

IN THE HIGH COURT OF SOUTH AFRICA
EASTERN CAPE DIVISION, GQEBERHA

CASE NUMBER: CC19/2024

In re:

THE REOPENED INQUEST INTO THE DEATHS OF FORT CALATA, MATTHEW
GONIWE, SICELO MHLAULI AND SPARROW MKONTO

WITNESS STATEMENT



I, the undersigned,

EUGENE ALEXANDER DE KOCK

hereby declare as follows under oath:

[A] INTRODUCTION

1. I am an adult male retired member of the former South African Police ("SAP") with Identity number: 490129 5009 083, currently 77 years of age.
2. The contents of this affidavit are, save where expressly stated or indicated by the context, within my personal knowledge, and are both true and correct. To the extent that I do not have personal knowledge, the facts contained in this affidavit are corroborated by the documents attached as annexures to this affidavit. The documents are reliable, and to the best of my knowledge, the contents thereof are true and correct.

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3. Without waiving legal privilege, the legal submissions contained in this affidavit are made on the advice of legal representatives, which advice I accept.

[B] BACKGROUND

4. After matriculating high school, I commenced compulsory military training in 1967, whereafter, I joined the SAP in 1968 and completed my training at the Police College. Following my training, I began service in the counter-terrorist unit in the former Rhodesia.
5. Subsequently - in 1977 - I became the station Commander at Ruakana in the former South-West Africa, whereafter I joined the Security Police at Oshakati in 1978. During this time, I was assigned to the Ovambo Home Guard, where I provided specialised counterterrorism training to members of the Ovambo community and former Angolan nationals.
6. During January 1979, I became one of the founding members of the Koevoet Unit under the command of Colonel Hans Dreyer.
7. In May 1983, after enduring prolonged periods of conflict and unrest, I formally requested a transfer to the Western Cape uniform branch, specifically in the West Coast region. At this stage, I was experiencing significant fatigue resulting from hundreds of contacts with members of SWAPO and my motivation for this request was to secure placement in an environment with reduced exposure to violence, thereby minimizing routine encounters with gunfire and similar disturbances.



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8. Despite my initial request, the SAP assigned me to the C1 unit at Vlakplaas, where I held the rank of Captain and served under the command of Brigadier Jack Cronje. On 1 July 1985, I was appointed as the unit's commanding officer.
9. I served as a member of the SAP uniform branch – and not the security branch - from 1968 until my forced retirement in 1993, at which time I held the rank of Colonel.

[C] REPORT STRUCTURE

10. Effective 01 July 1985, I began reporting to Brigadier Schoon ("Schoon"), who was the head of Section C1. All directives concerning Vlakplaas were issued by Schoon, and I received my instructions directly from him.
11. Upon receiving instructions from Schoon, I would assemble a team to carry out the specified tasks. In certain situations, I will participate with the team in the designated task and assume the role of commanding officer for that operation. In my absence, command responsibility would be delegated to the captain of Vlakplaas.
12. Instances arose when another region in South Africa required support from Vlakplaas. In these cases, the commanding officer of the requesting region would submit a request to Schoon. Upon approval, Schoon would instruct me to assemble a team and ensure the deployment of Vlakplaas members to the designated region.

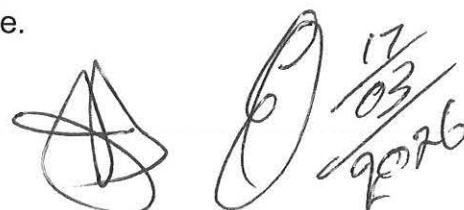


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13. During deployments to the regions referenced in paragraph 11, Vlakplaas members operated under the authority of that specific regional head and received instructions directly from that individual.
14. I did not possess authorization to operate autonomously across various regions, as adherence to the established chain of command was mandatory. All assignments within any region were contingent upon decisions made through the offices of Brigadier Schoon. To the best of my knowledge, the only exception was in the case of Japie Maponya pursuant to an order issued by Colonel Johan le Roux.
15. According to my comprehension of the organizational hierarchy operative during this period, Schoon received his instructions from the head of the National Security Police who, in turn, received directives from the State Security Council.

