

Colonel Louis Heap

O/C 5 SAI &amp; O/C Group 10, Durban

15/02/08

Missing Voices Project

Interviewed by Mike Cadman

	SIDE A
Interviewer	Can you tell me about your background - how you decided to join the military, when you joined the military and so on.
Louis	I was brought up to be a farmer.
Interviewer	In what area did you grow up?
Louis	In Northern Natal. My people owned a guest farm which had a lot of ground. And they were running the guest farm and I was going to be the farmer. I went to Weston in Mooi River.
Interviewer	That's an agricultural college.
Louis	That's right. While I was there I found out that the matric that I was going to write...I was in standard nine...was not university entrance acceptable, it was...it was a Standard Ten...
Interviewer	So it wasn't a university exemption.
Louis	That's right. Hell, that shocked me because I thought I wanted to be a vet. And anyway I left school immediately in a huff because of this, I felt I'd been bullshitted along the way. And I went home and my parents said to me, you must get stuck in here, do some work. I then found that the farm was not going to be able to carry two families. Well, them and me. So after about a year...in the meantime I'd written in to Union College, in the old days, to do correspondence courses, and I joined the Air Force, and I was a troopie in the airforce. And the Air Force had a very good scheme where if you wanted to study they got teachers to come in and give you night classes. I joined this lot and through them I got a matric certificate.
Interviewer	Roughly what year are we looking at now?
Louis	I'm looking at the fifties. And then I was so into swotting I thought to myself, let me carry on. So I wrote in to UNISA and I said send me your prospectus and I had a look at it and thought what's the easiest one here? And I picked the easiest one and said I'm going to do that. Because I saw the writing on the wall, if you want to get anywhere you must educate yourself. So I did this with my Air Force...I had a three year contract. After my three year contract I married my first wife and we went farming. Those days when you're 21 years old you think if you've got nothing you can make something out of it. I've got a farm with nothing, I got it on tick and this went on and on and on and I thought no hang on, I'm not getting anywhere here. So I sold the farm and I thought to myself, what do I want to do? And I thought to myself, well I want to be outside, I don't want to be office bound. And I joined the army. So I wrote in to the army and they commissioned me as a veld cornet, and they sent me on a whole lot of courses, which I

	<p>needed because I didn't have a clue what I was doing. And I went on a photo interpretation course, I went on an intelligence course, I went on a junior leader's course, how to be a junior leader. And that sort of got me right, and I was posted down to Durban in a thing called 14 Combat Group. We had combat groups those days where all the Citizen Force regiments sorted under...the command had the commandos and the combat groups had the Citizen Force regiments. They were supposed to be the conventional fighters. That came to an end at one stage and I was fortunately transferred to Ladysmith as a company commander, to 5 SAI. Where I spent 7 years, which was very, very good, because I became...I was a company commander, I became a second-in-command, and then I became an OC of 5 SAI. In the meantime we were starting to deploy...well the police was starting to deploy in South West and at that stage the law said, for some reason or another, that no army people are allowed there. So there's seven of us that were sworn in as policemen, we got police uniforms and away we went to Ondangwa and to Oshikati and we operated there and I operated with the police, which was an eye opener. Anyway, when that finished I came back to Ladysmith, I took up my job as a company commander and after a year or two, I can't remember, in fact I became a second-in-command of the unit as a major, I served under two commanders as the second-in-command and when the second commander was transferred I became the...I was the commander. And I served as Officer Commanding for about 18 months. I was then transferred to a very, very secret headquarters which was us, the Portuguese and the Rhodesians, stationed in Pretoria. And it was a very funny thing, it sounds important but it wasn't, because we...the Portuguese were going to pull out, and we didn't have much time for the Rhodesians, for some reason or other, they were very good soldiers, we lost something, because we are an arrogant crowd. So anyway...</p>
Interviewer	This would have been in the early seventies?
Louis	We're talking about '74.
Interviewer	Just before the Portuguese pulled out of Mozambique and Angola.
Louis	<p>That's right. They pulled out...well in any case, at that time, [Operation] Savannah started. Secret Savannah. And I thought I was getting nowhere and I was not soldiering properly in this headquarters, so I got hold of Constand Viljoen who was my boss at that stage, and I said, can't I do something else? So he says, right, I'm sending you up there. And I went up there and I was transferred...I was a Commandant then...and I was transferred as a staff officer into this war. And then...it was terrible. So the old commander then said, hang on, he needs a guy...we had taken the southern part of Angola up to Sa da Bandeira (<i>now Lubango</i>) and the south west, and they need somebody from the South African Army to liaise with the Unita and the FNLA, because what was happening, as we were going, so these blokes</p>

