

Grosskopf spills beans on car bomb

Staff Reporter

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FORMER liberation fighter Hein Grosskopf has revealed for the first time how he planned and carried out a 1987 car bomb attack on the Witwatersrand Command army base in Johannesburg.

Currently living in the United Kingdom, Grosskopf is seeking amnesty for the explosion on July 30, 1987. Twenty-six people, mostly civilians, were injured in the blast.

His application is being opposed by a woman who lost an eye in the attack. Alta Klaasen, 30, was 17 at the time of the blast.

The bright flash of the explosion damaged her left eye, and she suffered severe headaches until the eye was removed in February this year. "I was also in need of counselling for several years," Klaasen said.

Grosskopf, the son of former Beeld newspaper editor Johannes Grosskopf, told the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in Pretoria that he grew up in a relatively liberal Afrikaner home where his parents received and treated black friends as equals.

He left South Africa in January 1986 to join the African National Congress in exile. He linked up with the ANC in Lusaka, where he volunteered for military service.

Explaining why Wits Command was chosen as a target, Grosskopf said: "Because the state had so clearly politicised the role of the SA Defence Force by deploying troops in townships, SADF personnel and installations were by definition justifiable targets."

The explosion was planned to go off by 9.45am, when the morning rush-hour was over, children would be in school and restaurants around the site were still closed.

Grosskopf said it was agreed that a car with an automatic gearbox should be used. By lashing the steering wheel in a fixed position, the car could be made to move without a driver towards the target.

However, the car apparently failed to move closer to the target before the blast. Had the attack gone as planned, several military personnel would have been killed.

"I am glad that did not happen," Grosskopf said.

He told the committee he would remain living in the UK. For personal reasons it was not possible for him to return to South Africa with his children, Grosskopf said.