[D] THE INQUESTS

16. On 27 June 1985, an incident occurred in which Matthew Goniwe, Fort Calata, Sicelo Mhlauli, and Sparrow Mkonto were murdered. These individuals subsequently became known in the media as "*the Cradock 4*".
17. Following the deaths of the Cradock 4, an inquest was held in the former Port Elizabeth during February 1989, which was presided over by Regional Magistrate M. De Beer ("Magistrate De Beer"). I was not requested to appear at this inquest, and no finding was made against me.



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18. The inquest was re-opened during 1993 and presided over by the then Judge President of the Eastern Cape High Court *viz* the Honourable Zietsman J. I was neither subpoenaed nor required to testify.
19. Judge Zietsman found that the deaths of the deceased were brought about by deliberate acts committed by an unknown person or persons, and no adverse finding was made against me.
20. I have been informed that during 2021, certain family members and/or acquaintances of the Cradock 4 brought an application before the Gauteng Division of the High Court - under case number 35447/21 - seeking an order to compel the National Prosecuting Authority to make a decision regarding the prosecution of suspects for the crimes committed against the Cradock 4.
21. I am further advised that this court application was settled on the basis that the National Director of Public Prosecutions (NDPP) agreed to reopen the inquest.
22. A *subpoena* was subsequently issued and served on my attorney, compelling me to appear in person at the Gqeberha High Court to testify at this inquest.

[E] MY KNOWLEDGE AND INVOLVEMENT WITH THE DEATHS OF THE CRADDOCK 4

23. I confirm that I was not involved in the murder or the planning of the murders of the Cradock 4. I submit that this fact is well documented.



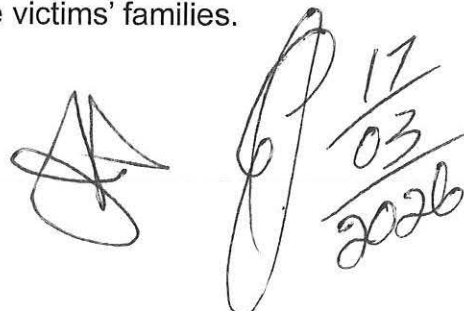
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24. My involvement has previously been set out during my testimony at the Truth and Reconciliation Commission ("TRC"), when I applied for amnesty for defeating the ends of justice for my role in advising Captain Sakkie van Zyl ("van Zyl") on how to dispose of the murder weapon.
25. On 6 March 1998, I provided testimony before the commission and, *inter alia*, stated that:
- 25.1. During July 1985, I received a telephone call from van Zyl, who was stationed in Port Elizabeth at the time.
- 25.2. Van Zyl referenced a weapon that was utilized during an operation – referred to as the Goniwe incident – and inquired whether I had a contact at the ballistic division.
- 25.3. Van Zyl informed me that the weapon was owned by a close friend and that only 120 of them are licensed in South Africa. Accordingly, he inquired whether it would be possible to modify the ballistic characteristics of the specific weapon utilised in the operation.
- 25.4. I then told van Zyl that I had no one I could trust to alter the weapon's ballistic characteristics and suggested to him that he had to throw the weapon into the sea because it was used in a serious offence.



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- 25.5. Later during the year, Van Zyl informed me that he was in command of the operation in which the Craddock 4 were murdered and that he was the one that kidnapped Mr Goniwe.
- 25.6. Van Zyl told me that Mr Goniwe resisted, at which point a shot was discharged inside the vehicle, penetrating the roof.
- 25.7. Van Zyl also stated that Head Office - under the leadership of Krappies Engelbrecht from the national murder and robbery division - was tasked with investigating the Goniwe case. Krappies Engelbrecht reportedly removed all the traffic tickets given or issued to that section.
26. I cannot recall the exact events due to fading memory and time passed. However, I have reviewed the transcript of my testimony at the TRC, which reflects what I remember to the best of my knowledge.
27. I am not aware that any adverse finding was made against me during any of the previous inquests, and I am also not aware of any testimony, statement or document that suggests that I had any involvement whatsoever with the murder or planning of the murders of the Craddock 4.
28. I received amnesty for my involvement in this matter and any offence incidental thereto. I will, to the best of my ability, provide my full co-operation to assist the state - where possible - to obtain closure for the victims' families.



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