	<p>would come and take over the towns. And they were running the show. And they said, no they need somebody to act as a co-ordinator or something from the South African point of view. So they sent me. I got myself a Portuguese interpreter, a local guy, because I couldn't speak a word of it, and we had to look at...we had meetings every morning with these guys, who didn't take much notice of us, but what I knew was that there were radio stations, there were banks, there were ports, there were refugees, and we tried to form a civil government but I was (<i>inaudible</i>). So I asked my headquarters, I said, please send me somebody that can run a port, I've got a bloody port that's full of refugees, full of people and I don't know anything about ports and railway things. No, nothing, nobody. Hell it was frustrating, but anyway.</p>
Interviewer	So you became the governor of the province?
Louis	That's right. I sat in the Governor's office. The governor of that particular part, I sat in his office. And it was a learning curve, my boy, it was a learning curve. Which stood me in good stead later. Then I came back, but it was still secret, it was so bloody secret that it was stupid. I'm telling you it was stupid.
Interviewer	From a military point of view you feel it was a waste of time.
Louis	Let's put it this way, when I was there, already in the secret stage, I used to ask...what's my problem, I asked the question, I'm a fox terrier, I'm chasing a Volkswagen, what am I going to do when I catch it? What do I do with it? And what were we going to do with it, if you look forward, we would take over the towns and the MPLA goes into the bush, so we've got a bloody war now, we've got a Vietnam. We don't learn lessons. But anyway, my generals, they know what's going on, there's politics involved, the Americans, the CIA was there, we had to...I remember the CIA bloke he said, just give me a bloody Cuban prisoner. We didn't give them a Cuban prisoner, we had Cuban prisoners, I don't know why we...because we're too bloody arrogant you see. Because old Ford was then the president and he was well...he liked us. And the Cubans were a thorn in their side and if we could...if they could use the Cubans we'd get their support. But we didn't do that.
Interviewer	Was the CIA guy just a liaison officer who would visit from time to time or was he stationed there?
Louis	He was stationed there. I think so, it was Sa' da Bandeira, those places. He was also involved with old Savimbi. It was a strange period. We didn't know what we were doing, I think. Any case, as soon as old Ford said to them, look, we went to Congress and Congress said no. So then we had to pull out. That's where we pulled out, because of that. Because we had to have their support. We were a pariah nation to start off with, now we're going to make it even worse. So we pulled out.
Interviewer	At this time Ops Savannah was...there were some formal units

	involved from the SADF, but you also had Jan Breytenbach operating with a hodge-podge of support from ex Angolan troops and a whole range of guys.
Louis	That's right. We had a hodge-podge. There was Three Two Battalion which was his original Portuguese guys, blacks...
Interviewer	That's right but it didn't have a formal name at that stage, it wasn't Three Two Battalion then.
Louis	No, it was Alpha Group. And Bravo Group. And then we had mercenary Portuguese from the towns who got stuck there, all kinds of uniforms and we sort of integrated them somehow. I'll never forget, I was appointed at one stage...we came back...no, hang on, while I was there, they said to me you can speak Zulu, go and take over a Three Two Battalion, we've got to try and get some guts into them. Now they don't speak Zulu, let me tell you.
Interviewer	No. <i>laughs</i>
Louis	So I said, ok, I'll go. So these guys didn't want to fight, Unita. In fact Jan Breytenbach got so cross with them that he didn't play with them. But what happened was where we were told to stop was a place near Cela and that neck of the woods, we were in the <i>agter aanstelling</i> , in the rear...the hills but we weren't forward. We weren't in the forward because we were in the hills. Rear slope. And we had this <i>nek</i> and we put them there and said, look if these blokes come at night you guard this <i>nek</i> . And they used to...if somebody fought they ran. So what they did was, they say, hang on we're just behind you here, we'll help you but...we had one company of whites. So when they ran we said, no we thought it was the enemy, we opened up. Just to get them to bloody stay put, you know. Anyway it was a terrible...and this battalion I was supposed to run was the most frustrating time because I'd go there, I'd want to have orders with the OC and the company commanders because our chaps wanted to do something and the other blokes didn't come. They went town shopping and they...it was just useless. Ok. Anyway that ended and I came back.
Interviewer	It sounds to me from the outside...
Louis	You're talking to the wrong guy actually about that. You see I'm critical of it.
Interviewer	Well it sounds to me just from what you're telling me and what I've read, that you know, the world was saying South Africa had invaded Angola in 1975 and they're steamrolling their way towards Luanda, but in the meantime it was actually fairly chaotic, there wasn't a proper plan and, as you say, what would have happened once South Africa had occupied all these towns? Your fox terrier and the Volkswagen analogy. What do you do once you've taken over the country?
Louis	Now I'll tell you another thing, my books had taught me at my college that when you do an advance, you do it on a wide front.

	<p>But Angola in November, December is <i>nat</i>. It is wet! And I wondered why those roads were built up like this and I found out because it was just water. So if we couldn't advance...it was not a military operation in the sense that we could advance. We didn't know what opposition...we were expecting the Cubans, they came. And there were dribs and drabs of them, they were coming. But if we'd had an organised enemy we would have been run off...we would have been on the road. But fortunately we didn't have it at that stage. So we were advancing, and you don't advance with armoured cars. The infantry advances at certain circumstances and then only then would you bring the armoured cars or the tanks. It's the principles of warfare and things like that. So the book didn't work so that confused us a lot. <i>laughs</i> And you learn, you learn fast. Anyway. The boys did very well, because there was really no enemy to talk of. There was a bit, there was skirmishes here and there but nothing...</p>
Interviewer	<p>Was there ever a danger that, you talk about these Portuguese mercenaries and dribs and drabs from the villages all around and all these guys who were meant to be on your side...but was there ever really a risk that they might turn on you?</p>
Louis	<p>No, no, the risk was that they forgot the war and started plundering. The ones that were with us were ok. But the ones that had joined the FNLA, Robertos crowd, they were quite independent of us. We were aware that they were robbing banks and things like that. And it was chaotic. Absolutely. But it wasn't structured because of two reasons. First of all, of the terrain, and secondly because of our attitude to it, it's so secret. The blokes in Pretoria, we wanted a part for a 25 pounder gun, and the bloke would say, it's an exercise, what the hell, I'll send it next week. And then the bloke arrived here and the mechanic wasn't a 5.5 gun mechanic, he was a 25 pounder mechanic. They had to go all the way back...little things like that. You wanted bearings for an armoured car...and the armoured car stands for a good long time. And the thing that also worried me was that we took a lot of...we commandeered a lot of stuff. I can't go to Angola because I signed for petrol and for lorries. We didn't have them and we didn't have the fuel. They gave it to us but I just signed. <i>Laughs</i> So I gave everybody that needed... <i>laughs</i></p>
Interviewer	<p>When you say, they gave it to us, who gave you these things, these vehicles and the fuel?</p>
Louis	<p>The Portuguese. I had a very good captain who was serving with me there, he was in charge of the airport at Rocades (now Xangongo). And he took Land Rovers that we'd commandeered, Land Cruisers. First time I'd seen them. And he cut off their tops and he put two machine guns on them. And the bloke's an engineer, so I did it for him. Hell of a job.</p>
Interviewer	<p>So it strikes me that there was no real law anywhere in southern Angola...</p>

