

# Man: cops were nice

## He stayed at police station while scouting out Sasol 2 refinery

Master bomber Abocobaker Ismail gave go-ahead for the attack of Secunda on May 31 1993. Special Writer **Robb Northey** writes

**P**OLICE were "nice" to an MK operative staying at a police station while scouting out the Sasol 2 refinery at Secunda before a Republic Day attack.

"Those police were very kind to us," Siphso Matthews Thobela told the TRC amnesty committee yesterday, adding that he had again stay-

ed at the police station just before the attack.

He is applying for amnesty for the attack on the Sasol 2 refinery at Secunda on Republic Day in 1993.

He and a fellow cadre had stayed at the hostel and police station near the refinery during the two weeks that they spent scouting the area.

"Because Sasol was a national key point, there was a police station near the hostel. When a stranger went to stay at the hostel, you had to report to the police

and show your identity book," he said. "They sometimes slept at the police station."

After returning to Mozambique and reporting to Abocobaker Ismail, the commander of MK's special operations unit, it was decided to go ahead with the attack.

Mr Thobela was in charge of the four-man team that attacked the refinery at about 9 pm on May 31 1993.

He said the team had done a final reconnaissance the night before to make sure of the shifts being

worked. "We couldn't affect our own brothers who were working there."

He said each member of the team had carried two limpet mines but they had only planted seven mines after cutting through the wire fence and reaching the target.

"There was a mistake when one of the mines was lost nearby," Mr Thobela explained when asked why all eight mines had not been set.

He said after returning safely to Mozambique, he was wounded

four times during an attack on ANC houses, known as the Matola Raid, on January 30 1993, and had not been fit for operational duty after this.

He said it was his opinion that the attackers were mercenaries wearing swastika insignia and not members of the former South African Defence Force.

"The main attack was by mercenaries and I hope they have also applied for amnesty," Mr Thobela told the committee.

"We knew the SADF style. These were whites but their faces

were painted black.

"The mercenaries spoke nice English; pure British. I could tell the difference between a Boer and an Englishman."

"They even shot the most in the fridge."

"I later heard they cut off the ears from the dead cadres so the mercenaries could put the ears on a table to get paid."

He said he believed they were mercenaries employed by the SADF. The SADF, when "embarrassed", employed mercenaries, Mr Thobela told the committee.

# Renewed calls to return art to owners

A ROW has erupted again over the University of Pretoria's Van Tilburg art collection amid renewed accusations that the items were stolen from Dutch Jews.

The collection, which includes paintings, carpets, ceramics and furniture, is housed at the Oni Lefevre Gebou on the institution's main campus in Lynnwood Road.

It was donated to the university in 1980 on the death of the owner of the collection, Dutch art dealer Jacob van Tilburg, who stands accused of being a Nazi collaborator.

There is a bust of Mr van Tilburg at the entrance to the building.

Accusations that the items were stolen from Jewish families have surfaced before, although a tribunal against Mr van Tilburg in 1948 found that the allegations of theft could not be proved.

Now an in-depth article in the Mail and Guardian has raised questions about the origin of the collection once again.

The accusations against Van Tilburg are not new, having surfaced on frequent occasions in the past," said Marlene Bethlehem, national chairman of the South African Jewish Board of Deputies.

"All indications are that he stole this collection from Dutch Jews, many of whom believed he was befriending them and would look after their property during the occupation."

**Rightful owners**

The board, she said, would like to see the collection returned to its rightful owners.

"The University of Pretoria, as its present custodian, should re-evaluate its previous decision to accept the collection despite the passage of time and distance," Mrs Bethlehem said.

"The moral obligation of returning stolen art treasures has again been highlighted throughout Europe. We are sure that the university will acknowledge its task in this regard."

"Academic institutions would certainly not wish to benefit from something that might very well have been acquired by theft," she said.

"And it is morally unacceptable that a man who might reasonably be suspected of having robbed and betrayed people for personal gain should be posthumously honoured by the displaying of a bust and the naming of a public exhibition."

The University of Pretoria is expected to issue a Press release next week, stating its position.

