General Tells TRC Special Forces he Commanded Killed 12

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Twelve activists were killed in covert operations by the SA Defence Force's elite special forces under his command from 1985 to November 1988, former special forces commander General Joep Joubert said on Wednesday.

This included killings by the notorious Civil Co-operation Bureau, he told the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's special hearings in Cape Town on the armed forces.

Joubert has applied for amnesty for the killings, but did not disclose details on Wednesday, fearing this would prejudice his application.

The killings took place in the context of an SADF-sanctioned plan that its special forces were to use clandestine and counter-revolutionary methods to combat the liberation movements.

Joubert said he had been autorised to draw up the plan by fromer SADF chief General Jannie Geldenhuys.

The plan he had drawn up called for the elimination of African National Congress targets, including activists and hangers on.

Covert operations were based on this plan.

However, he had not sought approval for specific operations from Geldenhuys "because I was under the impression he had given me the authorisation to do that", Joubert said.

The plan involved co-operation between special forces and the security police.

He believed particular operations had only to be approved by the head of the security police, as special forces were merely supporting the police in the internal operations.

"After one incident, it became clear this was not the case," Joubert said, without elaborating.

The particular operation had been reported to Geldenhuys and corrective steps were then taken to establish proper authorisation channels.

However, Joubert said once this approval mechanism was in place in early 1987, the police no longer requested support from special forces for its covert operations.

"After the procedure was put in place, the plan (for eliminating targets) was not used anymore."

From that period until he was transferred to another position in November 1988, neither the special forces nor the CCB had been involved in covert operations, either jointly with police or on their own.

Joubert said he did not know whether the police had requested subsequent support under his successor, General Eddie Webb.

Questioned by TRC national investigations director Glenn Goosen, Joubert said that from early 1987 until November 1988 special forces operations only involved conventional methods.

Joubert repeated that he believed "everyone of importance" was aware of the clandestine and covert operations.

Asked who he was referring to, he said "the government of the day".

This included the departments responsible for security, such as the police and defence force, and the State Security Council.

"It would have been very strange if they didn't know," Joubert said.

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