An interview used in "Attacking the Heart of Apartheid: The ANC's MK Special Operations Unit" (Penguin, 2025), Yunus Carrim

MK Special Operations Unit Project

Interviews

Muff Andersson

29 December 2019

Cape Town

Muff, can you tell me a bit about your background? Your personal details. To what extent, if at all, did your parents shape your political attitudes? What drew you into the political struggle?

I was born on Tristan de Cunha an island in the South Atlantic where my father was a meteorologist. My parents moved to what was then Bechuanaland, now Botswana, at independence.

My father was very deeply opposed to the National Party in South Africa because he had fought in the Second World War and he regarded the Nats as very much like the Nazis. So, my parents were very keen to move somewhere else. They were not activists; they were very much liberals. My mom worked in the office of the President of Botswana, Seretse Khama, and my dad set up a meteorological office for the Botswana government completely independent of South Africa – which until then had taken responsibility for Botswana. Dad also worked for the World Meteorological Organisation of the United Nations.

So, we were living in a non-racial society, but I was sent to school in Pretoria, to St Mary's DSG. And the difference between living in Botswana and schooling in South Africa had quite a big impact on me, and I think that's where I started to develop a political consciousness. The same with my brothers, Gavin and Neil who were at Pretoria Boys High. Gavin was proud of Peter Hain, who was two standards higher. We talked about these issues from quite an early age.

By the time I was in matric, Gavin was already starting to get involved with the trade union movement and that obviously influenced me. The next major influence came with my first job in South Africa – in the Wartenweiler library at the University of the Witwatersrand under Ilse Wilson, Bram Fischer's daughter. When Bram died in jail, the calm and dignified way Ilse and Tim, her husband, handled it had a profound influence on me.

I went into journalism in 1976 at the time of the Soweto uprisings and the year Gavin was banned for his trade union work. My very first major interview for which I was tested on a TV screen was with Percy Qoboza from the *World* on the Soweto uprisings. This all affected me.

I had been trained at the *Star* through the Argus Cadet course and then posted for my internship to the *Pretoria News*. In Pretoria as part of my training I covered events in the townships, heard court cases of the Black Consciousness Movement and read about the liberation of Mozambique. It was dramatic.

I then joined the *Sunday Times* and worked for Len Ashton on the feature's pages in the magazine section. There was a Black Consciousness guy called Enoch Duma, who was going into exile. We had long chats. And Ilse put me in touch with a doctor called Paul Davis, who introduced me to Ray Nkwe who ran a small unit I discovered was pro ANC, the Black Music Foundation (BMF). I was writing about music in my book *Music in the Mix* (Ravan Press 1981), looking at how black musicians were ripped off by the industry which walked off with the profits. BMF hoped to set up facilities for poor musicians to study music.

So they invited me to join them even though I was White. Ray Nkwe also led the People's Choirs in Soweto. BMF had regular meetings, often at my place because three of the members worked in the city and it was easier for them, but sometimes in Soweto. I was also doing work for an organisation called RAM, Rock against Management, which was raising money for the striking meat workers. People involved in this included Neil Coleman, Barbara Creecy and Lisa Seftel.

I was at my parents in Botswana in 1979 and, out of the blue, Wally Serote and Thami Mnyele came to see me. They knew about the BMF and RAM. After discussions they gave me pamphlets from Medu Art Ensemble, a cultural organisation, for the BMF and RAM. On another visit they recruited me and asked me to do some cultural and political work which involved taking ANC pamphlets into the country, which I did.

It was easy for me to go backwards and forwards to Botswana, and later they asked me to recruit people into an ANC unit, which I did. I was put in touch with Hannchen Koornhof, Patrick Fitzgerald's former wife to work with and I recruited a domestic worker from across the road to work with us in a unit, Gcina Mhlope. Today Gcina is a famous writer, actor and oral storyteller.
As it got closer to the Culture and Resistance Symposium (held in Gaborone in 1982), Thami and Wally wanted to start organising musicians and other cultural workers into structures.

I had left the *Sunday Times*, and gone to Capital Radio – but I got into trouble there for incessant coverage of the student uprisings and they asked me to leave. But Subry Govender in Durban asked me to front for him because he had been banned in a crackdown on progressive journalists, I'm talking 1980 and the bannings and house arrest followed in around 1981, and Subry couldn't run Press Trust of South Africa. So I went off and stayed with him and Thyna in Verulam. PG (Pravin Gordhan) was running the Durban Housing Action Committee so he asked me to teach young activists about media because I'd had this experience also with Smangaliso Mkhatshwa and Moss Chikane in Soshanguve and other townships.

Irwin Manoim started the journalist training project in Soshanguve and other townships and drew me and Liz McGregor, Keith Coleman and others into it. Young activists needed to write their own community newspapers and pamphlets.

Anyway, then Gavin got detained together with Neil Aggett (trade unionist killed in detention), Barbara Hogan (ANC underground activist who was imprisoned) and others. And I got this message from my mom in Botswana that I must 'come to the wedding'. This was 1981. It was a pre-arranged message with Wally to drop everything and go.

So, then I beetled off with an overnight bag to Botswana only to be told by Reg September (ANC leader) that I wasn't going back to South Africa. They put me up in a government flat and Mac (Maharaj, ANC leader and former Robben Islander) came to see me and said would I like to go and study or go for training. I said I'd like to go into the armed struggle as I thought I'd be more useful; I didn't think I'd be of any use to anybody if I went to study.

What degree did you have then?

I didn't have a degree, only matric. I got my MA and PhD after liberation. Back then I just had a journalism qualification from the Argus Cadet Course, which was later accepted as a degree through the South African Qualifications Framework.

But you chose the armed struggle – and it seems immediately. Why?

It wasn't just suddenly. I'd been working in the underground structure. I had previously asked structures there if I could go to MK - and they said I'd be more useful inside South Africa.