When approached for comment, Duka spokesman Mike Straus said the university was not in a position to discuss the situation at this stage, but would probably respond to the allegations early next week. - Staff Reporter

# Legal protection urged for destitute

THE government has been urged to put in place legislation to safeguard the interests of homeless and jobless people.

Mkhuzi Mthembu, president of the Pretoria Homeless Association, said at the Speak on Poverty hearing at St Albans' Cathedral yesterday that homeless and jobless people were being exploited.

Mr Mthembu said there were individuals and organisations which were raising funds for homeless and jobless people.

"But unfortunately homeless and jobless people are not benefiting from these fund-raising projects and there is an urgent need to stop these people from exploiting us."

He said there were people who established shelters for homeless and jobless people and yet expected them to pay a certain amount every month.

"Where do they expect us to get the money?" he asked.

**Great need**

He told the hearings that most homeless and jobless people made money from selling old cardboard boxes, beer and soft-drink cans, and bottles.

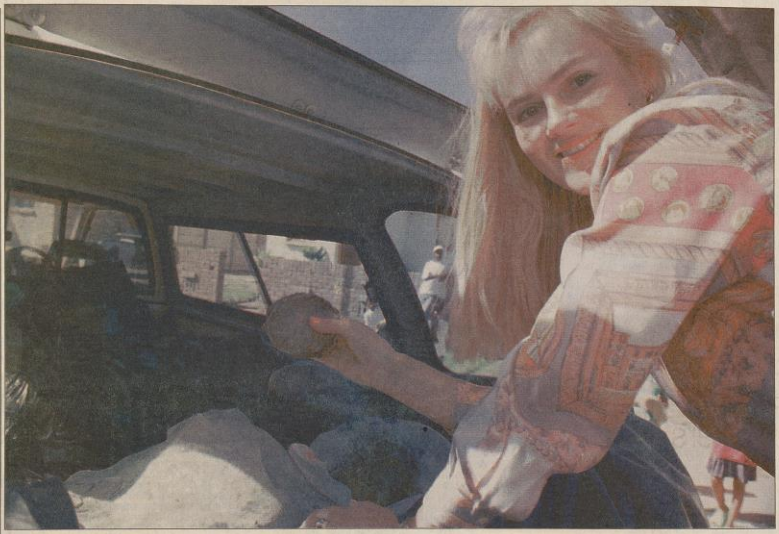
"The money they make from selling these items is not enough and it would be unfair to expect them to pay a certain amount every month."

Mr Mthembu said there was a great need for the government and non-governmental organisations to start skills training for homeless and jobless people.

"I went to the Department of Labour for assistance and did not get any."

Mr Mthembu said he also went to the National Institute for Crime Prevention and Rehabilitation of Offenders but the response was "cold".

"Homeless and jobless people should not be shunned as they need the help of the government and the community," said Mr Mthembu. - Staff Reporter



**BIG CATCH:** Captain Petronel Neuwoudt of the Endangered Species Protection Unit with some of the illegal abalone confiscated in Eerstesens. Picture: NICOLENE OLCKERS

# 2 men held on possession of abalone charge

VIRGINIA KEPNER  
CRIME REPORTER

MEMBERS of the Endangered Species Protection Unit have arrested two Eerstesens men in connection with the illegal possession of abalone.

Unit spokesman Captain Petronel Neuwoudt said the men were arrested at 11.15 pm yesterday at the home of one of them in James West Avenue, Eerstesens.

"A bakkie and trailer loaded

with abalone were found at the house," she said, adding that the confiscated abalones were worth about R500 000.

Five large chest freezers, of which two were allegedly packed with abalone, and a large freezer normally used in butcheries were the only furnishings in the house.

"We believe the operation has been going on for some time and the house was specifically used for the purpose of illegally dealing in abalone," Capt Neuwoudt said.

"The bakkie used to transport the abalone belongs to one of the suspects. The trailer belongs to a friend who lent it to them. We are not sure whether the friend knew what they were going to use it for," Capt Neuwoudt said.

