces, were much more in control of the situation than in fact was the case. And also through his recent visits to a number of military units, particularly I recall his visits to some air defence units around Maputo and his visits to an air force station in the north of Mozambique, in Nakala, where he presided over the -I don't know how do you call it in English, but the closure of the training course of one of our paratrooper battalions. At the time the paratroopers were under the air force command. And....

CHAIRPERSON: A sort of passing out parade?

COL HONWANA: Exactly. Passing out parade. So as a result of all these visits he said at this meeting he was convinced that we had what it took, or what was required to pursue a military victory in the war against Renamo. The problem was to place the right person in the right place. This was the emphasis of his - and this was the way in which he explained the changes that he was starting. He was initiating by removing General Mobote.

And I remember quite vividly the President saying that when I return - I am going to Zambia, when I return from Zambia

early next week we will continue this meeting because I want to announce further changes in this command structure of the armed forces. We need to place the right person in the right place.

And he was in other meetings in which I was present. I also recall the President saying that we have failed to trust our young cadre. We have trained people as military officers, as military experts in a variety of functions, but we have failed to employ them properly. And therefore we are suffering these results in the war. So what we have to do is to be bold; what we have to do is to have the courage and place the right people in the right places.

This was something that he was insisting on. So it is not speculation that - at least in his mind it was clear that what he had to do, was a major reshuffle of the command structure. And this was said at those meetings when I was present.

MS TERREBLANCHE: Mr Chair, may I ask something of a different nature? Col Honwana, this might be a bit painful for you, but it concerns your brother. We have had a look at some remains of intelligence communication of the Western powers at the time. They were basing their analysis of the documents found on the plane particularly on the diary and the documents found with your brother. At the time they were concluding that Mozambique was under the kind of spell of major Russian disinformation campaign in Southern Africa, and that they were

like the propagandas of the Russians. Now just in your opinion, do you think that your brother would have been the courier of such - or would there have been possibly another reason for him - if they are correct of course, and if the Western interpretation is correct, why there would be such documents with him?

COL HONWANA: Would you please just clarify the question? If my brother would have been the courier of the Russian propaganda campaign?

MS TERREBLANCHE: Yes. Do you think that your brother would have been, or can you think of any just possible reason or - you have known him closely, why he would have had this particular material with him?

COL HONWANA: You have to understand that my brother was the President's special assistant. But this was only one of his functions. My brother was the head of external intelligence of the Mozambican Security. And I know that he had contacts with Western intelligence agencies as well as intelligence agencies from the East. So he was involved in the intelligence game if I may call it so. I don't have the details of his involvement. Obviously he would not discuss what he did with me. So it does not surprise me that he would have documents of this nature because it was part of his functions.

MS TERREBLANCHE: It makes perfect sense, thank you.

CHAIRPERSON: Let me just assure you that the person who has just entered is a member of the Commission staff and therefore you can relax in his presence. Mr Alvin Brink.

COL HONWANA: Thank you very much for that.

CHAIRPERSON: Can you - Deborah?

MS PATTA: Yes. Just two more questions, on the Malawian hostilities, just to clarify. I mean I'm sure we're all aware, but this was well after the 1984 Nkomathi accord had been signed with South Africa and South Africa was accused of backing Renamo at the time.

And secondly, Armando Gubuza, am I correct in saying that he headed up or was involved in the commission of inquiry on the Mozambican side into the Samora Machel plane crash?

COL HONWANA: You are correct. He was the head of the national commission. In his capacity - exactly, now I recall. In his capacity as the Minister of Transport he was the head of that commission, yes. So I must correct, at the time my previous deposition about Gubuza's position, he had gone through that situation of being more or less in the wilderness - no, let me get my memory straight. No, no, no. At the time of the accident he was not the Minister of Transport. I think he was appointed the Minister of Transport by President Chissano after the crash. So my previous comments are correct that at the time of the accident

he was sidelined. And I apologise for this, but I'm just digging into my memory, I don't...

CHAIRPERSON: Yes.

COL HONWANA: So...

CHAIRPERSON: And to your knowledge, do you know if President Chissano was aware of the tensions between the late president and Armando Gubuza? I would assume he was aware. And do you think this was a deliberate shift in outlook which indicated possibly a disapproval - not a disapproval, that might be a strong word - not necessarily an inclination to follow the outlook of the late president in sidelining Gubuza? Because it seems he was making an effort, not only one to take him out of the wilderness, but also to place him in charge of a very tricky and I must say sensitive investigation. It's like asking a person who was known to be my enemy to investigate the circumstances of my death. Or don't you have any views on that?

COL HONWANA: I mean firstly to respond to your initial question, I think if I was aware of it, President Chissano was also aware of the tension between the late president and Gubuza. Everybody was aware.