When they ask you to go to either armed struggle or education, that's a standard thing they do.

The people who went to study were those who became the bureaucrats in the new South Africa, they got the jobs, we all got nothing. At the time we weren't thinking about that. We were the militants. I was just deeply passionate about doing stuff; I mean I had really seen terrible things happening in the townships, so I was very anxious to assist.

I think I was very closely affected, we had had a lot of drama with the Security Police and working with Subry, Smangaliso, Moss, PG, and them - everybody there was in trouble, even RAM and the BMF. Wherever we were, it was very fraught. People were followed, threatened, arrested, detained, banned and house arrested. Killed. So, I was very politicised, very militant, it was the most logical next step to take up the armed struggle.

What about your above ground mass activities? Did you just feel you'd come to an end with that?

I'd already moved into the political underground and wasn't involved in any mass activities beyond what I've already said. The above-ground mass movement certainly didn't need a tadpole like me, there were huge initiatives on the ground, and no one even noticed I wasn't there since I was never an important activist anyway. I'd always made tiny contributions.

Muff Andersson, after 1994

So, your transition from the political underground to the armed struggle was an easier one to make?

Totally, even now I don't march in mass demonstrations.

So, what happens after you decide to join

They started basically with intelligence training to do with book codes so that I could start engaging with people from home. But Mac and Wally agreed I should continue to assist with the Culture and Resistance Symposium and I should read a paper I'd written on music at that Symposium before I went away for training in 1982 in Angola. I discovered later I was part of what is known as the Madinoge detachment who trained in those years. I didn't go into the open camps except for Funda where I did firearm training. Otherwise, I was based at an underground place called GM of which Johnny Sexwale was Commander. He told me that 'GM' stood for 'place of giants.'

In Angola I was trained by George, a Russian GRU Colonel in MCW (Military Combat Work) and several other South African comrades using only their MK names so I don't know their real names, in politics, firearms, topography, engineering, tactics and so on. George also trained us in Kung Fu. George was paranoid, he always thought he was going to get poisoned, and he later died, but I'm told not of poisoning.

Then the third set of training I had was later with Eleanor Kasrils and Tim Jenkins in London.

What happens after Angola?

When I went to Lusaka, I linked up with Reg September again, who debriefed me after my training, and straight after that Comrade Cassius Make (ANC Ordnance head assassinated on 9 July 1987 in Swaziland) came into my life and recruited me. The Revolutionary Council (RC) was replaced by separate military and political HQs. Cassius had been the deputy secretary of the RC.

He asked me to do special work within Ordnance structures for the use of Special Ops. I had to report directly to him and not to the Ordnance structures in Botswana. It involved setting up an unknown separate internal network.

Comrade Joe Jele (ANC NEC member), from the political structures, turned up at Billy and Yolisa Modises where I was staying. The ANC did not like poaching of comrades from one structure to another. He wanted the real names of the people I had recruited in the cultural structures so that someone else could take over managing them. I was vague as I had my eye on one or two of them for the military work Comrade Cassius had asked me to do.

Cassius had requested I seek out primarily White activists who could transport weapons across the borders to South Africa. White - because they were less likely to come under suspicion. And preferably women, because in his experience of clandestine work women were more loyal than men – which surprised me, since it was not my own experience.

Cassius had instructed that I never give out the names of these individuals to anyone, not even to him, and to only use code names.

As instructed, I set up this network as a parallel structure to the main Botswana Ordnance structure. Cassius showed me where the main ordnance stores were, and explained how to access them and through whom, in case anything should happen to the go-between assigned to me.

Cassius explained that the weapons in this parallel structure were for use by Special Ops, at that point headed by JS with whom he was a friend and close comrade. Cassius was also a proud communist, he never hid it. He was prepared to go the extra mile for Special Ops and trusted me enough to ask me not to give any details to the head of Ops, Comrade Lambert Moloi, who was served by the mainstream structure. The distinction, however, was not something operatives from home needed to know so they were never told.

Cassius said he expected I would be visited by Comrade Moloi if their structures were not doing well with ordnance. Cassius said he might hand over a map or two to Comrade Moloi, but I should not under any circumstances give details to Comrade Moloi about our operatives. A difficult request, he knew, but Comrade Cassius was a cautious man. Hence whenever Comrade Moloi arrived and asked questions, I had to fudge them. Comrade Moloi's visits were awkward.

Although weapons for both structures came from the central Ordnance stores in Gaborone, they were never moved directly from the stores to the place where we packed them into the car of the transporter. In this way there was a cut-out between the operatives I worked with and the mainstream ordnance comrades.

This was a principle that I continued to observe throughout my work with Cassius. It meant that when I had to leave Botswana in 1985 the network was intact and we could use some of the comrades for a bigger project.

In Botswana I ordered the hardware from the go-between that I needed to send through. Comrade Cassius always told me exactly what he needed and where. I would make the arrangements, fix the cars with the internal comrades and later provide Cassius with the maps of the DLBs (dead letter boxes) inside the country. These went directly into his hands.

Comrade Cassius insisted that the go-between was not to meet any of the internal operatives. When I was not able to doctor a car – in other words, load it with weapons - myself with the internal operatives because it was a particularly difficult load, we had to change the number plate before involving the go-between and anyone else he might bring to help him and give incorrect dates of when the comrades were leaving. Again, orders from Comrade Cassius.

I stuck to them and all the operatives were safe. We had no casualties.

How would you keep in touch with Comrade Make?

Comrade Cassius came to see me at least once a month or asked me to come through to Lusaka to see him. He liked to meet early in the morning, often around 6, when there was no one around, and usually in open spaces. He always contacted me directly, not through third parties except sometimes he would send a message through Wally Serote that he was coming. Mostly he would prearrange a meeting date and place but would always meet me somewhere else while I was walking to the meeting and steer me off from there.

