

Unofficial translation

Individual MP's parliamentary motion (Chr.Dem.)

Motion to the Riksdag

2025/26

by Gudrun Brunegård (Chr.Dem.)

Forensic Investigation of Deceased on Dag Hammarskjöld's Aircraft

Proposals for parliamentary decision

1. The Riksdag supports what has been stated in the motion about a forensic medical examination of the original material from the post-mortem of the deceased carried out and to give an accredited forensic laboratory the task to request the original X-ray pictures for examination and assessment of the ballistic samples, and announces this to the Government.
2. The Riksdag supports what has been stated in the motion about urging the Government to appoint a multi-disciplinary investigation in order to clarify which trade-offs the Swedish Government made in connection with the investigations in 1961-1962 concerning Dag Hammarskjöld's death, and announces this to the Government.
3. The Riksdag supports what has been stated in the motion that all relevant and available material unredacted should be put at the disposal of the investigation, as well as to the academy and the public, and announces this to the Government.
4. The Riksdag supports what has been stated in the motion that the Government should make a public apology to the surviving Swedish families regarding the attitudes of previous governments towards the cause of the crash, and announces this to the Government.

Motivation

Background

Around midnight between September 17th and 18th, 1961, sixty-four years ago, Secretary-General of the United Nations Dag Hammarskjöld perished in an aircraft incident, which caused the death of the other fifteen people on board: the Swedish Air Crew and Hammarskjöld's entourage. Of the perished, nine were Swedish citizens.

Three investigations were carried out from autumn 1961 to spring 1962 in order to clarify the cause of the crash: two North Rhodesian ones and one UN investigation. The latter was mainly based on information from the North Rhodesian investigations. In parallel with the three investigations, the Swedish Government, formed a Special Working Group in autumn 1961 to scrutinize all incoming information and report to the government.

Representatives of the colonial rule in Northern Rhodesia right after the crash spread preconceived statements that the aircraft had probably crashed due to the Swedish crew's alleged lack of experience in African conditions. This opinion was later pushed during the investigations. Other sources spoke about light phenomena in the air above the plane that could be interpreted as shelling, and of injuries on Hammarskjöld's head, which could be interpreted as shot wounds.

The UN Investigation was handed over in May 1962. The North Rhodesian investigations and the report of the Swedish Government's Special Working Group, which was handed over on the same day, assessed pilot error as the least unlikely cause to the crash. Unlike these, the UN investigation gave an open verdict; none of the hypotheses worked on could either be confirmed or refuted – neither technical error, external interference, internal interference or human error. The UN General Assembly

decided to close the investigation and reopen it if new information emerged which could explain the crash.

In 2014, the UN General Assembly decided to reopen the investigation. The Tanzanian judge, Mohamad Chande Othman, was appointed to chair the investigation. Mathias Mossberg was appointed by the Swedish Government in 2018 to examine the Swedish archives and hand over what was relevant to judge Othman. Already in his 2019 report, judge Othman concluded that some kind of external interference had caused the plane to crash. After that, the General Assembly has on three occasions, most recently in December 2024, decided to extend the investigation. All countries, with direct or indirect connection to the case, have been requested to open their archives and hand over all relevant information to the investigator. Great Britain and the U.S.A. have still not done so, despite the fact that there is likely to be abundant material, such as the radio traffic eavesdropped by American military planes at Ndola at the time.

The United Nations investigation is focusing on the crash which caused the Secretary-General, the UN employees and the Swedish citizens' deaths. The Swedish Government's Special Working Group, which was established in the autumn 1961, its work and why the opinion on what had happened shifted from February to May 1962, is, however, an internal Swedish concern. The Swedish investigator Mathias Mossberg notes in 2019 that the Swedish shift of opinion ought to have its own investigation.

During the exchange of lines in the debate of an interpellation in the Riksdag autumn 2020, the Swedish Foreign Minister Ann Linde admitted that it could not be excluded that there could have been diplomatic, commercial or Realpolitik reasons for the Government's actions during spring 1962. This assessment was shared by Foreign Minister Tobias Billström. In a reply to a letter from the so called Brunegård Group, consisting of undersigned, Archbishop Emeritus KG Hammar, Professor Henning Melber and Hans Kristian Simensen, the Foreign Minister wrote in July 2023 that it could not "be excluded that the political landscape of that time together with foreign and security policy considerations could have had an impact (...) on the report from 1962". Foreign Minister Billström further noted that through Othman's conclusions, the theory of pilot error was no longer the most likely cause of the crash.

In light of the conclusions in Mossberg's report, the Minister of Foreign Affairs assessed that there was little to indicate that Swedish archives still contain information of the kind that the Brunegård Group hopes to obtain answers to through a truth commission. He continued that 'the material available in the Swedish archives is for the public, including researchers and journalists, free to take part in and to analyse. I am also encouraging everybody interested to do so to throw light on the events'. If new findings were made in Swedish or other countries' archives, he could be willing to discuss the question again about a Swedish truth commission.

This possibility was appreciated. However, it still occurs that documents from the public archives are masked, in some cases documents that previously were shown unmasked. This makes it difficult to search for the truth. It is of great importance that all relevant archive material is handed out unmasked.

The current situation

In his continued investigations and comparisons of documents from various archives, Hans Kristian Simensen has presented several discrepancies between the Swedish material and other available sources to the rest of the Brunegård Group. That includes data from the autopsy protocol, which to some extent differs. In the original, Rhodesian autopsy report from autumn 1961, it is mentioned that three bullets were found in each of two of the bodies. Five of these bullets were extracted during post-mortem and were analysed. After forensic analysis they were assessed to have come from exploding ammunition boxes close to the victims, without any grooves, which would have pointed to the fact that they would have passed through a barrel of a gun.