Louis	We were the law.
Interviewer	Yes that's exactly what I was thinking. Because the Portuguese were in the process...well they were gone...
Louis	Well the railway line between...
Interviewer	That's the one down to Lobito?
Louis	No the railway down from Mocamedes ( <i>now Namibe</i> ) port to Serpa Pinto ( <i>now Menongue</i> ) ...the senior guy was a ganger. The station masters had disappeared, the drivers had disappeared, and I had one National...that's where I always said I...something I always remember very well, is I could have done with a commando or a Citizen Force there, because they were people with skills. But I had National Servicemen, who had just come out of school. Now I said to one bloke, anyone know about it? He says, my dad was a driver, I used to go with him sometimes on the plate. He always said, come. So that's how I got bloody train to look after. It was terrible. I had a harbour with a big Portuguese ship, and I said to them, send me somebody. I found out years later that the SAS Kruger or something, was sailing up and down the coast about 3-6 kilometres but he couldn't come into the port, he was not allowed to come in to the port.
Interviewer	Because you were running this secret operation?
Louis	No, he's not part of the secret operation. They don't use ships. Look the ships mustn't be lost and aircraft mustn't be lost. Anything else can be lost. But those two...we couldn't use the aircraft forward for reconnaissance or for bombing because the general of the Air Force said, you can't use aircraft. Let me tell you, it was terrible. I don't know whether Jan Breytenbach has told you this.
Interviewer	I haven't spoken to Jan myself. One of my former colleagues, Angela Macintyre spoke to him.
Louis	I'm talking about general level. The troopies were excellent, let me tell you that. I always wondered, I'd been training too for a long time, and I always wondered, how are these guys going to react in a war? And we had one company from Walvis Bay there. I told guys when I came back, I said, you know what, when they come back, we must salute them, not they must salute us. They were excellent! They had no food, they had no post, they had no beer, they had nothing! It rained. They were wet! If you go and see them in the ( <i>inaudible</i> ). I was amazed! I was really so impressed with them. My training at Ladysmith had taught me a lot of things. One of them was that when you want to get maximum fire in the front you must have one of two things, either a buddy system where the guy next to you is there, or you must have a team mounted weapon, like a machine gun. Because there's what we call battlefield isolation. And boy are you isolated, if you suddenly go down, if there's fire from the front and

	<p>you go down because down (<i>inaudible</i>) also fire. If you do that, you don't know where anybody is, and you must start talking. And just to teach them because you are so silent in your training, and you must teach them, now you can shout, now you can talk. You've got to teach them to do this. And these are the things...in actual fact my training as a training man, was based on about the troopie. Not about my career so much as what does the troopie do? How must we teach him? When you come into the army a lot of chaps told me, bloody waste of time. Came in on the Friday and for 2 weeks I just lay around and did nothing. We at Ladysmith brought it down. We had within a week we had everybody's hair cut, and medical, issued, and we were ready to train after one week. For instance, when we went on to the range we didn't chase troopies up and down the hill to go and fetch something, a <i>takkie van daai boom</i>, that we did not do. We were there to fire a rifle and to train and to train how to fire it and we structured our training such. Because after all if it wasn't for the troopie I wouldn't have had a job. So it was all about him really. Then when I came back from Angola they put me into army headquarters as a staff officer on the Director of Operations Staff. while I was there they made me the Secretary of the Defence Staff council. I took all the minutes of the meetings which Malan and his staff, that's the medics, the chaplains, the logistics, the engineers and that crowd. There was another council called the...I can't remember it was so long ago. There was a naval captain, he was their secretary. And that was the Army Navy Air Force.</p>
Interviewer	And at this stage Malan is still Chief of the Defence Force?
Louis	Yes.
Interviewer	He became Minister in '79, I think it was.
Louis	Yes, possibly.
Interviewer	Same time as PW Botha became Prime Minister.
Louis	And he did a very good job of sort of getting it together and...but I can remember...you know, you remember stupid things. I can remember sitting in there taking the minutes of a meeting, where the generals were discussing the colour of the ribbon. There's a new ribbon that they'd decided on. And I thought...and that's my problem. They could see it on my face. They could see, this Heap, <i>hy stel nie belang nie</i> .
Interviewer	But you know, Jan Breytenbach in his books, I can see that he has no time for generals talking about the colours of ribbons or anything else. That to him it is a case of, yes, you need to do it, but don't bother me with that.
Louis	That's the staff's job.
Interviewer	Exactly.
Louis	So I wangled and dangled and pulled long strings and I took up

