

SECTION 29: ROBERT MCBRIDE AND GRETA APELGREN

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We also used the book "Till Babylon Falls" by Brian Rostron (1991) in which the question of the command structure is addressed but no admissions in regard to Magoos are made and General Steyn's amnesty application.

1 BACKGROUND

Overview of ANC leadership structure

In 1986 the following were in leadership positions within the Military Headquarters of the ANC:

Joe Modise (Chief of Staff until 1986) and Chris Hani (Chief of Staff from 1986)

Responsible for overall leadership and training

Lambert Moloi (Operations)

Responsible for the actual planning and execution of operations.

His MK name was Lehlohonolo and he often stayed at a house in New Stands, Gaborone.

He sometimes made use of a [REDACTED]. He was arrested in Lobatsi, Botswana in April 1985 but was released by the Botswana Special Branch.

Ronnie Kasrils (Military Intelligence)

Collection of intelligence for use by MK and joint planning with other MK structures.

The above sat on the Politico-Military Council (PMC). The PMC had general knowledge of the number of units on the ground as well as their location. This did not necessarily mean that they were aware of the actual identities of the operatives. It was the Regional Politico-Military Council 's (RPMC) task to service specific areas within SA by utilising RPMC structures in the "forward areas"- for example, Botswana. The line of command was a long one as only the RPMC's reported to the PMC. The Area Politico-Military Councils (APMCs) provided political and military leadership at the local level as well as intelligence gathering. A typical APMC would be made up of the 3 Commander, Commissar (providing political leadership) and cadres responsible for propaganda, military training, acquisition of weapons, intelligence gathering and logistics. Each of whom worked on a "need to know" basis.

Botswana RPMC

The RPMC which serviced the Mc Bride unit in 1986 was based in Botswana. The following were within leadership positions within Botswana:

Aboobaker Ismail (aka Rashid or Rashid Patel) Commander of Special operations

now a Major-General in the SANDF. His predecessor was Cassius Make.

Overall MK Commander in Botswana may have been *Patrick Mavundla MK Charlie Naledi Seemela or Godfrey Mokoena or Moloji-* killed in an SADF raid on 28 March 1988.

McBride also had contact with the following persons (codenames):

Oupa (could be L. E Pule who was allegedly responsible for despatching three consignments of arms to RSA during March 1986 and who resided at [REDACTED] - perhaps with Webster and McBride. He was arrested on 11 June 1986 with limpet detonators and electric detonators. He was deported on 24 August 1986 without being charged and returned to Botswana allegedly in October 1986. He is now allegedly Ambassador to Botswana)

Chris (could be Christopher Manye, MK Little John who previously resided at [REDACTED] and who used the telephone number [REDACTED])

Victor (could be Johannes Mnisi, who was permanently based in Botswana and who was allegedly involved in the Pretoria car bomb explosion in 1983 in which 19 were killed. He later died at the hands of the SA security Forces in Botswana)

Georgie

McBride later identified these person to the SAP by means of photographs.

Recruitment, training and visits to Botswana

Robert McBride was recruited into MK in October/November 1985 by Gordon Webster. They had previously been friends at Bechet College. Webster was in the special operation's unit and his mission was to sabotage transformers inside electricity substations in Natal. He was instructed to recruit a cell in SA.

The main task of special operations division was sabotage.

The members of the cell were initially:

Gordon Webster (Steven Mkhize or Humphrey Piedmont)

Robert McBride (Colin, Douglas, Michael Jones and Charles Franks)

Bheki Ngubane (aka Zola-deceased on 27 April 1986 in arrest by SAP in Pmb)

Welcome Khumalo (Themba , Blackie)

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After March 1986 McBride recruited the following as part of his cell:

Nazeem Cassiem

Matthew Le Cordier

Alan Pearce

Antonio du Preez (bodyguard for Webster)

Greta (aka Denise) and Jeanette (Helen or Mary) Apelgren were recruited earlier but were according to McBride generally passive members of the cell. They allegedly accompanied the male members of the cell as cover and drove the vehicles.

