

Rocket HQ traced

Whites set up farm as attack base

By EMIELIA JAROSCHEK

WHITE agents infiltrated South Africa to set up an isolated farmhouse as a base from where five ANC insurgents launched their audacious 122mm rocket attack on Voortrekkerhoogte military base last August.

A Rand Daily Mail investigation followed the trail of the group to the luxury farmhouse Mooiplaas near Pretoria, also used as an HQ by the ANC men and as a hideout during the manhunt that followed.

An unsuspecting Pretoria businessman leased the house to Britons Nicholas Francis Henry Heath, 33, and Bonnie Lou Muller, 27, who slipped into South Africa to front the plan, giving false home addresses to the authorities.

Two other white agents — Briton David William Hedges, 37, and Belgian-born Guido Luciaan van Hecken, arrived in South Africa to buy transport for the operation.

A fifth white linked to the attack is a former South African, Dr Edward Wethli of Canada, whose truck was used by the insurgents.

All the whites were out of South Africa by August 12, when the attack was launched.

Security Police confirm the ANC attackers — all black South Africans based in a Mozambique military camp — have also got away.

The Mail investigation led to the five-bedroomed farmhouse on Mooiplaas, secluded amid bluegum trees, only 600m from the Erasmus police station and 250m from the launch site.

Heath and Muller rented this house at R500 a month, — and the ANC men moved in as well, posing as labourers and domestics and caching weapons in the house as they plotted the attack.

Heath and Muller lived there until two days before the attack.

The owner, Mr Gerhard Basson, told the Mail the house was left in a shambles, with damage to the floor and ceiling where armaments were apparently cached.

A Pretoria man who drove the black insurgents around told the Mail at a secret meeting how he was approached by one of the ANC men, a former school friend.

In August he began to suspect the men were planning an attack on a military base.

On August 11, the five insurgents carried their Soviet Grad P rocket launcher piece by piece along 250m of dirt road and set it up in the veld — only to abort the attack when a passerby became curious.

On August 12, armed to the teeth with rifles, pistols and grenades, they set it all up again — and that night 122mm rockets smashed into the military base 7km away, wounding a black woman and damaging homes.

A Laudium youth was shot and wounded as the insurgents eluded pursuers and fled back to Mooiplaas.

There they lay low for days as a massive manhunt went on, with roadblocks and air and sea exit checks.

They waited for the hue and cry to die down before making their escape from South Africa.

Security Police confirmed details of the Mail investigation.

They said Van Hecken and Hedges handed over three cars bought for the operation to the ANC.

They left for Swaziland on June 26 last year. Van Hecken is now lecturing at the University of Maputo.

Dr Wethli left South Africa for Mozambique in May — and his truck was driven back for the operation by Heath and Muller, who had travelled to Maputo.