	<p>many favours that I had outstanding, and I got myself transferred to the military base, Jozini, which was a piece of...it was the training section of Natal Command. And it was in a terrible state when I got there. It wasn't my idea of a unit and I fought my staff down there, fought them to get it to be recognised as a unit, as a (<i>inaudible</i>). Ok, I got that right, and I was there, and while I was there what happened was it was before the troops were starting to be posted to South West in great mobs. Every unit in Natal Command (<i>inaudible</i>) came there for training. I trained the corporals, the sergeants, had courses running, and when they came for their camps I put them in training. And I had a very good Citizen Force guy, Norman Edwards, join me, and I had a good sergeant...when I went there I had nothing. Really nothing. It was a one man job. That was the life, you sort of start with nothing...one thing about the army if they want to start something they find an old hospital that's falling apart and say that's it. So there's nothing built for you. But then they came down to me and said, look they want to start a Zulu battalion. So I said, fine, give me the instructors, give me the kit and I'll go, and we had...at Jozini military base we had what we called the old compound. So I got this thing painted out and cleaned out and I said, right the first company of 121 Battalion arrived for induction training. And that was a beautiful experience. I really enjoyed that. Because you get these guys who, <i>funa sebenza</i>, I want a job, bugger the army, I want a job. So this is a job. So we had to take them...they were raw....and turned them into soldiers. And that very first company, I'll never forget when it had a passing out parade, all the mothers and sisters and wives who invited me and on the playground...after the parade we had a demonstration of silent drill. One of the platoons did silent drill. No commands, just silent drill. And then another platoon did the stripping and assembling blindfolded of their R1 and the machine gun. Blindfolded! And I was proud of them. Really did a good job. and they were then moved to Matubatuba and I lost command of them.</p>
Interviewer	This is what, around about '78 as well.
Louis	<p>Yes, somewhere around there. In '81 I was...Colonel Lloyd who became a General was the 2IC of the command, and he came to me and he said to me, look, I'm being promoted to Brigadier and I'd like you to be my Colonel. Now I knew him well. And I said to him, no thank you. It won't work. Thank you very much but I wanted to stay at Jozini and my forte is command not staff command. That's what I joined the army for. Anyway. That of course put me back five steps in his opinion. But then I was promoted and made his 2IC.</p>
Interviewer	And that was Charles Lloyd?
Louis	<p>Yes, Charlie baby. <i>Laughs</i> Then I went there. (<i>inaudible</i>) the things...you're not in command, you can't change things, people have their ways and means and they think that's right so you just stick around and do what you have to do. And then fortunately they decided that I was so bloody useless that they would make</p>



	me the...I was the commander of Group 10. You know what the groups are? Every command...if you see, commanders are at divisional headquarters, and then they had brigades. In the conventional term not in the conventional way, but you'd have a group running the Northern Natal, you'd have one in Maritzburg and environs, you'd have one in Durban, you had one in Zululand. I had the Durban one.
Interviewer	And then all the units, like Durban Light Infantry, Natal Mounted Rifles.
Louis	No, no, they were still under the CF set up. But we did have some command units like Congella Regiment and Natalia Regiment...the 24 Field Gunners. And they were in the family. And those elements could be called up and used by us. And all the commandos in the area, Umgeni Commando, Durban North Commando, South Coast Commando, Oribi Commando, etc, they were grouped together. They were grouped under me. I was responsible. Command then slowly but surely abdicated their responsibilities with these guys. And we had to do the lot. Which was fine by me, I lived it. But when the war broke out I [ <i>in the rural areas and townships of KwaZulu Natal</i> ] I was instructed that the task of Group 10 is to support the Port Natal police division in their operations.
Interviewer	Now this is the war in the townships, the rural areas, down towards Izingolweni and....
Louis	That's us. Now a learning curve started. Boy oh boy, the police and us have got a culture quite different. In fact, a lot of Generals after a year or two came to visit me...it was going well with us. We were fighting the war as we could see it but the culture problem...let me explain it this way. The Generals came and we were briefing and they said, Louis have you got any problems? So I said, yes I have. These bloody policemen, the police were all there, and I said they're eating up my troops. They said, how come? I said, when I deploy a Buffel, I've got to bloody have 4 troops detached from my fighting force, and I haven't got so many. They all looked at me, and they said, why? I said, the one in front on the right hand side, he has to say blue, blue, blue. The one on the left has to say, wee wah, wee wah, and the two at the back go woof, woof, woof. <i>Laughter</i> Now that's a joke, and the Generals looked at me and I thought to myself, uh oh, here you've done it again. <i>Laughter</i>
Interviewer	You're in trouble, they haven't caught your humour.
Louis	No, it's not humorous, this is very important stuff. They come from staff you know, they're up in Pretoria, they come all the way down here. They can't wait to get back to the tea and scones. But anyway. You're talking to the wrong guy here actually. You're talking to the wrong guy.
Interviewer	I don't think so. I'm enjoying your stories.

