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**UNSETTLING WHITES OBJECTIVE OF MK BOMBING CAMPAIGN:
TRC TOLD**

Unsettling the white population during the apartheid years was one of the objectives of an Umkhonto we Sizwe bombing campaign in the 1980s, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission heard on Wednesday.

MK "master bomber" Aboobaker Ismail testified in Pretoria that the deaths of white troops made the white population ask the question whether the country could afford the ongoing loss of life.

"Black lives did not matter," he told the TRC's amnesty committee.

The committee is hearing the amnesty applications of members of MK's special operations unit.

Ismail is seeking amnesty for several bombings, including the Church Street bomb outside the SA Air Force headquarters in Pretoria in 1980 which killed 19 people and injured about 200.

He reiterated on Wednesday that it was not African National Congress policy to attack civilians, and denied the Church Street bomb, which he said was authorised by the ANC leadership, was racially motivated.

Advocate Louis Visser, who represents some of the victims, suggested the bomb was aimed overwhelmingly at white civilians, which Ismail denied.

"The problem is that people continue to argue as if apartheid did not exist and as if there was no military machine attacking black people," Ismail said.

"There was a war situation in this country."

He said it was time people recognised this war was brought about by racism and apartheid.

Visser put it to Ismail that the possible loss of white civilian life was not taken into consideration in planning the Church Street bomb.

This was in stark contrast to Ismail's admission that MK would not have bombed the Sasol 1 oil refinery in June 1980 had the inhabitants of a nearby township been at risk, he said.

Ismail defended the bombing of the SAAF headquarters by referring to what he described as the despicable conduct of the security forces which butchered children in Soweto in 1976.

"We were at war," Ismail said. "Did the apartheid forces think they were fighting a war against people that will not fight back?"

Visser told the committee Herman Stadler, former head of the police's public relations unit, would no longer testify as planned.

He said he had consulted Stadler, and came to the conclusion that his evidence would not assist the committee.

The hearing would continue on Thursday, when the committee was expected to hear testimony from Charlie Martin, alleged to have been an MK operative.

MK member Colin de Sousa told the committee earlier this week Martin had recruited him and three others towards the end of May 1987 to undergo military training.

De Sousa said he kept Wits Command under surveillance before a bomb blast which killed one soldier and injured 68 others.

Martin had indicated to the committee he would like to testify to clear his name.

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