When Webster was arrested on 27 April 1986, Welcome Khumalo joined McBride's cell and McBride recruited his father, Derrick.

McBride and others went to Botswana on the following occasions:

6 December 1985 Gaborone

On this occasion McBride went with Webster to Gaborone and met Chris and Oupa, who gave him instructions on weapons and how to make an arms cache at the Morningstar Motel. (Webster crossed the border on foot the day after McBride.) McBride does not mention the training in his unsigned statement but does in the book "Till Babylon Falls"

December 1985 In bush beyond Gaborone, Molepolole

On this occasion he was given a 3 day course on firearms and explosives.

10/11 January-12 January 1986

On this occasion he went with Greta Apelgren and obtained money from Chris for accommodation and then McBride was taken to an arms cache by Chris and Oupa and obtained limpet mines, mini limpet mines, hand grenades and detonators. McBride was shown again how to use the explosives. They booked into the Morningstar Motel as Michael Jones and Denise. He also gave Chris messages from Webster and collected a message for Webster.

Shortly after this McBride and Apelgren became lovers.

5 March 1986 Gaborone

McBride and Webster went to Botswana with Greta and Jeanette Apelgren in 2 separate cars. They stayed at the [REDACTED]. Georgie and Oupa arrived and took one of the cars with them. They collected further armaments and McBride received more training. The women did not meet the ANC members.

23/24 March 1986 Gaborone

Webster, McBride, Greta and Jeanette Apelgren went to Botswana with one car and a caravan and checked into the [REDACTED]. Chris and Oupa took

Webster and McBride to meet with the commander of special operations, Rashid (viz Aboobaker Ismail) and Victor (viz Johannes Mnisi). Rashid briefed McBride on his new duties:1

Smuggling "equipment" into SA
Recruitment
Sabotage missions
Establishment of a new cell separate from that of Webster.
He also explained codes and telephone cyphers.

He told McBride that the following persons were legitimate targets:

Abrahams
Stowman
Pierce
Coloured police reservists at Wentworth

McBride was given more training including establishment of DLBs by Ghris and Oupa.

Rashid then returned with them to the Motel and met the Apelgrens.

The next day, Webster and McBride drove to a rendezvous outside Gaborone where they found 2 cars with Rashid, Victor, Chris and Oupa. They transferred 3 suitcases of equipment and money to their car. They then returned to SA with the arms in a caravan.

According to Webster, in his trial, Rashid had instructed him to place a car bomb in Durban and that he refused on the grounds that it was not the policy of the ANC sometime in March. He stated that "Rashid is a blood-thirsty person". According to Webster this is why he later resigned from special ops.

About 10 May 1986 Gaborone

McBride, Greta Apelgren, Gordon Webster and his girlfriend, Ann, went to Botswana. Webster had been arrested and escaped (see below). They checked into the [REDACTED] Robaert and Greta as Douglas and Denise Johnstone and the others as Mr and Mrs Charles Dickens. McBride tried to contact Chris through a female contact several times. The next day Chris and Georgie arrived and they moved Webster and Ann. Later Chris and Oupa transferred McBride and Apelgren to a safehouse.

Whilst there Chris was arrested and was to be deported to Zambia. McBride and Apelgren went to Francistown and then back to Gaborone. On McBride's return to Gaborone he was summoned to meet a senior commander of

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special operations. He was instructed to recruit additional members, send Le Cordier for training in July and was officially appointed commander of the cell. They returned on 19 May 1986. McBride then heard about the SA raid on Botswana. PW Botha said that "SA has the capacity and the will to break the ANC".

McBride then received a phone call from Oupa in Botswana instructing him to respond to these raids (see Pine Parkade)

7-12 June 1986 Gaborone

G Apelgren and McBride went to Gaborone and checked in at the [REDACTED] McBride left a message at his usual contact number (Victor at [REDACTED]) to say that "Douglas" had arrived. Rashid arrived that night and checked the room for bugging devices. Rashid held a series of meetings with McBride over the next few days.