If I had to go through to see him in Lusaka, he gave me cash in advance to buy a plane ticket and he would pick me up and arrange accommodation for me. I usually stayed with Claire Bless or Billy and Yolisa Modise.

He was the most security-conscious person I have ever worked with and I learnt an enormous amount from him.

At a later stage during a period of alerts he stayed with me and my fiancée in an industrial area, not a fully residential area, which he had insisted we move to prior to the raid.

Comrade Cassius did not like written reports, which he felt could easily be intercepted. Unlike any of the senior people I had worked with in the movement, Comrade Cassius was not interested in meeting my contacts except once when we decided to send two for some further training in the GDR and we weren't quite sure about one of them - but they did not know who he was.

In 1984 I was arrested at a safe house in Gaborone at which I was staying.

Why?

I don't know who informed on me. Someone had clearly gone to the police because quite a few plain-clothes police were waiting when I arrived and later, as it turned out, the Botswana government put pressure on ANC political structures to flush out MK activists.

A comrade named Cyprian unfortunately failed to fully clear the backroom I was renting on another property after I had sent him a message through my brother Gavin from police cells to do so. Under the bed was a box with 700 AK bullets. So, I was charged with weapons of war and the pistol which they found on me when they arrested me in the first house.

Comrade Thabo Mbeki was in town and instructed me, through Wally Serote from political structures, to plead guilty to the charges, which I did. As it was

just after the Nkomati Accord, Comrade Mbeki felt that he had to show that the ANC was not co-operating with MK people.

But Rashid (real name: Aboobaker Ismail) marched in after a couple of weeks and said he had a message from MHQ. It was, you're MK, answerable to MHQ, and not political structures. Rashid said my instructions from MHQ were that I should change my plea to not guilty.

How long were you in prison? What was it like?

One month. After that I was allowed to move in with my parents but had to report to the police once a week until the trial finished the following year. The worst part of the arrest was the police cells, but the prison was fine. There were the usual difficulties, including no hot water and being lined up at four in the morning naked to shower.

There was just nothing to do. There were thieves and sex workers in the cell, and an Indian woman there who was a mandrax smuggler. I was seen as the most dangerous prisoner (laughter). They used to sing hymns all the time and have church services, but I was an atheist. I learnt quite a bit of Setswana there.

I got incredibly involved with the women, discussing their lives, their lack of income and other things. I tried to get books for us to read. They were saying why don't you have a baby. They had come in with their babies.

My dad came every day to see me with homemade soup - because as I was an awaiting trial prisoner, I could have a visitor. And he bought me an alcoholic cocktail disguised as orange juice in which he put like a very strong Tequila or Vodka so that by four o'clock when they locked us up, I was a bit tipsy, and that helped me. So, I looked forward to that drink.

So, what happens about your legal case?

Rashid had become Commander of Special Ops and was in contact with my lawyer, Rahim Khan. Rashid said MK would get me a lawyer. Things changed rapidly. Rahim changed my plea. George Bizos breezed into town. He was paid by IDAF (International Defence and Aid Fund) at MK's request. It was a tough trial that went on for a year but Bizos got me off the weapons of war which had carried a fourteen-year sentence with no option of a fine. I was fined for the pistol.

One month after the trial had ended in 1985, at which time I was living with my fiancee in the industrial site, the backroom where I used to stay and where

the weapons were found became a target in the Gaborone raid. The young conscientious objector who moved in there against my advice since the address had been given in my court case, Mike Hamlyn, was killed.

As a result of a sensational *Sunday Times* story suggesting I worked for a KGB front, the Botswana government declared me a prohibited immigrant and gave me 24 hours to leave. My name was published in the government gazette along with a list of alleged Russian spies.

I went to Zambia, was met by Comrade Cassius with Comrade Slovo who said jokingly, 'welcome to the KGB', since he was also always accused of being in the KGB by the regime (laughter).

So how do you get involved in the Safari truck operation? (This was a truck taking safari tourists from Lusaka to South Africa that transported large amounts of arms hidden in secret compartments, unbeknown to the tourists. A documentary on this, 'The Secret Safari,' can be viewed at https://youtu.be/foqURw31gmc)

Cassius explained he was sending me to London for a special project that involved sending large amounts of weapons into the country on a very big truck. He said the people working on the project ranged from good and trusted SACP party comrades to imaginative ANC ones, but none was in MK structures or working under discipline. I would be the link to Lusaka and responsible for the internal component. He explained that he wanted to ensure the project was coordinated directly by MHQ.

He was responsible for the operation but would consult with JS and OR as it was a special project. There was to be no question about MHQ running the operation with Cassius as Commander. It had to be run according to the security standards we had been working with from Botswana to ensure no casualties.

He said the ANC would not allow me to take my fiancée, Calvin Khan (Riaz Saloojee) with me. It was movement policy that people had to be married if they travelled together at movement expense.

Cal followed me from Botswana and we married in Lusaka. He too was from MK though working with . He came from a family actively involved in struggle; his father, Cassim Saloojee, was Transvaal Indian Congress president and a founder member of the UDF.

Mac Maharaj was Cal's witness for the court ceremony and Cassius was mine. So, we have an historic wedding certificate. Cassius organised the entire

marriage. Normally there was a 21-day delay but he applied for a special marriage licence. He also organised rings. Cassius made us sign in our own names rather than our MK names so that the marriage was legitimate. Joe Slovo was the master of ceremonies at a small party in Mandla Langa and Ilva Mckay's flat.

When he sent me to London, Cassius bought me a word processor, a very early version of a computer, you could save info on disks. This was for a book of short stories I was supposed to be writing, which was my cover in London. I did not keep notes of my work and had to retain them in my head. We were received in London by Aziz Pahad, who became a close friend and godfather to our child when he was born.

