



defence

Department:  
Defence  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

# MEDIA STATEMENT

Department of Defence  
(Defence Corporate Communication)  
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## STATEMENT BY DEPARTMENT OF DEFENCE: MEDIA STATEMENT ON DIVERSION OF DEPUTY PRESIDENT'S PLANE

Date of Release: 09 September 2009

Embargo: None

Cabinet was today briefed on the circumstances surrounding the diversion of the airplane in which Deputy President Kgalema Motlanthe was traveling to the Democratic Republic of Congo last week.

The Deputy President was returning from Libya on Monday 31 August 2009 where he was leading a South African delegation to the Special Session of the African Union Assembly. The flight departed Libya for a planned refueling stop in Bangui the Central African Republic. On approaching Bangui, the weather was overcast and the visibility was very low.

- The aircraft made three approaches to Bangui airport before diverting to Gbadolite in the Democratic Republic of Congo, the official alternative to Bangui on a flight planning based on 45 minute homing and holding.
- Gbadolite airport is a recognized airport and was the nearest suitable diversion airfield with the capacity to accommodate a DC9 aircraft.
- While the airport does not have runway lights and the pilots were unable to make radio contact with the ground control, the aircraft did not have sufficient fuel to continue to another airport. The pilots had to make a forced landing at Gbadolite.
- One of the rear tyres burst on landing. This did not impair the ability of the pilots to control the aircraft. The tyre was replaced on the ground by the aircraft engineer.
- There was no damage to the aircraft.

We wish to reiterate that at no point was the safety of the Deputy President and his delegation unduly compromised.

We wish to express the gratitude of the South African government to the Government of the Democratic Republic of Congo, MONUC, the people of Gbadolite, and the South African Embassy in the DRC for their assistance and cooperation.

We also wish to express appreciation to South African Airforce crew of the DC9 for their professional conduct throughout.

**Ends.**

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