It seemed that Oupa was on the run as he spent one night at the hotel on the couch. McBride allegedly mostly met Rashid alone and he was given fresh instructions. He was told to step up his sabotage activities in Natal as the ANC wished to respond forcefully to the renewed repression in SA. He was told to carry out a car bomb attack and that it should take place where there were a lot of people (see P38 unsigned statement) He gave McBride extensive briefing on how to construct a car bomb (P39 unsigned statement)

On paragraph 167 (Page 40) of the unsigned statement McBride states as follows:

" After this Rachid told me that the car bomb was to be detonated in the city centre if the operation was carried out during the day. I was to choose a spot where there was a lot of movement of whites. Should the operation be carried out at night the car was to be parked on the beach front; if at all possible close to a night spot which is frequented by off-duty soldiers and policemen..... He then said that I should go for one of the night spots and he named two possible targets, namely the "WHY-NOT INN" next to Garfunkels and a night club next door to the Edward Hotel, both on the Marine Parade."

On paragraph 168 (page 40) of the unsigned statement he states:

"Oupa emphasised the fact that the car bomb should be set off on or before the 14th June.

McBride was ordered to prepare more DLBs and arms caches and to send Le Cordier for training. The emphasis of the lectures were allegedly that the unit should intensify it's offensive and select bigger and more conspicuous targets. He was given R3000 for "Zola"'s family as well as a large batch of arms and explosives.

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They returned to SA on 12 June 1986, arriving on 13 June 1986. A state of emergency had been declared and that Jeanette and Eric Apelgren had been detained..

2 MK OPERATIONS

The cell was involved in inter alia the following missions (only missions including McBride or Greta Apelgren have been included):

- attempted sabotage of Mayville electrical sub-station on 5/01/86 (carried out by McBride and Webster)
- explosion aimed at electrical sub-station at corner of Chamberlain Rd and Austerville Drive, Jacobs on 9/01/86 (Webster) where Colonel Bobby Welman, Mervyn Dunn and Detective Constable Roelof van der Merwe was injured in a second explosion when a limpet mine went off at a different time. Colonel Welman died 3 weeks later on 30/01/86 (carried out by Webster with the knowledge of McBride). Explosives from the Factorama cache were used.
- second sabotage aimed at Jacobs sub-station on 21 March 1986 (carried out by Webster, McBride, Khumalo) with limpet mines from Webster's arms cache in Caluza. Greta Apelgren picked them up and drove them home.
- Providing explosives to Vincent James possibly for an attack on a Mr Leaf (McBride)
- Training Le Cordier and du Preez in the use of explosives and authorising an attack on Mr Klein (McBride)
- assisting escape of the injured Gordon Webster from police guard at Edendale Hospital on 27 April 1986 and subsequently to Botswana (carried out by R McBride, D McBride, Khumalo, du Preez,, Le Cordier, G Apelgren). Derrick and Robert went into the Hospital and Mlungisi Buthellezi was killed and Nkosinathi Nkabinde and Siphwe Shange were wounded. Webster later alleged in exile that it was he that shot these people. The others assisted in transporting Webster.
- planting a bomb at Pine Parkade allegedly without a detonator on 20 May 1986 (carried out by McBride and Jeanette Apelgren as driver)
- establishing arms caches at York, New Hanover (Webster and McBride), Cato Manor, Factorama (Webster and McBride), Shongweni (McBride, Le Cordier, Greta and Jeanette Apelgren- the Apelgrens drove and picked the men up)
- Magoo's bombing on 14 June 1986 (carried out by McBride, Cordier and with G Apelgren driving)
- Sabotage of oil pipeline over Umlaas canal, an oil storage depot in Hime street and an explosion in a dustbin in Point Road outside the Copper

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Shop on 21 June 1986 (on the instructions of McBride with the actual operation being carried out by Le Cordier and du Preez)