Secondly it's very difficult really to respond to your question. But my sense is that probably at the time of a great loss the idea was to have everybody on board, even those members of the leadership who had been sidelined. I mean

everybody had to be on board, everybody had to be together what it meant to have lost President Samora Machel. So in that sense I think - and given the fact the Gobuza had been the Minister of the Interior, given the fact the prominence of Gobuza in the Polit Bureau, despite the fact that he was sidelined at the moment but he was a powerful figure.

It was maybe on the part of the new president a sign or signal that we are all together in this, and that we are trying to reduce the internal frictions in order to face a much more danger, a much more threatening situation, which is the loss of President Samora Machel and the need to guarantee a certain stability in the initial times of transition. But this is just my interpretation, obviously.

CHAIRPERSON: Now what - and now I'm asking you as a person who was in the armed forces, and particularly in the air forces. I know it's a topic that would possibly take you days on end to talk about, but what is your assessment of the South African response to the Nkomathi accord? Is it your view that when once it was signed they did everything in their power to stick by it, or did they immediately undermine it, and what in your view were indications that it was undermined? Because I think the overrunning of the military base and the discovery of documents which had been delivered by a Deputy Minister of

Foreign Affairs no less was a revelation to the world that some goings-on were taking place, notwithstanding the accord.

COL HONWANA: I think you have answered your own question, and I share your view completely. I mean there is no doubt in my mind - in hindsight now - that the South African authorities had no intention whatsoever to honour the Nkomathi accord. And I say this based is in the evidence of the documents, the famous Gorongosa I think of August '85 probably.

But having been involved in operations throughout that period, I mean we had almost on a weekly basis - if not on a daily basis - evidence of the continued South African involvement in supporting Renamo. So probably the biggest mistake that our leadership made at the time was to believe that the South African of that time were to be trusted. And we paid a very high price for that.

But I have no doubts whatsoever that there has never been intention to - it is not possible, it would have not been possible for example for the deputy minister Louis Nel to come to Gorongosa, to have the meetings that they had and the whole range of military personnel - and we're not talking about lieutenants or captains; we're talking about brigadiers, colonels - to come to Gorongosa, to do what they did and to say what they same, post Nkomathi without the agreement of the highest authority in this country.

CHAIRPERSON: Mr Magadhla?

MR MAGADHLA: Colonel, what would be your comment to a statement which says before leaving for Lusaka President Samora Machel organised a meeting with journalist, the party leadership and the military. He told them that he had received information that the South Africans wanted to kill him. He gave clear instructions what to do if he wouldn't come back.

COL HONWANA: I think those were separate meetings. As I said, I was present at the meeting that the President called with the military leadership. I am not aware of any other meeting with the military leadership outside of this one. And I believe that he had a meeting with journalists, separate from the meeting he had with us. I believe he had a meeting also with the party leadership of the Polit Bureau, and it's possible that he might have given instructions of what to do should he not come back. But I'm not aware of those instructions.

MR MAGADHLA: Ja. I'm asking the question in the wake of the attack itself as to whether immediately after the plane could not be accounted for, that perhaps steps were taken in accordance with his instructions. But I understand if you say that is one that got away, that you went in. You are unaware of. But there are also - there is also a statement which says that

"According to the Mozambican medical commission persons currently unknown interfered with bodies of six of the 35

who died when the aircraft smashed. Six of the bodies were found to have incisions already stitched up on the side of the neck. These incisions, about 7 cm long, were made with a sharp instrument on one or other side of the neck along the line of the sternocleidomastoid. The bodies affected were those of a Soviet crew member, President Machel's two Cuban doctors, two Mozambican stewardesses and of a functionary of a Mozambican foreign ministry. It was not possible to establish the precise times at which the incisions had been made."

Are you aware of that statement?

COL HONWANA: Yes, I am aware of that. I remember that issue being raised by the police sub-committee of the Mozambican national commission of inquiry.

MR MAGADHLA: I see also here it says that

"These cuts were not the cause of death. The South African Prof Nel advanced the theory that the cuts had been made to collect blood samples, but declared also that it was not normal procedure."

I see he says it was not normal procedure. I was just going to ask also that if the accident had taken place there and they had identified the plane as belonging to Mozambique and the passengers as well, would it have been proper for them to quickly start taking blood samples and things like that on the bodies

without having had communication with the Mozambicans, or having Mozambicans present at the scene at the time?

COL HONWANA: I think absolutely not, particularly in view of the plane it was and the passengers that were there. And in view of the tensions between South Africa and Mozambique. So I think it was way out of line to do what they did.