Superintendent Piet Latagan, also of the unit, said the abalone was apparently gathered in Eerstesens. "An informer in Cape Town told us that the men would be in Pretoria yesterday. The community in Cape Town also helped

in the arrest by tipping off the police," he said.

Supt Latagan said they waited for the men, aged 33 and 34, in Stormvoel Road and followed them to the house in Eerstesens, where they were arrested.

"We believe they had been supplying Chinese restaurants around Pretoria with abalone."

"The restaurant owners will be under surveillance in future and investigations might also lead to more arrests," he said, adding that

some of the restaurants had already been identified.

He said the abalone would be flown back to Cape Town by the Department of Fisheries, which would be investigating the case.

"The perlemoen (abalone) is still frozen, which means it is still useable," Supt Latagan said.

The two men are facing charges of illegal possession and illegal import and export of abalone and are expected to appear in court soon.

# Police officers get their due after talks

ABOUT 25 000 police officers who qualify for salary increases will be paid thousands of rands after successful negotiations between the service and unions.

The police recently denied these members their awards due to administrative inefficiency. South African Police Union (Sapu) president Superintendent Arno Nel said.

He said Sapu fought the issue and was pleased that members would now get what was rightfully theirs.

Sapu general secretary Odelste van Niekerk said 5 780 members had already received their money.

"Administrative work to pay the 25 000 members their dues will be completed by the end of July," she said.

Ms van Niekerk said those police officers who had not received salary increases could still

apply, and those applicants who were turned down the first time, could apply again.

"These applications will then be evaluated and re-evaluated to see if they qualify for a reward payout," she said.

She said salary rewards were paid to members who did exceptional work.

Supt Nel also said Sapu would have to fight again to get the implementation of affirmative action in the police kick-started.

"The police now have to get their allow on the road and report progress to the national negotiations forum at the end of each month."

"Furthermore, the police can no longer appoint managers to top positions unless these appointments are in line with the affirmative action implementation plan," Supt Nel said. - Crime Reporter

# Fire-fighters get no chance to cool down

FOR the third time this week, men from 17 Squadrons climbed into their airborne water-carrying aircraft to douse the burning countryside around the city.

Yesterday two Oryx helicopters and an Alouette dumped 64 000 litres of water on a fire threatening houses along the Hartheebpoort Dam.

The helicopters, both with Bambl buckets, battled the strong crosswind that was fanning the blaze.

Relieved residents stood below, waving and shouting encouragement to the crew who battled for more than three hours to get the blaze under control.

Air Force spokesman Lieutenant Colonel Lavette Machin said the air force had been dousing fires all over the country.

Most of the operations were carried out on the defence force base.

**Caller charged**

"Sometimes people phone the emergency services, who then give us a call. If we have been requested to go to a fire, we charge the caller."

"But the last few days have all been paid by us," she said.

Col Machin said that on average it cost about R6 000 an hour to keep an Oryx in the air.

On Thursday the crew were called out to fight a fire in the Hemps River area, where 12 houses were saved from the blaze as well as a number of people who were trapped.

Col Machin said it was normal for the helicopters to be called out frequently at this time of year.

**Only restriction**

"The only restriction we have is that we cannot fight fires at night."

"It is then left to the fire brigades to watch the fire until dawn arrives again," she said.

A spokesman for Pretoria Central Emergency Services said grass fires kept them busy all day yesterday.

"We had over 20 calls today (Friday) alone and at the moment we are fighting a fire on a hill in Montana," he said late last night.

Other emergency services around the city agreed that grass fires were a major problem at the moment.

A Contention Emergency Services spokesman said they had dealt with 12 fires throughout the day. "The first call came just before 10 am," he said.

Asnia Emergency Services said their day was rather quiet, as far as fire went - they had only three. - Staff Reporter

# Police fire on taxi patrol

TWO members of the Taxi Patrol Squad were seriously wounded last night when police opened fire on them after they had forced off-duty police in a private vehicle to stop in Sokehangwe.

Police spokesman Captain John Mahasa said from information available it appeared that the patrol squad, who were travelling in four vehicles, did not notice that the private vehicle was being driven by police. - Transport Reporter

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