- Sabotage of water pipes at Westville on 29 June 1986 (on instruction of McBride and carried out by Pearce and Le Cordier)

3 MAGOO'S BOMBING

McBride claimed at the trial that the following occurred on 14th June 1986 (Saturday):

- He visited Matthew Le Cordier to discuss what they should do as a state of emergency had been declared
- McBride left and then decided to build a car bomb
- He went and bought a vehicle at South Coast motors
- He then went to town to choose a target that was central and chose the Hyperama House and Home
- He fetched the explosives from a dead letter box in Cato Manor including 10 SZ 6's, an SPM limpet mine, a pistol, a Makarov pistol and AK47 ammunition
- He made the bomb in the car using AK47 bullets and burglar guards as schrapnel at the base. The burglar guards were in his father's workshop. He then placed a limpet mine on top.
- He told Le Cordier to make himself available in the early evening to meet ANC people.
- He fetched Le Cordier at 7 45pm.
- He phoned G Apelgren and asked her to meet them and when she arrived, he told her that they would be going to the drive-in but that he had to drop the car for friends in town. He asked her to meet him in [REDACTED].
- On the way to town McBride told Le Cordier that there were 50kg of explosives in the back of the car
- He saw G Apelgren drive past
- Le Cordier then allegedly told McBride that he was wasting 50kg of explosives and suggested that they detonate it on the [REDACTED]. Matthew stated that he knew of a suitable target.
- McBride alleges that he stated that it was against ANC policy to attack whites at a non-strategic target but was then influenced by Le Cordier
- They walked to Apelgren's car and drove with her to the beach front
- They saw the target and then returned to the car with the explosives
- McBride then got into the car with Apelgren and directed her to park near the [REDACTED]
- Le Cordier followed in the car with the bomb
- McBride left Apelgren's car and went to Le Cordier. They drove to where Apelgren was and told her to move out
- They then parked the car in the space she vacated- near the "Why Not" bar and "Magoo's" bar.

- McBride removed the number plates and put them in the boot
- The bomb was set for 15 minutes and it was then detonated
- They joined Apelgren and then put in petrol
- They then went to Ridge Road so that they could see squad cars coming out and could follow them as this was the best way to avoid getting caught
- At this point McBride told Apelgren about the bomb
- They then returned home.

Matthew Le Cordier's version differed from that of McBride at the trial (as state witness):

- He said that when McBride came to visit him the decision to use a car bomb had already been made.
- He maintained that McBride had already bought the second-hand cortina used in the mission. He stated that McBride had said that Rufus Johnson had seen him buy the car.
- He said that they stopped outside the Hyperama House and Home and that McBride then told him that they were going to bomb a target on the [REDACTED]. He agreed, however, that he told McBride that he knew of a hotel where people sat on the verandah.
- He said that they parked in [REDACTED] so that they could use the Mazda to reconnoiter the target instead of the cortina.

In his unsigned statement McBride provides a different version of certain events:

- He bought lengths of steel rod to use in the bomb as schrapnel at Bonus Equipment
- He bought a cortina at Gateway motors in the name of William John Hughes.
- He placed the schrapnel around and on top of the charges and placed a limpet mine on top.
- He decided to detonate the bomb in [REDACTED] but there was a police roadblock in town so he returned home.
- He and Apelgren reconnoitred the Marine Parade looking for the "Why-Not Inn". He could not see it so he searched for another target (see P44 paragraph 182). He found an empty spot near Garfunkels restaurant and Apelgren parked the car and remained there. He walked back to fetch Le Cordier and the cortina in [REDACTED].
- He told Le Cordier and Apelgren afterwards that a bomb had been planted.
- He also told his father, Derrick McBride what he had done when he got home and that he did not think the bomb had exploded

- Apelgren and the two McBrides went back to the scene, which was cordoned off and were told that a bomb had exploded..

The list of dead and injured is listed below.

The "Why Not" bar was more severely damaged than Magoos but the media called it the Magoos bomb.