MR MAGADHLA: And seeing that it's being said and it has been said by many people that at the time there had been some military movement by the South Africans close to that place, close to the border at the time; if they - even if the plane had actually lost track on its own or for whatever reason - putting aside the question of the misleading beacon - wouldn't they have identified, wouldn't they have tracked or identified a foreign plane that was sort of that had lost track and got into their country? And if they had, wouldn't it have been the proper thing according to aviation treaties and things, have warned that plane that look, your plane has lost track or are you coming to South Africa or whatever the case would have been?

COL HONWANA: Absolutely. And I think if may make a suggestion, at the time what we knew or what we thought we knew, was that the South African Defence Force had the capacity through their systems of radar and all of that, they had the capacity to follow any flight departing from Maputo practically from the point of take-off. They had the technical capacity.

And similarly they had the capacity also to control and follow the incoming traffic into Maputo. And of course with much better reason they had the capacity to control every movement in their own air space, in the vicinity of the two hostile borders both with Mozambique and Zimbabwe. This is the knowledge I had at the time, and I believe this is correct.

So in that case I think it is reasonable to assume that the South African Defence and Security Forces indeed did track President Machel's flight. I think it is reasonable to assume that they saw the flight diverting from its normal path, going towards the crash site. And I also think that it's reasonable to assume, or to say that they failed all the basic norms and revelations of international aviation. Because they failed to warn the crew about the mistake which was being made.

Besides, the crew was in open communication with the Maputo air traffic control. So the South African authorities had access to - I mean the Maputo frequency is an open one; it's known. It comes in all international aviation documents. And they would know, so they could have intervened in the dialogue between the crew and the air traffic control when it was clear that the crew was confused as to where the plane was. They could have intervened and they could have directed the plane to Maputo.

MR MAGADHLA: Yes. Thank you for that. And to your knowledge, did they ever give an explanation as to a nine hour delay in letting or informing the Mozambicans of the crash and the deaths of the passengers?

COL HONWANA: To my knowledge it was never clarified.

MR MAGADHLA: Are you aware of if perhaps that question was posed to them and as to what response they gave?

COL HONWANA: I am not aware that the question was posed to them. I know that we solicited our own security services to pose that question. We as a technical committee. And the response that we got was that they were never informed by the South Africans. So I assume that the question was posed by the Mozambican authorities.

MR MAGADHLA: Now the documents that Pik Botha spoke about as having been retrieved from some of the people who were dead at the scene, were they ever handed back or made available to Mozambique or did they keep them as property of their own?

COL HONWANA: I don't know. I don't know the position.

MR MAGADHLA: Now there has been reports that before this incident there had been attempts on the president's life in the form of attacks made on his palaces by South African forces. Perhaps they themselves may have not known that these were South African forces, but there is information and there are

reports that there were several attempts made at these palaces.

Are you aware of that?

COL HONWANA: I'm not aware of any such an attempt. And although I may understand that maybe the security forces would want to keep those things secret, I find it very strange that I wouldn't know of it. And I'm not aware of any such attempt. Either by South African security forces or any other security forces, specifically in the president's palaces and all that. I'm not aware of it.

MR MAGADHLA: Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON: Any other questions?

MS PATTA: Yes, I just have one question for you Col Honwana about the regulations regarding the arrival of the presidential plane from the Mozambican side. Do you know what those are, and were those practised on the night? For example the military radar on the Mozambican side or some radar would have had to have been on; there should have been four ground crew people; those kinds of things.

COL HONWANA: There were no such thing as regulations. And the president's flight was treated as a civilian flight. It was operated - I mean the plane itself was operated as you know by a Soviet crew, but everything concerning the air traffic control, et cetera was dealt with by the president's security, the ministry of security and civil aviation authorities.

This had been an issue that we as air force had discussed with some of our colleagues, wanting to have more say in the organisation of such flights. But it was decided that it was a matter of security and the security and civil aviation would take care of that.

Now besides that, if I may make a comment on the actual flight and on the accident, I think it is important to try and understand why would the crew take the risk that they took, even considering that they were not - they would not come to Ntumbuzini in terms of the fuel. The quantity of fuel that remained in the aeroplane.

Even if the flight had been successfully completed in Maputo, they would have arrived - how can I put it - with fuel far under what would be deemed safe. In other words in any normal flight when you calculate your flight you have to make sure that you have enough fuel to come to your airport of destiny, to be able to hold for whatever reason - there is some obstacle in the runway - to hold for a given period of time; minimum 20 minutes or 40 minutes - and to have enough fuel to fly to an alternative air field.

Clearly in this case the crew didn't have enough fuel to do that. And they obviously knew it, because they knew the fuel consumption features of the aeroplane; they knew the distance. So they knew that they didn't have enough fuel to do that.

Now I knew the captain and all members of that crew. I had worked with them for years. And I knew them as professionals. I had flown with them in that very aeroplane a number of times. And all I can say is that their behaviour in that particular flight was absolutely uncharacteristic in terms of their technical behaviour, as professional flyers.