At Liliesleaf Farm in Johannesburg you will see a Bedford truck on display in an area of the exhibition marked London Recruits. Actually, London Recruits was Ronnie's project from a different and earlier era, nothing to do with this truck.

Outside of having some drivers recruited in England and an office in Greenwich through which unwitting tourists bought their tickets, and the planning committee in London – The London Traders on which two trained MK members sat – the safari operation is not a 'London' or 'White' story. it was commanded from Lusaka by black comrades, Cassius Make and later Rashid. From 1990 the trips were run from Johannesburg, mainly to make arms available for SDUs (Self-Defence Units).

The story is complex. It involved individuals who participated in the operation in London, Lusaka, Zimbabwe, Botswana and South Africa.

Comrade Rodney Wilkinson, after doing the Koeberg operation under the careful supervision of Comrade Rashid, had been sent to London by Comrade Mac to get far away from the action. He and Comrade Aziz dreamt up various schemes to deliver large scale supplies of weapons to South Africa. Rodney came up with an ingenious idea for a converted truck.

Joe Slovo introduced Rodney to Mannie Brown and Laurence Harris. Mannie was an old trusted activist and frequently helped the ANC and SACP raise and launder money and was a friend of Joe Slovo's. Laurence Harris was a leading British socialist economist, had done underground work for the ANC, and was also a friend of JS's. Aziz was beginning to get embroiled in 'talks about talks' with Thabo Mbeki and he could not afford to be involved with a military project.

Mannie, Laurence and Rodney continued their discussions and Rodney drafted designs for a converted Bedford to carry weapons to South Africa. At that point Mannie reported on their discussions to Aziz.

Although the idea to set up a tourist company was in place, the op wasn't practical – none of the team had either links to supplies of weapons in Africa or structures in place in South Africa to deliver the weapons to. This was why Cassius had sent me to London to be the link to MHQ. I was supposed to deal with the nitty gritty, link the truck to MK operatives and sort out the internal leg of the operation. I was to travel to Zambia at least once a month.

The first meeting I went to was at Mannie Brown's house around September 1985 where I met Rodney and Laurence as well. Mannie seemed ill-prepared for me. Whereas I had been fully briefed about the operation and what I must do, they had been told little about me except that someone was coming to join the group.

I was puzzled by a slightly aggressive Mannie, who, holding a whisky, asked questions like, 'So, what is your purpose here?' I tried to remain calm. I asked if Aziz had not mentioned I was coming and that I'd been sent by Cassius Make from MHQ. Mannie said he had not heard of Cassius or MHQ. He looked me up and down. He invited me in. The others were friendly but Mannie clearly had a bee in his bonnet.

It turned out that although Aziz had told them I was coming Mannie had subsequently seen that press clipping from the *Sunday Times* about me working for a KGB front in Botswana, and I looked like too much of a bimbo to be able to contribute any wisdom in Mannie's view. This he told me later to our amusement. Obviously, Aziz clarified the situation.

The London Traders held lively meetings when we got going. Although Comrade Mannie was initially unsettled about working with a young comrade he soon went into Dad-mode, providing supper and buying bags of groceries since Cal and I were poor, and we were disciplined about working under an MK command structure with Cassius at the helm. Mannie hosted us at his house and usually cooked us a meal. We laughed a lot.

Rodney, besides being the mastermind of the truck, was a sweetheart to work with. He worked on the truck and built compartments for the weapons accessible only when the seats were dismantled from inside, whereas the luggage was accessible from the outside of the Bedford. Rodney was struggling with the size of the compartments. Cal had expert knowledge of weaponry. We poached him from Mac's structures, with Mac's permission, and brought him on board to deal with the Lusaka and regional legs of the operation.

With Calvin on board, The London Traders – as we were known – settled into more rigorous discussions about how to get the truck to Africa and launch the tourism venture based in Greenwich. He was certainly the person with the most military knowledge in the team. Laurence played the role of, whether he knew it or not, our Commissar, and steered the political discussions whenever the team swerved off track.

Cal fine-tuned the size of the compartments with Rodney so that custom-made boxes containing AK's, limpets and grenades could be slotted neatly into the compartments. The idea was that a package of hardware would be fitted into each box and then the entire box itself could be buried in a DLB at home.

Laurence took care of much of the early recruiting of personnel and drivers; and Mannie the business side in London – he was a genius at business. The business, registered in Greenwich, was staffed by British comrades Jenny Harris and Heather Newham though the nature of the project was not fully disclosed to them.

My task was recruiting and training activists to receive, store and distribute the weaponry inside the country.

Cal and I shared the training of these comrades – I was responsible for all aspects of the receipt and transport of the weapons and dealing with general living, surveillance and counter-surveillance; while Cal trained them in the more difficult tasks of how to conceal very large amounts of weapons – a ton at a time - in their homes. I maintained contact with the comrades.

Shortly after I gave birth and was breastfeeding, Cal took over my travel, going to Lusaka to brief Cassius, sorting out the issues of the loading of materiel in Lusaka, and meeting comrades in the forward areas on my behalf. Besides talking about the overall progress of each aspect of the project, Cal and I did not share the information that others did not need to know relating to the Africa and internal operations. Nothing military actually happened in London except for discussions, the ordnance side was in South Africa.

We did discuss, as a group, the typical, though never specific, signs and signals that we would use internally for comrades to identify the loaded vehicles, as well as the typical pitfalls that we would have to overcome internally.

I did not want direct contact between the drivers of the truck and internal operatives receiving the materiel because it would put both the drivers and the internal operatives at risk. We agreed the drivers of the truck would hire a closed bakkie – a small van – then load it with arms from the truck and leave it

somewhere, like a busy parking lot, for the internal operatives to pick up. However, how to hand over the keys without either side seeing the other? Mannie was helpful following these discussions.

