

**DURBAN September 28 1999 - SAPA**

**MCBRIDE: MAGOOS CASUALTIES UNDER SPOTLIGHT**

The death and injury of civilians in a bomb blast apparently intended for apartheid security personnel, outside the Magoos bar on the Durban beachfront in 1986, came under the spotlight at a Truth and Reconciliation Commission amnesty hearing in Durban on Tuesday. The committee heard evidence from African National Congress special operations unit commander, Aboobaker Ismail, in connection with a number of incidents and attacks in and around Durban between 1981 and 1986. The incidents include the Magoos bar bombing, in which three women died and 73 people were wounded when former MK (Umkhonto we Sizwe - the former armed wing of the ANC) operative Robert McBride planted a powerful car bomb outside the establishment on June 14, 1986. McBride is applying for amnesty for the bombing. Ismail, as commander of the unit which carried out certain attacks in the Durban area, has claimed political responsibility for all the acts committed by operatives under his command. Ismail said the Magoos bar and the nearby Why Not bar were targeted because they were believed to be frequented by apartheid security force personnel who were regarded as legitimate targets in the ANC's armed struggle against the former government. He said the ANC was satisfied that reconnaissance conducted by McBride had justified the bars as legitimate targets. On Tuesday legal counsel acting on behalf of the victims who are opposing McBride's application, Tony Richards, questioned whether McBride had in fact conducted adequate reconnaissance identifying the bars as legitimate targets in which civilian casualties would be restricted to a minimum. Richards referred to a document submitted previously by the ANC to the TRC in which it apparently stated that the Magoos bar fell into a so-called grey area in which targets were not necessarily clearly defined. Ismail conceded during questioning that not as many security personnel were in the bar at the time of the attack as was thought there would be. Richards said according to his information not a single person killed or wounded in the bombing had specific links with former security forces. During further questioning Ismail remained adamant that the attack was carried out based on intelligence that soldiers and policemen frequented the bars. Marchelle Gerrard, 28, was one of the three women who died in the blast. Her sister, Sharon Welgemoed, who was attending the hearing said her family opposed McBride's application because he was a convicted murderer who had killed innocent civilians. McBride was convicted of the killings and received three death sentences but received a reprieve in terms of a deal struck between the ANC and the former government. Welgemoed said, however, the family would abide by the amnesty committee's decision on amnesty in the interests of reconciliation.