Louis	<p>And General comes down...a hell of a good General, a bloke I like very much, who was the Chief of Logistics, who said Louis (<i>inaudible</i>)..... because no way would my Generals, quite rightly, allow us (<i>inaudible</i>) to be found wanting in auditing and controlling. It was very strict. In fact they'd sent every commander to Pretoria on a course on logistics control. And that little thing called the Yellow Pages also came out, the Yellow Book, and boy you had to know it. They were strict and it was good. The General, you may have known of that one, that was investigated at Army level, was Witkop Badenhorst. But they got us logistically right. And this other General came, he was from a higher level, got the Army commanders, Navy and Air Force in this big hall. When you start off you also start with a joke. Fortunately I knew him well. And he got up and he says, what's the difference between us and the circus? Now the normal answer is, that we have more tents than the circus. But that was an old, old joke. So Louis puts up his hand and he [the General] says, yes, Louis what do you say? I said, we don't salute the clowns in the circus. I tell you what that hall laughed. They caught it! (<i>inaudible</i>) Anyways, that was another blot in my book. And then the learning curve as far as the police was concerned is you must remember you are fighting a war in your own country. You are not fighting it in somebody else's country. So the laws are different. You cannot do speculative fire. You can't drive around and say I think there's an enemy there and bam! You don't know who there is. If a little '<i>fanjaan</i>' ('<i>umfaan</i>'- Zulu for little boy) throws a stone at you, you don't shoot him, because you've got to go to court and the court will ask you, was your life in danger? In a roundabout way it may have been. But you don't shoot the mug. And we were so sensitive about property, that when you sent your troops out...I had my troops spread far and wide. Now you can't be there to look after them. You've got to trust that it will happen as you came. Because we had a week of explaining period before deployment. And I had a system where every single patrol, every single day, the names of that patrol and where it went and the times it went would be submitted. I had a filing cabinet full because in two month's time somebody comes and says, my mealies was <i>omgery</i>, or my hut was broken. And I live there, and it was at nine o'clock that morning, I look where the patrol was and I must have those names and units because they may have to come to court. So there was a hell of an admin thing around this. It wasn't just get on the vehicle and <i>gaan speedie</i> boys. And we understood this. We understood but the police were in charge, and it was my job to try and get the police to think a little bit military, because they were policemen. The policemen said to me, aagh Louie man, you bloody army blokes, <i>julle gaan haal die bobbejaan agter die berg</i>. We wait until there's a problem then we arrest them. I said no, no, we must anticipate. And that's the army way. But to them it's being too pro-active. They're not pro-active, they are reactive. So that was that, getting that together.</p>
Interviewer	When you say the police were in charge, if you had an area

	where there was something happening that you felt you had to have troops and policemen in that area, would the police take priority over the army?
Louis	Absolutely. In fact the book says, that I may not operate without a policeman. No matter what his rank.
Interviewer	So in other words if you had a Buffel out in Umbumbulu or wherever it might be, theoretically there should have been a policeman there?
Louis	Absolutely.
Interviewer	From what point of view? To act as a guide or to act as the enforcer of the law?
Louis	The enforcer of the law.
Interviewer	But in practice that was impossible.
Louis	Yes, but we knew our restrictions, so while there were some of my troops that sort of got out of hand...my Brigadier came to visit me, a hell of a nice guy, Andy Anderson, came to visit my troops once, he was command OC and they said to him, <i>hulle kinders</i> they're throwing stones at us. He said, <i>skiet hulle</i> , shoot them! I don't want anyone throwing stones at my troops. That's very nice from that point of view, but when he'd gone I said, shut up, we don't shoot anybody. Unless the bloke points a gun at you, then you shoot him. But he throws a stone at you...so you had to have this balance. And what hurt me at one stage, you know this court case they had here in Durban where some Major had blown the whistle and said that they'd shot people up somewhere, and Malan and a crowd of blokes had been caught. Do you remember that case?
Interviewer	I've got a vague memory of it - we're talking about the mid eighties now? Was it meant to be a secret operation that went wrong somewhere along the way?
Louis	That's right. I was OC Group 10, it was my responsibility. Thank god I didn't know, but if they'd told me to do it I would have done it differently. But this bloody crowd came in from the side. I didn't know about them, the next thing I heard there was a court case. But in was in my area of responsibility, it was in my...look the Special Branch of the police, Veleigheids Tak, they did their own operations, but that didn't worry me.
Interviewer	Did they ever talk to you, the Security Police? Did they come and say to you, listen Colonel, this is what we...
Louis	No, what they'd say is Colonel, don't go into KwaMakutha this week, stay away.
Interviewer	But they wouldn't tell you why?
Louis	Now ways!

Interviewer	So they wouldn't swop intelligence with you?
Louis	They'd swop intelligence that was not do to with them. You see the police have got a funny set up. They had a specific operational arm. The operational arm that I worked with, were the COIN counter insurgency police. They were a special unit. They were the guys I worked with. But the Security Branch would have operations...not telling us anything, and so on and so forth.
Interviewer	So sometimes it would be an absolute surprise to you what they'd done?
Louis	Absolutely. Absolutely. This specific one was a surprise.
Interviewer	Wasn't it Operation Marion?
Louis	I can't remember.
Interviewer	I think that's what they said in court, it was Operation Marion.
Louis	I can't remember about it, but I felt actually very taken aback, because if they'd come to me...it was a very simple operation. Come to me and said, look we want to do this, this, I would have done it according to the laid down way. Because I worked with the police like this, we decided somewhere that we will rewrite the counter insurgency urban book. We will write it in Afrikaans. I went up to Bloemfontein and I sat around the table there and I heard there that all they wanted to do was to translate the British book. Really! I said, hang on it doesn't work that way in our towns. It's a different baby! No, Louis man, <i> jy soek kak</i> . I said, no, you...I tell you what we must write this book how to get on with policemen. I have five rules: first of all you don't criticise him in front of colleagues. If you promise him anything you give it to him. And there was some other things, I can't remember what they were. I said, that's what you must teach our guys, because as soon as they see...the Brits when they came in, the army commander becomes the commander. I'm talking about (inaudible). The army commander comes in, takes over, and then when he's sorted it out he gives it back to the police. Then he sort of disappears off the scene. We had not got to that stage. And I said we will not get to that stage without...I'd seen the signs, there was no way that the army was going to take over and do its thing. I mean there was looting and all kinds of things taking place and I just ignored it. Where in the books says, shoot them. The police are monitoring the situation. That word monitor. Anyway. Are you with me with what I'm telling you?
Interviewer	Absolutely. I understand a lot of what went on in Natal. Both in the semi rural areas, and then also the urban places, Chesterville, Umlazi.
Louis	Chesterville, I spent nights in Chesterville. I remember going to KwaMashu one night and I had a brand new vehicle that the medical guys had...we didn't have vehicles, we had a transported informer. And I took him, and as I came along there, a lot of