He went shopping and located a beautiful magnet box strong enough to stick under the driver's side of the car. The drivers of the truck could then place the closed bakkie at a pre-arranged spot, beetle off to get the truck serviced, while the internal operative took the closed bakkie to be unloaded at the safe house that had been doctored to house the hardware. The operative would then return the car, put the keys back in the magnetic box and leave. In due course the drivers would return to collect the closed bakkie and leave.

The Safari Truck, now at the Liliesleaf Farm Museum in Johannesburg

How would the internal operatives identify the bakkie? How would you communicate with them?

Because the closed bakkie or van would never be the same, it had to be identified by a sticker on the windscreen and a toy hanging from the mirror. The sticker might say, 'Jesus saves and the toy might be a fluffy pink dog. I would have shown both earlier to the internal operatives but not to The London Traders, and they would only be given to the drivers of the van later.

Since we did not have cellphones or computers in those days, I communicated with each operative through a separate book code if there was a need to send detailed instructions or on postcards giving the dates and places of pickups if we had already made pre-arrangements. With each operative the times and dates were not as they appeared to be. With James Garraway, for example, besides the book codes there was a system in which everything was three before. Hence 12th meant the 9th, September meant June, 6pm meant 3pm. It meant the event had happened by the date or the time and there was a way to check if anyone was being followed.

The postcards themselves meant specific things for operatives – all prearranged messages. People in the pictures could mean dividing up the items in the boxes into smaller DLBs, mountains could mean burying the whole box, forests urgency, and so on.

Cal and I never went to the Africa Hinterland company near Greenwich in London even though we lived close by, and nor did we have the inclination to,

in case it had come under some sort of scrutiny and we were spotted. We regarded this as the open part of the operation.

Where we were unable to bring a comrade to London for up-to-date briefings and refresher training too often, because it would raise suspicion, I communicated with them in their own book code. In those days you could send this in tins, toothpaste tubes, boxes of biscuits, and even written on clothes lining and ironed into the hem of an item of clothing sent as a gift.

I brought Jenny Evans to London and trained her to take over my role in Botswana. She did a fantastic job and was a brave and amazing commander expanding the work in Botswana. James Garraway was another who came to London. All the Canadian comrades came to London.

In the case of a comrade that was in the Dolphins unit, it seems he and the comrade he worked with used to find the key under the mat inside the car?

For sure in some cases the car may have been left open. In some circumstances comrades had a problem with the magnet box and drivers changed the arrangements slightly.

Also, with Rashid the trips were running internally by then, the Hinterland office had moved to Joburg in 1990. Instead of a six-week trip with tourists coming in from Kenya, and weapons being loaded in Zambia, it was a two-week trip. Menno Schroeder ran the show from Joburg and drove the truck. The weapons were now loaded in Bulawayo.

Towards the end there were some odd things happening, unexpected things, and comrades had to improvise. Like Martha Gordon, one of the key operatives in Joburg, was telling us about going to fetch a van and finding police there and she just walked straight passed it.

Okay. Anything else about how the Safari truck operated?

Well, Laurence and I did some of the counter-surveillance training of drivers and that too was not shared with other members. Rodney also trained one of the drivers.

Rodney had been through a lot of stress with Koeberg and nobody gave the guy any support afterwards. Typical of the ANC. You are just supposed to go on with your life after such a massive event, as if nothing has happened!

Anyway, he was a hero and a great comrade, we all loved him, but one day he lost a briefcase. Of necessity we decided he needed time off – a sad decision since he was a popular figure and, of course, the designer of the Bedford.

Also, I remember Cassius was also prepared to travel to see Cal and me in London. We didn't always have to go to Lusaka for him to get a briefing about the truck. I remember him coming to London during the freezing winter of 1985 to meet us on a street corner. In his typical style, he didn't want to go into any room for a meeting, not even a pub. When Cal and I met him, he was shivering in his shirt sleeves. His arms were covered in goosebumps from the cold but nothing took away the smile from his face or the shine from his eyes. He was a really inspiring man; someone I would do anything for.

At times when he was in London JS too would meet with Cal and I but he always spoke about general matters, how we were getting along, if we had any problems; he would talk to us about political developments and ask if the work with the team was going well but he never asked for operational details of the truck or interfered with Cassius's line of command. He gave us little gifts, like badges from the Soviet Union and of Marx and Lenin.

When exactly did the Safari truck start operating?

The truck was shipped to Africa in December 1986 and trips started two months later. The first was a dry run, since we had information that the border police had been tipped off about a truck with orange signage approaching the border with arms. This was from a company called Truck Africa. If Truck Africa was an overland tour company operating at the same time as we were, then information had obviously leaked.

We did the trip without arms so that our truck could be searched and cleared. We know from our security at the border that the other truck was searched, and ours was not. After that we were safe until 1993, bringing in 60 tons of hardware.

Thereafter we continued with our trips every six weeks without any problems, taking one ton of hardware into South Africa each time.

The unsuspecting tourists would book through the tourist company Africa Hinterland in Greenwich, fly to Kenya and board the Bedford which would then wend its way to South Africa via Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe. It would stop in Zambia for servicing and while tourists visited Lusaka, MK comrades would fill the hidden empty compartments.

Who were some of the key comrades involved?

Those who loaded the arms included Benno Smith, who we called Ronald, who really knew his stuff, and also Winston, a Commander in the structure from Botswana. Chips (Govind Chiba) was also part of the Lusaka network.

The first drivers, from 1986 to 1993, were Mike Harris and Jo Lewis. Stuart Round did this from 1986 to 1991. Menno Schroeder was the final comrade for the internal office up to 1993.

