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LETTER DATED 11 OCTOBER 1962 FROM THE MINISTER FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS
OF THE REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA TO THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

I have the honour to refer to communications, both formal and informal, which passed between yourself and the Permanent Representative of South Africa to the United Nations concerning unconfirmed reports of the sale or disposal of aircraft by a firm in South Africa to Katanga.

This information was immediately communicated to the authorities in South Africa and a reply has now been received to the effect that neither Harvard nor Mustang aircraft have ever been included in the South African Register of Civil Aircraft. The South African Air Force are the sole owners and operators of Harvard aircraft in the Republic of South Africa. The Pretoria Light Plane Club near Pretoria undertook the modification of a limited number of Harvard aircraft of the South African Air Force which are used for training purposes. None of these or any of the other Harvard aircraft was ever sold or otherwise disposed of to any private firm or organization within or outside the Republic of South Africa nor to any other Government. Nor has the South African Government sold or otherwise disposed of any aircraft to Katanga.

The South African Air Force never possessed or operated any Mustang aircraft in South Africa nor were any of these aircraft imported or registered locally for private purposes. South Africa's No. 2 squadron during its operations in the Korean War was equipped with Mustang aircraft, but those were resold to the United States Government in Korea.

The South African authorities are also unaware of the movement of such aircraft through South Africa and are confident that it would be virtually impossible for such movement to take place without the knowledge of the Civil Aviation or Customs authorities.

As far as the report about the three Piper Comanche aircraft is concerned, it has been ascertained that three Piper Comanche and one Piper Tripacer aircraft, previously registered in South Africa, were exported to purchasers in the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland in the course of normal commercial transactions.

The South African Government has no knowledge of any negotiations that may have taken place in connexion with the sale of Belgian aircraft in Rwanda and Burundi to the Katangese authorities. In any case this is something over which the South African Government would have no control whatsoever.

It has been noted that the charges regarding alleged sale of aircraft to Katanga were released to the Press, and it is further stated that Mr. Gardiner's report would be submitted tomorrow (Friday) to your Congo Advisory Board.

On behalf of the South African Government I wish to lodge a protest that the report in question, which admittedly was based on "usually reliable sources", was published before the South African Government had been afforded sufficient opportunity to investigate the matter. There is the further fact that the publication of such unconfirmed reports place a Member State of the United Nations at a distinct disadvantage in a controversial matter before the Secretariat has made a serious attempt to substantiate the allegations.

You will have noticed that the report, as issued to the Press, has already been eagerly seized upon for an attack on South Africa in the United Nations.

In this connexion I am constrained to mention that the present allegations appear to be an attempt to revive the rumour of the offer of 40 Harvards by South Africa to Katanga, which, as you are aware, formed the subject of correspondence between our Permanent Representative and the Under-Secretary for Political Affairs during April of this year.

In view of the serious consequences flowing from the publication by the Secretariat of unconfirmed reports, my Government is obliged to request that a copy of this letter be circulated as an official document of the United Nations.

Accept, Sir, etc.

(Signed) Eric H. Louw
Foreign Minister, and
Chairman of the South
African Delegation