	Inkatha chaps on the streets. I said to them, go, don't stop! And that bloody knobkierie went right through the window, it stuck there. When I got there we had to take it out. That type of thing. There's no way, if it was an armoured car I was in I would have opened up with a machine gun in a war situation, [but] you can't do that.
Interviewer	When you were operating, say you had a task to do wherever it was, you used mainly commmandos?
Louis	Yes.
Interviewer	But could you call on support from say a Citizen Force Regiment?
Louis	Sometimes they came. In fact it was so that I structured my commandos that were directly under my command...I used to write an operational order every year, and update it. And I would say to Highway Commando, I said you are responsible for KwaMakutha, for this, for that, that's your area of responsibility. You are required to know the policemen, where the police station is, who the magistrate is, who the school chaps are, the intelligence, basic intelligence stuff, because if a Citizen Force unit comes here from the Transvaal, he's never been here, he doesn't know a thing, you will detach these people to them and you will orientate them. That was their task. They didn't do it. Excepting Peter Williams. Peter Williams was a commanding officer and they did it well. His particular commando. But he knew exactly what I wanted. He did it. But the others didn't do it so well. But that was their job, that was their operational orders, stated that clearly.
	END OF SIDE A ( <i>counter at 166</i> )
	SIDE B ( <i>counter at 15</i> )
Interviewer	And then at the same time if for a particular task you needed support from the airforce you could say we need two helicopters on such and such a date and such and such a time, did they have...?
Louis	The police headquarters would request them. We did the work but it was their request. And their request counted more than mine. I was under command of policemen. He was a Major and I was a Colonel. But it didn't worry me because I knew we had a job to do and let's do it.
Interviewer	So if the Major decided that he needed three platoons of your men, two helicopters, and if he needed them for a week, he could request that?
Louis	Absolutely. And if I had them I'd give them. In fact we had an ops room, operating...they had that beautiful place at the Point. First of all they were at...what's that main one near the command, main headquarters...where the division is, that big tall building with flats next door to it.

Interviewer	CR Swart Square.
Louis	That's right. First of all they had a hangar there, we used to operate from there, then they got this beautiful little place in the Point area, I think it was the old jail or something. And this major converted it very nicely and we had a big operations room and we had a big conference room. And we would meet there daily. And the say, ok this is what's happened, this is what we're going to do. Can you help me with this? Sure, sure. Get my blokes now to do this. That's how it worked.
Interviewer	Did the Special Forces ever get involved in these things? And I'm referring specifically to the Recces.
Louis	Not to my...they would be used with these secret missions. I didn't know where.
Interviewer	So you wouldn't get briefings...they wouldn't say, listen we've learned X,Y or Z?
Louis	They got their intelligence from us, if there was any.
Interviewer	So it worked that way around. Because you had the guys on the ground who knew the area. You're a Zulu speaker, were many of your guys able to converse in Zulu?
Louis	Some of them were. But you know, the old days of a youngster in Natal, growing up in Natal...I'm not talking about Durban, I'm talking about Natal...of being able to speak Zulu, they're dying. My eldest son went to school in a hell of a panic, he couldn't speak English or Afrikaans. He was a Zulu speaker. And we said, children like that, boy they pick up a language like that. I remember he turned about five or six and his grandfather, grandmother and he wanted a bicycle badly because his little mate had a bicycle, so we bought him a tricycle, so we put the tricycle on the veranda and he came out that Christmas morning and he said, <i>Hau</i> , my bicycle. That's how he spoke. <i>Laughs</i> So Zulu was a problem. In fact when I retired from the army...
Interviewer	What year was that?
Louis	1989. I retired at the age of 55 because I saw the writing on the wall. I wasn't going anywhere, I was a bit of a has-been. So I thought, no, well let me get out. And a hell of a nice guy, Pretorius, Brigadier...he became Chief of the Army, General Pretorius, was my OC. And he said, Louis I want you to do something for me. I said, what's that? He says, I want you to come back under article 9 and I want you to be my liaison with the Parks Board, which is a big intelligence source, and I want the KwaZulu government, Ulundi, I want you to liaise with them. A very nice job there. So I liaised with the...I got to know Buthulezi very well and some of his ministers, and the Parks Board, one of the biggest jobs we did was we plotted every single pass between here and Lesotho. And whether it could be vehicles or foot or what the going was like and everyone. So we