On a regional level in Zimbabwe were John Spyropolous and Sue Godt, and Winston, his wife Milly and Jenny Evans in Botswana. There was a much wider team of people assisting with cars and storage; there were Ordnance supplies and so on, but I'm naming the people who were directly involved from the outset.

Internally some of the first major recipients, storers of the hardware and creators of smaller DLBs were Martha Gordon in Gauteng and James Garraway and Lee Hobbs in the Cape. Later Andrea Meeson came to Gauteng and we moved Nigel to the Cape.

But obviously that team grew and grew. By the time we were arming the SDUs Chris Hani and Ronnie were on the ground. Cal and I helped Jeff Radebe arm units in KZN; the Cape Town machinery was in full swing; Ronnie also had some Vula people on the ground; Rashid had Special Ops comrades like Robert McBride working on the ground. It was massive.

How would you recruit them?

Well, different ways. It depended on who they were. When we were in England, we went to Canada to recruit people. We recruited one person from France, several people from Canada. We used a lot of Canadians because the apartheid security wouldn't be suspicious of them.

But there were a lot of South Africans as well. As I said, we mainly stuck to the brief of getting white people, but we also got a few Indians in.

Sometimes I tried to find people who were keeping secrets about something else, maybe they weren't out of the closet, but they wanted to do something for the struggle and appreciated being approached, or they were hopelessly introverted, or intellectual, and couldn't bear the thought of sitting in public meetings of any sort. People who didn't have high political profiles. I was particularly good at converting left liberals into militants. Discussing endlessly with them.

How many people do you think you recruited overall?

Over the years, about 20 to 25.

What were some of your challenges?

Our major problems were security problems internally – ensuring people had proper covers for their work with us; helping them to overcome their problems in setting up the places in which they would store the weapons, and then, of course, burying the boxes. That was a major security risk since it involved driving out with an exposed box.

Our lesser problem was that the anti-Apartheid movement would oppose tours like "Africa Hinterland" going into South Africa.

Right at the end of the operation, in August 1991, when the Greenwich office closed up because the Joburg office had opened in 1990, a creep called Scott Singleton who had an office in the same building as Africa Hinterland phoned up a teenager named Lynne Rogers, offering her a job. He pretended he was a big chief in Africa Hinterland. When she came to his office, he strangled her. Scotland Yard came to the Africa Hinterland offices to investigate and asked Heather if she knew this Scott man. She didn't obviously. She told the cops the office was closing down. The police sniffed around before searching nearby offices. Well, they caught Singleton and jailed him but just imagine if they had snooped further.

However, there was never a single casualty, a single arrest, between 1986-1993.

With the assassination of Comrade Cassius in 1987, which absolutely devastated us, Comrade Rashid was made head of Ordnance.

Cal and I were moved to Zimbabwe. Cal become regional commander of the internal ordnance structures there. When we were there, working under Rashid as head of Ordnance, he still had his hand in Special Ops. One of the Special Ops tasks Cal and I did for Rashid from within Ordnance structures in Zimbabwe was train Rafiq Rohan for his work in bombing the Natal command; so, there was always that overlap.

Cal was then moved to Zambia as a deputy to Rashid with Ronald. In 1989 I took over from Cal as Regional Commander of internal ordnance structures – Moss George Sibanda was external commander. There were now many other projects besides Laaitie, as the truck was known under Rashid, and it was running well. Rashid empowered a young regionally based command structure,

expanded the operation, set up a quick turnaround time for the trip with a two-week safari and a South African office. The Greenwich office started to wind down.

Rashid was every bit as cautious as Cassius. The only difference was that he wanted to know who the operatives were and he and Ronald, who doctored the cars, dealt with some personally, which had never happened with Cassius. Comrade Cassius, when he was alive, got the maps and details but neither Cassius nor JS ever knew or asked for the details of the operatives. Until then no one else on the operation knew the details of the operatives except me and Calvin.

All the acts of bravery in relation to the project took place on African soil. After 1990 the project armed of SDU's internally. Chris Hani and Ronnie Kasrils were deeply involved, with Madiba's knowledge.

So, when did you stop with the Safari truck operations?

Instead of closing up in 1991 at cut-off date, the operation had to continue because of the IFP and state attacks on communities. The truck officially wound down after the Pretoria Minute but we stopped distributing weapons in 1993.

Would you regard yourself as having been a Special Ops operative or not?

No. I assisted with ordnance for Special Ops, with a special project for Special Ops, but I was not in Special Ops per se, and sometimes our work overlapped with that of Special Ops, as I explained. Comrade Cassius worked closely with JS, and some of the projects were Special Projects for Special Ops, and JS and Cassius were in on the truck together, so it was clearly conceived of in that vein.

What did you understand Special Ops role to be?

Its operations were distinct from normal MK operations, they were very well planned and big, glamorous. They hit many sub-stations and economic targets. And sometimes their operations seemed to be timed as retaliatory, hitting back at key targets after the regime had committed atrocities like its attacks on Matola in Mozambique, in Swaziland, in Botswana or the other neighbouring states.

Anyway, sometimes I knew something big was coming as Cassius wanted certain materiel to go through.

By the time I met Rashid – when I was in prison and he came with that message from MHQ that I should not plead guilty as per Thabo Mbeki's advice – I knew who he was because there had been something in the paper that said he was the number one terrorist or something like that.

JS and Cassius separately visited my Dad on quite a regular basis and had discussions with him after I'd been kicked out of Botswana to reassure him I was okay and in good hands; Dad hadn't known before my arrest that I was in MK and was amazed and pretty shocked. My dad had arguments with them because he thought MK was incompetent and very wishy washy. That they didn't attack military bases or fight 'man to man'. He thought it was pathetic that MK just attacked pylons. My dad had been fighting in Egypt and had strong opinions. They were amused by some of my Dad's views. My Dad called MK inept.

When you read or heard over the radio that a major economic or military target had been hit, could you say it was done by Special Ops?