The Swedish Government's Special Working Group commissioned the Swedish Medical Board in January 1962 to examine the complete autopsy report of the sixteen deceased, which had been carried out by three medical experts called in by the Rhodesian Government as experts. The Chairman of the Special Working Group, Chancellor of Justice Rudholm, requested through First Secretary Axel Edelstam that the autopsy report, as soon as possible, be examined and commented on by Swedish air- and forensic experts. Two Swedish experts, the Swedish Royal Board of Aviation's Aeromedical Assistant Dr Arne Frykholm, and Professor Nils Ringertz were commissioned by the Medical Board to examine the forensic report after post mortem.

In their report dated February 15, 1962, Ringertz and Frykholm reports to the Medical Board that bullets were found in three bodies: "In spite of the fact that all of the dead bodies found on the scene of the disaster were completely X-rayed, bullets were found only in the three named who could all, with great probability, be assumed to have been carrying ammunition on their bodies. The simultaneous presence of cartridges and percussion caps forced into the bodies in those cases where bullets were found is highly convincing evidence that the bullets penetrated as a result of the explosion of ammunition during the fire".

Professor Stewart Fleming, who manages the original documents from Dr Hugh Douglas Ross' archive at the University of Dundee, made in August 2024, after being requested by the Brunegård Group, second opinion based on the material he has at his disposal. Superficially located bullets, pointing in different directions, are found in the X-rays of two of the bodies. In these two bodies and in a third one, there are remains of exploded cartridge cases.

The autopsy protocol concerning Dag Hammarskjöld states no injuries on the skin of his head or neck. According to Professor Fleming, the X-rays confirm that there are no injuries to Hammarskjöld's cervical spine or skull bone. He sums up that there are no signs that any on board the plane were murdered after the crash. The cause of death for all of the deceased is linked to injuries caused in connection to the plane crash and the intense heat generated by the explosion. One exception is Sergeant Harold Julien, who was thrown out of the plane and died a couple of days later. Professor Fleming's assessment thus confirms the original Rhodesian one.

In July 2025, Professor Fleming replied to follow-up questions concerning details from the autopsy report. He wrote that the five bullets that were removed during post mortem were handed over to a named North Rhodesian police for ballistic evaluation. Each bullet was placed in a separate container, which was marked with from which body the bullet had been extracted, but not where in the body the bullet had been found. Professor Fleming further confirms that a photograph of an X-ray from one of the bodyguards' mid-thigh, which, according to the protocol, states showing a bullet, is missing in the investigation material published in the UN investigation. The missing X-ray is, however, preserved among the original documents.

Conclusions

It is of great importance to determine whether the not analysed bullet has the same calibre, 9 mm, as the other ones. Does it have a similar appearance to the five analysed bullets, which would indicate that it exploded without passing through the barrel of a gun, or could it have been fired from a weapon? Forensic experts should, according to assessments from experts, with whom the Brunegård Group have been in contact, have good possibilities to determine this from high-resolution original photos. In this context, it would also be of great value to have access to Dr Ross's complete notes from the post mortem. Under Scottish Law, the confidentiality of the journal information, including the original X-ray films, is however maintained for 100 years. Decisions on the release of documents may be made by Dundee University's legal experts, but, according to information, the X-rays are under patient confidentiality laws.

The Swedish Government owns the question about Dag Hammarskjöld's death. Therefore, a decision by the Swedish Government is necessary before a forensic examination of the ballistic samples can be done by an accredited forensic laboratory. After such a decision the original photos and all documentation of the post-mortem of the victims can be requested for forensic examination. It would also be most valuable if the bullets taken care of by the Rhodesian police could be recovered and analysed. Where they are kept, if they still exist, is currently not known.

But why were, according to information, only two out of three bullets removed from the body of Sergeant Hjelte at post mortem? And why does the autopsy report illustrate only two X-rays with bullets from Private Persson's body, and one X-ray is missing, which is still in the original material? Why does not the name of the North Rhodesian police officer who received the bullets after extraction, according to Dr Ross's notes, examined by Professor Fleming, correspond with the name of the North Rhodesian police officer who according to the official investigations was confided with the mission? And why do Dr Frykholm and Professor Ringertz report bullets in three bodies, when according to the autopsy report, bullets were found in two bodies? Why did not the Swedish Government's Special Working Group ask questions about this? And why did not Dr Frykholm and Professor Ringertz mention that during the post mortem of Private Persson, metal objects were also extracted and handed to the police for examination?

With these questions, together with the ambiguities, that Mathias Mossberg in 2019 described as the Swedish Government's 'shift' in opinion during spring 1962 about what had caused the plane crash, the need for a multidisciplinary investigation, as the undersigned has presented earlier, still remains. In such an investigation, the above-mentioned questions should be elucidated, and, above all, which reasons may be found out for the Swedish Government to adopt the final report of the Special Working Group's and thereby align with the North Rhodesian explanation model, thus disregarding the mutually consistent testimonies of the eye witnesses concerning various light phenomena and more than one aircraft in the air. Through this the Swedish Government became involved in the shameful blaming of the Swedish flight crew, something has tormented and haunted their surviving families for more than sixty years.

The surviving families of those perished on SE-BDY Albertina have lived through long suffering. The loss of a dear relative has been made worse through the historical burden of guilt, that the Swedish crew were responsible for the disaster. A public apology from the government would have great symbolic value for the surviving families. Given that the UN investigator, Judge Othman, already in 2019 found that some form of external influence caused the crash, there is no need to wait for the UN's final report.

Gudrun Brunegård (Chr.Dem.)