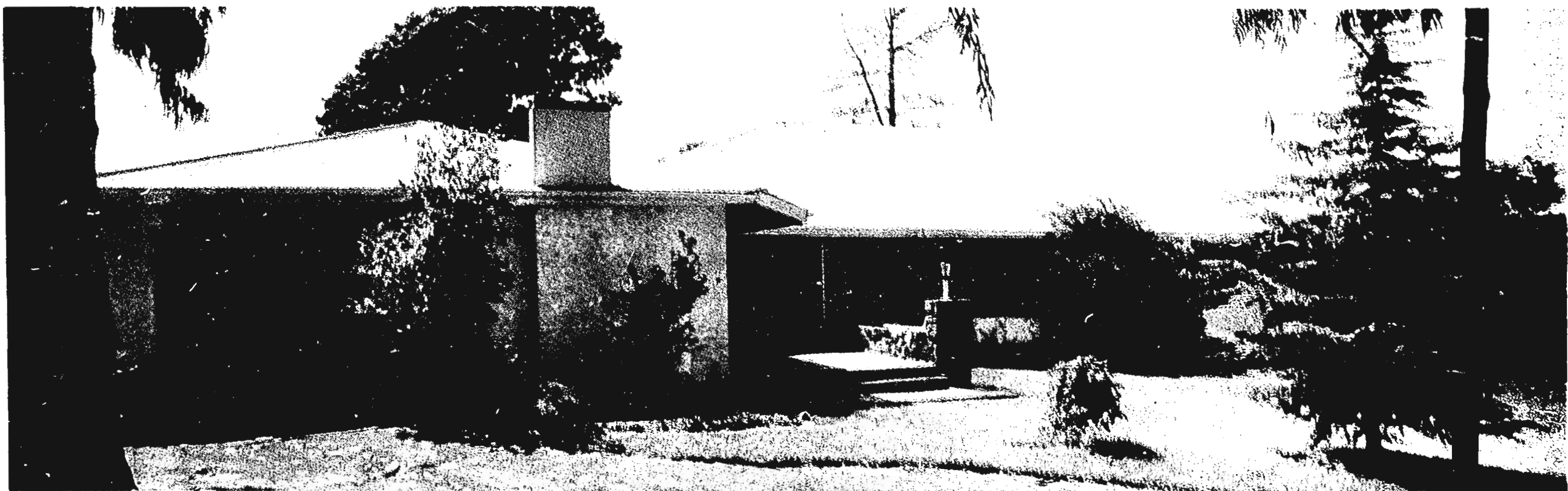
Meanwhile the South African Government is seeking the extradition of Heath and Muller from Britain.

But extensive investigations have failed to trace any of the three Britons. Both Scotland Yard and the British government gave negative responses.

Heath and Muller, who travelled as Mr and Mrs Heath, gave a non-existent British address to South African authorities.

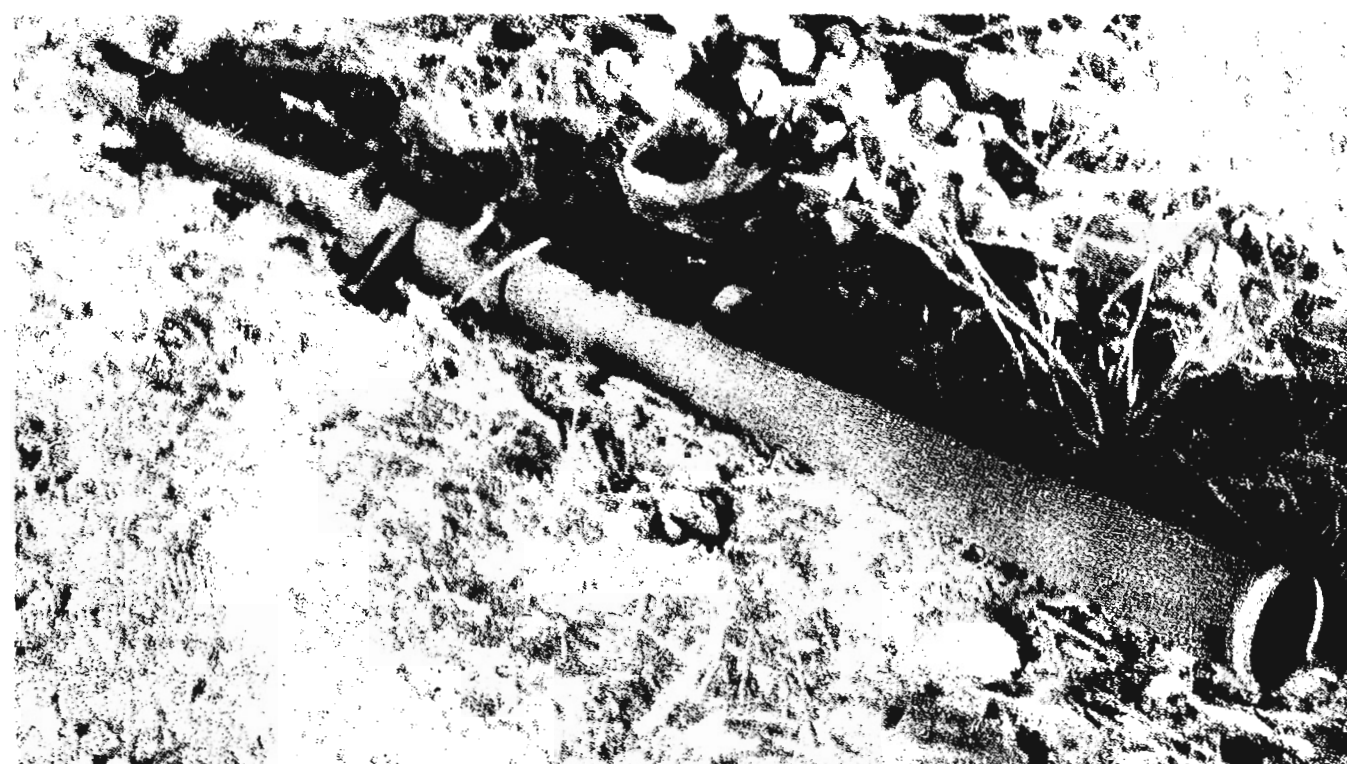
Hedges gave his address as 19 Queenswood Gardens — a block of flats — in London. But Flat 19 at the block is owned by a Mr Knight and there is no record of a tenant called Hedges.