Captain Zenardt de Beer (now Superintendent) of the Security Branch was responsible for the investigation into the bombing from CR Swart.

McBride then followed G Apelgren to Johannesburg. They returned to Wentworth in the second week of July for a visit. McBride was then recalled to Botswana. On 16 July 1986 Apelgren and Robert and Derrick McBride were arrested in Nigel. They were handed over to the Special Branch from Durban. They were interrogated.

Le Cordier was arrested on 18 July 1986 and then they arrested du Preez, Khumalo and Jeanette Apelgren. N Cassiem, however, was the first to be arrested after the Magoos' bomb.

McBride escaped one evening by overcoming his guard at Bellair SAP but was recaptured and shot in the foot.

McBride was represented by Adv Gordon and Le Cordier, Cassiem, Khumalo and Jeanette Apelgren agreed to turn state witness. McBride (accused no 1) and Greta Apelgren (accused no 2) faced 24 counts ranging from furthering the aims of the ANC, contraventions of the Terrorism Act and murder and attempted murder. Judge Shearer presided. Webster testified from London. The trial commenced on 2 February 1987. Le Cordier's evidence was the most crucial. Derrick McBride and Antonio du Preez were charged separately.

McBride and Apelgren were convicted on 7 April 1987. Apelgren was convicted for aiding Webster to escape and helping to smuggle him out of the country. She was sentenced to five years, 21 months suspended, imprisonment. It was found that she was unaware a bomb had been planted at Magoos. McBride was convicted for 3 counts of murder, aiding, harbouring and assisting Webster to escape, furthering the aims of the ANC and sabotage. Justice Shearer found that there were no extenuating circumstances and sentenced McBride to death on 13 April 1987. He was sentenced to 82 years for the other counts. An appeal against the death sentence failed in March 1988. On 16 April 1991 whilst on death row, his sentence was commuted to life imprisonment. McBride was released on 28 September 1992 after being given a remission of sentence along with Barend Strydom.

Issue of authorisation

At the trial McBride insisted that his actions were against ANC policy and that he was not given orders to bomb Magoos. However, later (whilst McBride has refused to name those who gave him the orders) he claimed that he received instructions from "the person in charge of special operations in Gaborone" (Mail and Guardian).

According to the Institute for Defence Policy, Lambert Moloï was the person responsible for the planning and execution of special operations and he would have worked closely with Aboobaker Ismail and Cassius Make, who were in charge of ordnance and supply of weaponry.

It should be noted that McBride was introduced to Rashid-Aboobaker Ismail as a commander of special operations and in his unsigned statement he admits that Rachid gave him the instruction to bomb the Why- Not Inn (see shaded section above)

Perpetrators

- 1. *Matthew Anthony le Cordier (MAIC)*

[Redacted]

Telephone:

- 2. *Robert McBride*

[Redacted]

- 3. *Greta Apelgren*

[Redacted]

Victims

It is alleged that 89 were injured. Herewith an incomplete list:

- 1. INJURED,

Jonathan Joseph Jeffers, [Redacted]

- 2. KILLED: Marchelle Cheryl Gerrard, married Oosthuizen, 28

Next of kin: Sister Cher Gerrard, [Redacted]

[Redacted]

- 3. KILLED: Angelique Pattenden 23

Next of kin: father Eric Pattenden, address?

4. KILLED: Julie van der Linde 28
Next of kin: Daughter Candice van der Linde, address?

5. G. Tonetti
6. A. van Wyk
7. T. Viljoen
8. L. Valentine
9. L. Waterworth
10. I. Walton
11. A. de Chalain
12. Marcel Plaatjies
13. L. Mitchell
14. Victor Mchunu
15. S. Mintz, Marine Parade
16. E. Maker
17. B. Newby-Fraser
18. L. Olivier
19. C. Olds
20. D. Pavillion
21. W. Puttock
22. M. Rathbone
23. M. Roe
24. F. Robits
25. K. Robert
26. P. Swart
27. S. Saich
28. A. Strydom
29. D. Arnold
30. Peter Byron
31. E. Booth
32. D. Brett
33. Michael Blair
34. J. Blair
35. Kevin Bryne
36. Christopher Clarkson
37. M. Cynnow
38. S. Coeks
39. Jenny Cubitt
40. A. Duncan
41. F. Drummel
42. Loraine de la Rosa, [REDACTED]
43. P. Donaghue
44. R. Durlcharan, [REDACTED]
45. E. Edgare