No, I didn't know exactly what structure had done it.

But, you know, I saw JS in parliament one day just before he died, and I went and held his hand and said I just want to thank you for everything you've done for the struggle – because I just thought I might never have a chance to speak to him alone again, and he just took me in his arms and held me tight and he said why are you thanking me? He said I should say thank you for everything you've done. I walked away with such big tears in my eyes, he was just always there, wherever we were, he was there. Although I dealt mainly with Cassius and later Rashid, JS was there. He saw us very often. Wherever we stayed, he visited. As I mentioned, at our wedding even. So I was never in any doubt that he was like the figure behind everything we were doing.

Of the Special Ops operations such as you know them, which two or three stand out for you and why?

I always felt the Koeberg operation was amazing and just very clever, and I thought the Sasol operation was the same thing. I just felt immensely proud of Sasol. How do our comrades do that, how do they have that kind of access and the knowledge? The meticulous planning and the secrecy and the discipline was great. I think that discipline subsequently vanished entirely from the ANC

(ANC Military Intelligence operative) Rocky Williams says that as good as Special Ops was, it was elitist and didn't necessarily

contribute to taking the mass struggles forward. Also, it was favoured with extra resources and the special attention it got from Tambo and Slovo…Your views?

You know, I think it's true that Special Ops did get special treatment in an earlier period. He's right. Because of my work in Ordnance I also got special treatment. I had the opportunity to speak to OR twice on my own when I was in Lusaka since he came to where I was staying; Cal and I always met with JS since he inevitably made a point of visiting us; I reported directly to Cassius and we met endlessly with Rashid. How many comrades had direct access to leaders? And then Chris and Ronnie, with whom we worked inside the country arming SDUs? Ronnie remains a great friend.

I absolutely do not agree Special Ops didn't take mass struggles forward. No! Rocky's wrong on that one. I think that some of the big operations played an amazing propaganda role because, for the masses, from how I understand they responded at home, it really made them feel very happy and gave a lot of encouragement to them and spurred them on, gave them hope, lit the fire. That there was an army, that it was fighting, that it was sophisticated. The more sophisticated the action, the more enthusiastic people were. I do agree with Rocky's observation about elitism, but I'm quite happy to engage with it.

Would you say that Special Ops was among the most successful MK units or not?

Yes. And I think MK's most successful ever sustained operation was the Safari Operation - seven years, no casualties - though the Vula comrades might disagree, and so might the teams of other comrades who did amazingly heroic deeds. Special Ops threw up some real heroes, and JS is beyond doubt the all-time hero of MK, and I totally understand why Cassius wanted to work with him, why major projects like this were set up together, how Rashid came from Special Ops to run the Safari operation and Ordnance.

I think people like Barney (Molokoane) are legends. So is Robert McBride. Other legendary people in MK though not with Special Ops were of course Chris Hani, and then there was Ronnie Kasrils, and another famous commander, Gebuza (Siphiwe Nyanda). Although Rashid didn't have the infectious laughter in him that JS had, he was an incredible, amazingly cautious, technician; the way he worked out the mechanics of things was painstaking.

Did you start working with Rashid when he was in Ordnance?

Yes, when he took over from Cassius while I was on the Safari project, though I'd met him, as I said, when I was in jail. As our Commander, he asked us in Zimbabwe to do some training of Rafiq Rohan, so he was still clearly doing some Special Ops work himself even though he was Ordnance Commander.

There is a view that after the Nkomati Accord, Special Ops begins to peter out. Its major activities occur between 1980 and around 1984? Your views?

After Nkomati, that's why I was brought in to do that parallel ordnance structure – because Special Ops was petering out, and they needed something that catered specifically for the remnants of Special Ops. They didn't have the Mozambique structure and that's why we set up the parallel Botswana ordnance structure specially for them. As I said, Cassius said they needed unknown people working on this structure for security reasons, for this special project.

Apart from Nkomati, do you know if there were any other reasons why Special Ops began to peter out?

After Nkomati the weapon stream was much slimmer, with various fronts closing. Also, this thing of the ANC wearing two hats: with Thabo Mbeki going around saying let's not have MK in these countries and MK continuing to function. So, MK couldn't risk operating in the old way, getting caught with little loads. Our leaders had to think big, risk truck loads instead of cars. Clearly the Safari truck that could bring in a ton of weapons was a huge deal and Special Ops people were invested in that.

Certainly, JS as former head of Special Ops and chief of staff was cherry-picking people to work on the project with Comrade Cassius. That's why I say you can't look at the Safari truck project separate from Special Ops. The fact that first JS brought everyone together and later after Cassius's assassination, Rashid was brought in from Special Ops to run the project and Ordnance as a whole spells it out. It was not just an ordinary ordnance operation. It was always conceived as a Special Ops project albeit for ordnance.

Also, at the Kabwe Conference there was a shift to People's War with the aim being to arm the masses, so politically the context had changed; the focus was not going to be so much on hitting high profile economic targets, but to find ways to get more and more weapons into the country in a bigger way to be able to work with SDU's. So, there was a political shift. In regional areas we were no longer looking at elite projects but at self-defence of communities against the terror caused by the apartheid forces in the townships.

The focus was now on attacking smaller police stations, offices and halls built by the regime and their oppressive symbols in the regions – targets more easily understood by the communities perhaps – and less to do with the economic targets and substations that had been the speciality of Special Ops. An important feature of this stage is that active units could determine their own targets.

Muff Andersson with Lindiwe Zulu, at the disbandment of MK, 1993

Of course, many key Special Ops comrades were killed or detained, and this weakened Special Ops. There is also a view that when Rashid left Special Ops to go to Ordnance, he took with him some of the best Special Ops comrades. You know anything about that?

