

PRETORIA May 11 1998 – SAPA

MK OPERATIVES DESCRIBE THE ATTACK ON SASOL 2

An Umkhonto we Sizwe operative has described to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission how the Sasol 2 plant at Secunda was attacked on Republic Day 1981.

"We could have attacked the target much earlier but Republic Day was decided on because the old regime normally displayed their military might and we decided to send a clear message to the masses that the racist regime was not invincible," MK operative David Motshwane Moisi told the TRC amnesty committee hearing in Pretoria on Monday.

He said MK also planned an attack on the Caltex oil refinery in Cape Town so that its leaders imprisoned on Robben Island could see the flames. However, Moisi was arrested after entering South Africa on a reconnaissance trip to the refinery.

He said he boarded a taxi, the driver of which was a police informant who took him to a police station where he was arrested.

Moisi was convicted and sentenced to death for treason, but his sentence was later commuted and he was released in 1991 in terms of the Pretoria Minute.

"I have, through my incarceration, my treatment at the hands of the security police and the two years that I served on death row, already paid my dues for my part in the armed struggle.

"I wish to be granted amnesty so that I may have my name permanently expunged from the criminal records," Moisi said in his statement. He said he took part in the attack on the Sasol 2 plant at Secunda on May 31, 1981, and sought amnesty for the blast.

On the night of the attack, the four MK cadres in the team donned overalls of the sort worn by staff at Sasol 2.

They cut their way through security fences before placing their limpet mines, which they carried hidden under their overalls, on the purifiers and gasifiers of the refinery.

They did not see the explosion because the time delays on the limpet mines had been set for an hour and by then they were on their way to the Swaziland border.

Part of the operation was to avoid human casualties.

"If there were many lives lost, we (the ANC) might have suffered a loss of support," he said.

Another applicant, Colin de Sousa, said he carried out surveillance work on Wits Command in 1987 while waiting to be escorted out of South Africa to undergo ANC training.

He said that on one occasion he was given an SA Defence Force corporal's uniform and went inside the complex, noting the layout of the premises and potential sites where limpet mines could be placed.

He did not know what form the attack would take, or that it had taken place, until after he had been driven back to Cape Town in the middle of the night, De Sousa told the committee.

Defence Minister Joe Modise attended Monday's hearing in support of the applicants.

The hearing has been postponed to Wednesday.