- 46. K. English
- 47. Dennis Eaby
- 48. M. Ethell
- 49. Brett Erasmus
- 50. James Ferguson
- 51. David Fletcher
- 52. R. Ferreira
- 53. L. Friar
- 54. Mr. Fiddler
- 55. Mrs. Fiddler
- 56. B. Tgidy
- 57. Paula Harvey
- 58. C. Haden
- 59. Carl Haddon
- 60. Keith Halse, [REDACTED]
- 61. T. Hempstead
- 62. S. Jeffries
- 63. J. Kerlen
- 64. Toni Joao
- 65. Helen Kearney, [REDACTED]
- 66. C. Kenning
- 67. L. Koenig
- 68. E. Langridge
- 69. L. Livingstone
- 70. Gavin Maxwell
- 71. ? Mervel
- 72. Jophn McKenna
- 73. P. Mulholland
- 74. Roger Shillaw

Most seriously wounded were: 44, 70, 35, 36, 51, 60, 62, 1, 72 and 59.

4 POSSIBLE QUESTIONS

Robert McBride

Recruitment, training and details of cell

- 1 When were you recruited into MK and by whom?
- 2 What unit were you recruited into at this stage?
- 3 What training did you receive?
- 4 Explain who the members of your cell were and what role they played?

Command structure

5 On your visits to Botswana who did you meet within MK? Please tell us about all your trips to Botswana.

6 What are their real names?

7 Who was your immediate superior in Gaborone? Who did you report to?

8 What is your understanding of the different roles of all your contact people in Mk?

9 Where are they today? Positions etc

10 What were the general policy guidelines and/or standing orders given to you by MK?

11 Who brought in the explosives used in sabotage missions?

12 Who did you communicate with in Botswana after a mission and how did you do it?

Magoo bombing

13 What were the instructions given to you on your last visit to Botswana in June 1996 prior to your arrest?

14 Who gave you these instructions?

15 Why was the [REDACTED] and specifically the Why Not bar and Magoos chosen as a target?

16 Did you have any alternative targets? Which?

17 Were you instructed to give a cover story if you were caught?

18 Who accompanied you on this mission ?

19 Outline the events of the 14th June 1986?

20 Why did you say at the trial that you were not given authorisation for the Magoos bombing and that it was not ANC policy but in an interview to the Mail & Guardian and in your unsigned statement to the police you state that you were instructed to do so?

21 What was the relationship (if any) between the Amamzimtoti bombing and the Magoos bombing?

22 Was there any connection between the Magoos bombing and the SA security force's attack on Botswana on 19 May 1986?

Other missions

23 Tell us about the other missions you carried out?

24 Was there a detonator in the [redacted] bomb?

25 Who shot the person ([redacted]) at [redacted] when Gordon Webster escaped with McBride?

Greta Apelgren

1 When were you recruited into MK?

2 Who were the members of the cell?

3 Did you receive any training?

4 Tell us about your visits to Botswana.

5 Who did you meet within MK in Botswana? Do you recognise this man (Rashid- Aboobaker Ismail photo)?

6 What missions did you participate in and what was your role?

7 Tell us about the events of the 14th June 1986.

8 Were you aware at any stage that a bomb was to be detonated? When did you become aware of this?

9 Are you aware of whether this bombing was authorised by the ANC and if so, tell us about it?

Both above could be questioned as to whether they were tortured in detention and by whom?

Taylor info

Investigators: Alex Munch and Gail Wannenburg

*What was policy on warnings
how many ops units operating in the
internal recess*