	<p>knew...look I don't know if they're using it because I hear the cattle rustling is something terrible at the moment. But it was there, and the parks board chaps were very keen. They thought it was quasi-military so they were nice to have around. And so that's what happened. And when I got to the age of 60 they said, no you're getting a bit long in the tooth now, bugger off. So I went and did some courses on labour relations and I now hire myself out as a chairman of disciplinary committees. That's what I do now.</p>
Interviewer	<p>That's very interesting. Back to the eighties when you had commandos all over the place. In the army you had Permanent Force guys, you had National Servicemen, you had Citizen Force guys and then you had the commandos. For the kind of work you were doing, was the army trained...did it have the understanding of how to deal with these issues that you were dealing with? You weren't dealing with the war with tanks and jet fighters?</p>
Louis	<p>No. We had to work it out and we had to train accordingly. And even then...you see, the training of a commando officer, which is a quite a different set up, is exactly the same as CO officer. He goes and learns about tanks, he learns about artillery, and then he comes back and he says I'm qualified. Qualified for what? To go and fight a war or something maybe. But not qualified to fight this particular...this counter insurgency war of ours, especially the urban one...or for the rural one as well here, was a different kettle of fish completely. It was a mind change, an attitude change. And of course the fighters, the Angola boys, looked down on us. I would rather get into my bloody armoured car and travel along and see, give me speculative fire there, do that, like they did in Angola. I tell you what, that bloody airport I arrived at after we'd been shot up by the bloody 90mm. We wouldn't do it here. Your wife or girlfriend or mother is typing up in the building somewhere I can't just basically fire at random, it may hit her, it doesn't work that way. So we had to adapt the drills. But then I got a bit clever. There are principles of war and every time I had to do something I said how do I do this with the principles I know? Surprise, integrated force, all the principles that had to do with war. How do I do this? And every time I did something and I went and sold it to...because most of the operations, the big ones, you've got to go and sell what you're doing to the command and staff. And I would say, this is the principle I'm working on, that one. Then they'd shut up because they can't argue a principle. Ek het dit geleer, I know them. So we adapted the principles to fit in to our type of war.</p>
Interviewer	<p>Did you find therefore that because you were having to adapt the principles to meet the specific circumstances, did you find that older troops were actually better to have in the field than a 19 year old conscript?</p>
Louis	<p>Oh yes, let me tell you something. I was a normal PF officer who was used to working with National Servicemen and PF instructors and we always looked down on the <i>skiet piete</i>. But then I got to</p>

	work with them and I'll tell you what, I told my CF regiment if you blokes do the work these guys do then you can be <i>windgat</i> , but at the moment don't be. Don't look down on them, they're excellent. The expertise that they have, the knowledge of their area is so good, that you can't operate without them. I couldn't operate without them actually, they were my number one guys.
Interviewer	So that's the commandos.
Louis	The commandos.
Interviewer	So the more mature guy who's been around a bit understands...looks at life differently to an 18 year old.
Louis	Absolutely. But he also gets the <i>moer in</i> . He wants to shoot when you're throwing stones at him but he understands why you don't do it.
Interviewer	And did you at that time have support from say, 121 Battalion, a black unit full of Zulu speakers? Were you able to call on them and say, listen go with my guys and talk to people?
Louis	Sometimes. Sometimes they were available. But they were starting to be deployed on the border. So...if they were available I would get them. But I was glad to do with or without them.
Interviewer	Was your feeling at that time, there was a lot of stuff going on in Natal in the eighties. Inkatha were at loggerheads with the UDF the ANC...they were one and the same I guess at the time...but it was very serious fighting going on.
Louis	Absolutely.
Interviewer	Did you get the impression that headquarters in Pretoria were more interested in Angola and South West Africa because that was a more glamorous war?
Louis	Oh yes, absolutely. So were my fellow officers. Absolutely.
Interviewer	So this was an irritation for them?
Louis	Yes.
Interviewer	It must have been very frustrating sometimes?
Louis	It was. But I was fortunately had certain brigadiers...the first ones didn't want to know my trouble...right the beginning when we started doing this internal security stuff I had an OC who had fought at Anzio and he had an MC, and I said to him, we must start training for this type of thing. He says, that's banditry! It's a police job! Don't talk to me about that! You know, you must take number one gun and fire it, I don't want to hear. So there was always that. And I was always understood that this would be important. The Recce course, I volunteered for that, I passed that Recce course. I didn't pass the jumping part. I was too bloody old and too fat. So I didn't pass that. You know when I think about it I'm glad because poor old Breytenbach, we lost such good soldiers, soldiers that I'd grown up with and I knew, who were