Not much, but this thing of Special Ops petering out was before Rashid went to Ordnance in 1987. Anyway, leaders often did that, travel with their people when they moved to other positions, because they trusted those they worked with and knew who was good. So, if Rashid did that, that was normal. Rashid's gone on public record as saying he moved Dolphin into working with SDU's.

And I know that Oscar (Marleyn) was working in Special Ops in Mozambique, with JS and was moved to Ordnance when he came to Zimbabwe. And because we had to get amnesty at the same time I know about Robert and SDU's, so he was another like that who moved from JS to Rashid.

Anyway, People's War meant a different approach to the armed struggle, you were asking people at home to do the ops instead of sending in units from outside to pull off the high-profile ones. Both Special Ops and Ordnance comrades were highly trained. People at home needed training to form SDU's, obviously, and for political reasons there was a need for an MK presence.

Gebuza said at the MK conference in 1991 you simply could not have untrained but militant people in charge of the SDU's, MK had to be an active presence. So, these were the debates. And you can imagine that in exile after the declaration of People's War you had to refocus too and pour a lot of skills into a structure like Ordnance which was working well. Rashid had to use the structure efficiently. So basically, Rashid did what any smart Commander would have done, and Ordnance absorbed some of his best operatives at that point.

What do you make of the Pretoria bombing? Was there anything controversial about it within MK and ANC ranks?

At the time, no. We thought it was perfectly fine. Now, all this time later, I have my queries about the death of civilians. I obviously question whether we could have handled things much more tightly. With Magoo's, I saw it as a legitimate target. But I think that some of the other operations could have been more tightly controlled.

Which other operations?

I clearly remember a discussion in maybe 1985 when I had just arrived in London with Mannie and Laurence that a white secondary school had been attacked – I can't remember if any kids were hurt. We thought the target sucked. Mannie said we couldn't be sending in weapons if comrades were using them against kids. I was to report this to Comrade Cassius, which I did.

Comrades in MK were highly political. We always discussed these matters, many of us thought that if supermarkets, burger bars, Ellis Park had been done at night there wouldn't have been civilian targets.

But you can't compare, say, the Church Street Air Force bombing with ISIS-type bombings?

No, of course not. A military or police target was completely reasonable. I'm horrified when ISIS attack civilians as their primary target. Our comrades were supposed to aim at economic and military targets and civilians were sometimes killed as tragic casualties of war during the operations; the civilians themselves were not the target. At the time I accepted that; now I understand clearly why some people were put off by the Pretoria bombing.

In an article in the Mail & Guardian by Wally Mbele you are quoted speaking very positively about Rashid. But there are also others whom Wally says spoke about Rashid being temperamental. Do you want to say anything more about Rashid?

Yes, what I can say, he was sweet but fussy. I never saw him cross or lose it. I'd heard people say that he had a temper, but I never saw it with us. He stayed with Cal and me often. He was not a happy guy. He was not like JS or Cassius who laughed all the time. Rashid came across as rather anxious, and he had an ulcer – look, the work he was doing was tough so who can blame him, everyone was stressed? But he wasn't temperamental.

To what extent do you think the armed struggle contributed to the collapse of Apartheid?

I think to a great extent, but the armed struggle should've gone on for a few months longer, so we wouldn't have had to make the concessions on the 'sunset clauses'; and we wouldn't have had to keep apartheid civil servants in their jobs, and we wouldn't have had this problem of all the unemployed and disassociated MK people. Just as the armed struggle was called off, we were getting weapons into the townships, things were moving successfully. There was a lot of confusion and conflict over the way the armed struggle was stopped. We should've had more time to roll down things, not this kind of overnight bang of ending the armed struggle.

How would you characterise the late '80's? As a semi-insurrectionary or insurrectionary situation or neither?

I think semi-insurrectionary if you also consider the mass democratic struggles. The underground, the mass democratic movement and international sanctions were working brilliantly together, and the regime was unsustainable.

What do you make of where our country is now?

President Ramaphosa is in an impossible situation because there are some very corrupt people on either side of him, within the parliamentary structures and the ANC. The ANC's been weak in dealing with problems especially on corruption and the economy. I'm in the ANC's Stalwarts and Veterans structure – and a lot of the problems that we've tried to tackle haven't really been solved. The ANC's Integrity Committee needs a lot more teeth. The corrupt fight back and they seem to manage. Every time someone corrupt is on the verge of being expelled, they're not. They come back.

The ANC will become history like one of those has-been political parties in other places in Africa if it's not careful. And it's very divided. Look at ZAPU (Zimbabwe African People's Union), the way they just dissolved, and other parties where you get a corrupt leader replaced by another corrupt leader, replaced by another corrupt leader. There's a real crisis.

Half of the ANC is good and there are still stalwarts, but the memory of our struggle is fading. I like what you're doing because you're recording the memory of our struggle. Memory is good for the ANC, but there are fewer and fewer people around who can tell you what the ANC of Oliver Tambo was like.

I'm optimistic about the country. I think we must look to other sectors than just the ANC to try and build up and pull in good people, which is really what they did under OR Tambo, Special Ops and many structures that worked in exile. It might have been elitist, but it worked.

If you knew then in the '80's what South Africa would pan out to be now would you still have done what you did?

Yes, of course. We've got a democracy. We don't have a racist system. Kids across the races can hang out together. Like, if you see the way my child, born in 1986, has grown up, these kids are completely non-racist. Although they see racism, they say that it's simply crazy, and they all work together in non-racist collectives. They've grown up with a different experience. There are freedoms that there never were in the struggle era. I like the fact that we fought for these things.

We've got the best constitution in the world. I like it that people even take these things for granted. We've got a good country but there's a lot of problems in it. Our main fight today is against corruption, poverty and xenophobia. These are major problems, and so are the discrepancies in wealth. Despite the problems, we have a wonderful country!