MR MAGADHLA: Why do you think that this was so?

COL HONWANA: I have no explanation for this.

MR MAGADHLA: If there could be information or talk which says that on the evening prior to the crash there had been a group of South Africans or South African officials, high-ranking officials who had been at a camp or some sport close to the scene and sort of awaiting the happening; and amongst them there were Mozambicans who would perhaps be people who were from Frelimo as opposed to Renamo, but who were there with these people, what would be your comment to that? Would it be a thing that the Mozambican also have heard of or suspected to have happened? Or would there have been people that disappeared after that to say maybe people who would have crossed over to South Africa or whatever and did not return to their positions prior to the happening?

COL HONWANA: At the time it did not cross my mind that - to look at that possibility, at the time when I was involved in this investigation. Later, in the light of the conspiracy theories if you

will - and even now - I mean it doesn't surprise me that such a thing could have happened. Because I mean if there was South African involvement in creating the conditions for this accident to happen, certainly to my mind they would have to have some kind of support inside Mozambique. Some kind of at least inside information about the movements of the president, the details of the flight, et cetera, et cetera. The positions, the state of say air traffic control.

And we have to make here a fine difference. I mean we talk about air traffic control when we're talking about the Mozambican tower. But in fact it is an air flight information service. I think up to this day the civil aviation authorities in Mozambique, do not have the necessary equipment to be graded as an air traffic control site. What they do is to provide information. Flight information service; I don't know exactly the civilian name, but it's an information service which is different from a control service.

So for example, if you're flying under a control service, if the tower tells you to construct for example your landing manoeuvre in a certain way, that's what you have to do. It's mandatory. While an information service will say well, this is the wind, these are the conditions, you should make your turn to the left. But the captain says well, if the right is clear, I prefer to do

the right and they do this. So there's a slight difference in terms of the authority of the tower per se.

So Mozambique at the time it was a flight information service. Which is a fine technical detail, but I think it's relevant.

CHAIRPERSON: Ja. Well, I'm sure there possibly will be occasions during the course of our probing into this matter that will possibly require you to return, and if you don't mind, we'll give you due notice. But for the moment I think we should because of time constraints, thank you for having come and indicate to you that you are now released, but that we have found your testimony very valuable. And we would hope that it as well as other testimony that we will be getting in relation to this particular matter will be sufficient at least to throw this matter again back into the public domain, and that we should get hopefully the authorities both in Mozambique and in this country, to sanction a much more penetrating probe than certainly the Margo probe was.

I was keen to find out what the Mozambican investigation revealed. But then perhaps that is something for another day.

Do you have another witness Ms Terreblanche?

MS TERREBLANCHE: Yes, thank you Col Honwana. I agree that - I know that you're going overseas now, but we might be seeing Mrs Machel on the 23rd and we might want to - if you are back - to then test the other evidence we've had on your opinion.

COL HONWANA: 23rd of June?

MS TERREBLANCHE: Yes.

COL HONWANA: No, I won't be back.

MS TERREBLANCHE: Well, as soon as you're back we would like to just have another discussion with you.

COL HONWANA: I don't know if I can make this request; and probably it's unnecessary anyway but I just feel that I should make it. I would be very grateful if my name was not disclosed to the Presidents. Even the simple indication that there is a Mozambican former officer, for those who know me - you don't have many Mozambican former officers in Cape Town, so that is sufficient disclosure. I'll be very grateful if that didn't happen.

It's not because I fear for my safety or security. It's just because I don't want to have the Presidents calling me all the time and all those kinds of things. I'm retired.

MS TERREBLANCHE: No, you have our word. We have this far complied with it.

CHAIRPERSON: You are excused Mr Honwana.

COL HONWANA: Thank you very much.

WITNESS EXCUSED

MS TERREBLANCHE: Mr Chair, I am now calling somebody in terms of - we will now finish with the inquiry into the Helderberg with the next few witnesses. I'm calling a Mr Joseph Braisblatt.

CHAIRPERSON: Are you not intending to call any witnesses today in connection with this particular matter?

MS TERREBLANCHE: Yes, we are. However, the people from the Helderberg have been standing over and they need to get on flights this afternoon. But I do later today intend to continue with this matter. The reason we took Col Honwana was because he also needs to go overseas, and would have no other time. I have really tried to separate the two issues, but it has not logistically been possible.

CHAIRPERSON: I would hope that you have consulted with the engineers and the translators, for them to be able to separate the records when the transcripts are coming through.

MS TERREBLANCHE: Yes.

CHAIRPERSON: Very well then. Is it not time for us to take tea?

MS TERREBLANCHE: (Inaudible).

CHAIRPERSON: Who is that?

MS TERREBLANCHE: (Inaudible).

INAUDIBLE DISCUSSION ON ARRANGEMENTS FOLLOW