And the London offices of the banned ANC and the Pan Africanist Congress denied any knowledge of the trio.



A COUNTRY PLOT ... Behind the facade of this luxury five-bedroomed farmhouse on Mooiplaas, the tenants set up a base to launch the rocket attack.

Picture: RAYMOND PRESTON



THE LAUNCH SITE ... This is how police found the Soviet Grad P 122mm rocket launcher after the night attack on Voortrekkerhoogte, lying in the veld only 250m from the isolated farmhouse where the five ANC insurgents lay in hiding — while a massive manhunt was raised

Where terror paid rent and farm hands plotted

By EMIELIA JAROSCHEK
Crime Reporter

HIDDEN among bluegum trees and surrounded by ramshackle cowsheds, the farm Mooiplaas provided the perfect shelter — and the launch zone — for the insurgents behind the Voortrekkerhoogte rocket attack.

Mooiplaas, near Pretoria, is only a few minutes away from the military base.

The owner, Mr Gerhard Basson, rented it unsuspectingly to two people he described as an "average couple" — now known to be Nicholas Francis Henry Heath, 33, and Bonnie Lou Muller, 27.

Soon they had five innocuous-seeming labourers around the place ... two gardeners, a cook, a cleaner and a labourer.

The truth: the five were ANC insurgents.

They slept in one of the six bedrooms alongside a Soviet Grad P rocket launcher.

Unperturbed as military aircraft and helicopters flew over the farm every few minutes, the "labourers" tended the garden and household, keeping their Russian AK47 rifles, Makarov pistols and handgrenades safely tucked away.

The sprawling farm remained a safe haven for four days as police combed the countryside after the attack on August 12.

No-one could have expected the attackers to be lying low in comfort in a roomy white house 250m from the rocket launch site — and only 600m down the road from the Erasmus police station.

Surrounded by rolling lawn, the house is carpeted and wallpapered. It has a tiled American kitchen, telephone and built-in cupboards.

It was luxurious shelter for the bush-hardened men.

Now — eight months after the attack — an air of tranquillity and seclusion pervades the deserted farm.

Long grass and weeds have taken over around the dilapidated outbuildings that go with the farm.

For R500 per month the insurgents duped Mr Basson into providing the ideal hideout.

It was so strategically placed that the ANC men had to plod only 250m up a bumpy dirt road to set up their launcher within eye range of the Voortrekkerhoogte military base 7km away.