

*Washington and London accused
of hindering investigation into
UN chief's plane crash in 1961*



United Nations, March 2 (RHC)-- Scholars have accused the United States and the United Kingdom of impeding a United Nations investigation into the 1961 airplane accident that resulted in the death of UN chief Dag Hammarskjöld.

Hammarskjöld, a Swedish national, was killed in a plane crash, which was allegedly taken down intentionally on September 18, 1961, while en route to mediate a ceasefire between UN peacekeepers in the Congo and separatists from the breakaway Congolese region of Katanga.

During a conference in London, attendees were briefed by Stephen Mathias, the UN assistant secretary general for legal affairs, on the latest developments in the investigation, which aims to obtain archived documentation from member states.

The attendees expressed concerns that both the U.S. and UK were delaying the transfer of potentially crucial information. "While Belgium, Sweden and Zimbabwe demonstrated serious efforts, the U.S. and UK responses were wholly inadequate and showed contempt for the UN inquiry," said the organizers of Thursday's conference, the Institute of Commonwealth Studies at the University of London and the Westminster United Nations Association.

"The most recent general assembly resolution to renew the investigation was co-sponsored by 142 UN member states out of 193 – but not by the US and the UK," said Susan Williams, a researcher whose 2011 book "Who Killed Hammarskjöld" contributed to the reopening of the UN inquiry.

Paul Boateng, the former UK high commissioner to South Africa, said: "The work must continue because it is part of a wider struggle to support democracy, the international rule of law, and the UN, all under increasing threat." "There must be no stone unturned to get at the truth. The suspected murder of a UN secretary general is a crime too grave to be obliterated by time."

The crash resulted in the death of 15 other passengers, and its first inquiry, which was carried out by Rhodesian authorities, concluded that the crash was the result of a pilot error, but the finding was controversial.

People who witnessed the crash on the ground had claimed that they saw another aircraft apart from the chief's. At that time, French and British intelligence officers were reported to be near Ndola, Northern Rhodesia (now Zambia), where the crash took place, while U.S. intelligence officers were monitoring communications from Cyprus and reported hearing communications consistent with the UN plane coming under fire.

Hammarskjöld was killed amid a contest for resources in Africa during the post-colonial era, during his last journey, he was en route to a clandestine gathering aimed at mediating an end to the civil conflict in the newly liberated Congo, a nation abundant in minerals and teetering on the edge of collapse.

In the year before, the eastern province of Katanga had declared independence in 1960. While being a major contributor to the country's economy, this region is renowned for its vast ore deposits, including uranium ore used in the atomic bomb, which was dropped on Hiroshima.

<https://www.radiohc.cu/en/noticias/internacionales/348746-washington-and-london-accused-of-hindering-investigation-into-un-chiefs-plane-crash-in-1961>



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