	<p>selected to go to Special Forces. And in Angola, I got the impression, I don't know whether I'm right or wrong, but I got the impression they were being used incorrectly. And I always had a bit of a thing about Breytenbach not putting his foot down and saying stop. Don't use them for this. But they were being used as ordinary infantry and they were being shot up something terrible. Look a reconnaissance guy is a guy who works two of them together, they're camouflaged and they're silent and they work far away and it's a hell of a job, believe me, it's a hell of a job. Look I can't swear to this, I may be wrong, but I got that impression.</p>
Interviewer	<p>Isn't that what happened at Ekeke when the Recces actually...there were a large group of them, it might have been 40, it might have been 50, but they actually formed an infantry unit and that wasn't what their role was.</p>
Louis	<p>Absolutely. Look they're bloody good infantry men but that's not...way too expensive to use like that. Anyway...</p>
Interviewer	<p>Jan Breytenbach seems to have fought two wars: he fought one war against the people who he thought was his enemy and then he fought another war against Defence headquarters.</p>
Louis	<p>Yes, well he and I are both in the same boat. We're both Colonels. We both retired as Colonels but for different reasons. <i>Laughs</i></p>
Interviewer	<p>Do you know him well?</p>
Louis	<p>Very well, yes.</p>
Interviewer	<p>He seems to be quite a character.</p>
Louis	<p>He is a hell of a nice guy. This Recce course we did he was the Major there, I was a captain. He was instructing us on this course. Boy did he put the fear of god into us. And the last part of course is escape and evasion, and he said to the Security Police, you're always bloody bragging that you can break these blacks. I'm going to give you some whites, you can try on them. So when we were captured, we were interrogated, but we still knew they weren't going to kill us but we were sure it was bloody close. <i>Laughs</i> Anyway...what else can I tell you, I've been talking for hours.</p>
Interviewer	<p>It's very interesting, because there's aspects of it...you mentioned that way back in the sixties they wouldn't deploy the army in what was South West Africa, so they put you into police uniforms, made you into policemen.</p>
Louis	<p>That's right. We were instructors for the police, they wanted us to...</p>
Interviewer	<p>So you went in...was this after '66 when they had that attack on Ongulumbashe?</p>
Louis	<p>That's right. At the time. It was in 1968, I think. And then we went over. Then after that they deployed the army up there but only as</p>

	guards of the bases. They weren't allowed out of the gate. And only after that did we take over from the police.
Interviewer	And that would have been in the early seventies?
Louis	I spent a lot of time up there. Yes.
Interviewer	What made the government change their mind and say listen the police can't do it on their own, we actually need to get the military in there formally?
Louis	I think the police found that out, and then they...I've got a feeling they interpreted the law which says that we are a Defence Force. That was the big thing. Crossing the line was a big crime in those days. Crossing the Angola cut line. But then you define defence and you have what you call aggressive defence and passive defence. Now we were doing passive defence work. Then we said hang on we need some aggressive defence. And it was maybe just a play at words but that got us.
Interviewer	To cross the cut line, a small little...a section of guys going across for a few hours and that Pretoria never knew about. But for anything bigger you would have needed authority from Pretoria.
Louis	Absolutely. Well I think so, I would have from my headquarters up there anyway. South West Africa.
Interviewer	But it wasn't the case of well you do what you need to do?
Louis	The trouble...well I wouldn't have crossed that line, if any white troops had been killed, and they were that side or captured that side, I was in big trouble. So we kept to our side. We understood why it was but we couldn't understand why it was that way.
Interviewer	So was the...just as I asked you was...
Louis	Just put it off for a bit. It was very difficult. The reason it was difficult was you get continuity, so that I always insisted on a two week pre-deployment training period. You know that in the townships...I had an intelligence section, at my unit, which grated me and they hated me because I told them they were historians. That they were telling me what happened yesterday, and I want to know what's happening tomorrow. And I didn't get it from them. So I sat down with a youngster...I was very fortunate to get a youngster who was a computer boffin, a National Serviceman, and I said to him this is my problem, how are we going to control this? And I worked out there is what is called firewood, tinder, and then there's a spark. The sparks I know were the 16 <sup>th</sup> of June and certain dates that were used to whip up the public. The tinder was, have the pensions been paid? Has anybody been removed stupidly? Which was happening all the time.
Interviewer	You mean forced removals.
Louis	Forced removals. All the things that I knew could cause a problem. And I had young Lieutenants who were transferred to

	<p>me all from the Citizen Force, who came for their camp, and I put them in every single township, and I put them next to the police station. And they had to go and visit the Bantu administrasie guys that were responsible. They had to go to the schools, they had to go to any department that was involved with the economical welfare of the people. And they had to measure for me and say what's going on. They would feed me every week...they would feed me with information. Say, look it's ok, it's quiet, and everybody's happy, they've got their pensions, this is happening, this, that. So when the 16<sup>th</sup> of June arrived I could say to my brigadier, I don't need extra troops, I'm ok. Or if my...and I put this on a computer and I could read it as a graph. And I said, no, hang on, I've got a possible problem in KwaMakuthu or in Chesterville, or Umlazi, or KwaMashu. I need an extra...but don't call up a battalion because what happened was... <i>phone interruption</i> In fact that particular program got used in the army. It was sold to the army and the army chief, the Brigadier who's in charge of intelligence at army headquarters came down to me and I sold it to him. Look I said to him, the tinder in different places is different. He mustn't use my tinder, you may have different tinder. You must identify them and then measure them. And that's how I got my...so I ran my own intelligence. My intelligence blokes became bloody loads of shit with me, I just didn't use them. Go and play golf or do something, get out of my hair. <i>Laughter</i> I wasn't very popular with the intelligence section.</p>
Interviewer	<p>...You speak of tinder [the situations that are volatile] specific to rural KwaZulu Natal, tinder that's specific to urban areas. Now you're aware of these issues but you when you raised the issues that you also need to liaise with the guy making decisions (<i>inaudible</i>).</p>
Louis	<p>That's another story.. <i>Tape turned off (counter at 208)</i></p>
	<p>END OF RECORDING</p>

**Collection Number: A3079**

**Collection Name: "Missing Voices" Oral History Project, 2004-2012**

***PUBLISHER:***

*Publisher:* Historical Papers Research Archive, University of the Witwatersrand

*Location:* Johannesburg

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