

**Statement to the Commission of Inquiry into TRC Stopped Cases****Case Reference:** The Rietbok air crash, 13 March 1967**Submitted by:** Robyn Lichter on behalf of AFORAT  
(The Associated Families of the Rietbok Aircraft Tragedy)**Date:** 07 November 2025

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Thank you to your honour and her learned colleagues of the team for creating this inquiry in the format that we have today.

A special thanks to all those who have worked over the years to help bring truth and justice for this case. It has been a very long and traumatic journey, but many have stayed the distance. In particular, I mention Alan Elsdon, whose wisdom, advice and support have been ever present for decades, leading us to this point.

I also pay tribute to all those who worked tirelessly, but in vain, to attain recognition at the original TRC in 1998, namely Helen Brown, Johannes Bruwer and Martin Legassick.

This statement is our submission to the South African Commission of Inquiry into TRC cases, focusing on the Rietbok Air Crash. It outlines the case as an example of a stopped TRC case, detailing the crash in 1967 and the previous findings of the official inquiry, and requests that the commission investigate the case to provide truth and justice, as recommended by the current inquiry's mandate to hold individuals responsible for apartheid crimes accountable.

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## 1. Introduction

This statement is submitted to THE JUDICIAL COMMISSION OF INQUIRY INTO ALLEGATIONS REGARDING EFFORTS OR ATTEMPTS TO STOP THE INVESTIGATION OR PROSECUTION OF TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION COMMISSION CASES (TRC CASES INQUIRY) by **Honourable Madam Justice Khampepe**.

We wish to highlight the incident of the Rietbok air crash as our claim of a stopped case that requires further investigation. We welcome the commission's establishment and its mandate to ensure that individuals responsible for apartheid-era crimes are held to account.

## 2. Background of the Rietbok air crash

- **Date and time:** The incident occurred on 13 March 1967 at 1710 GMT.
- **Aircraft:** The crash involved a Viscount aircraft, registered as ZS-CVA.
- **Location:** The aircraft crashed into the sea approximately 1½ to 2½ miles offshore.
- **The Event:** The SAA Rietbok crashed into the sea at Kayser's Beach near East London, with the loss of twenty-five lives on Monday, 13 March 1967

South African Airways Flight 406, also known as the Rietbok Crash, was a scheduled passenger flight from Port Elizabeth that crashed into the sea on approach to East London, South Africa. All 25 passengers and crew on board were killed.

Standard air crash investigation procedures with aviation experts in charge were disregarded.<sup>1</sup>

Minister of Transport Mr. Ben Schoeman, Mr M J Van Rensburg, Deputy Minister of Transport, Secretary for Transport Mr D J Joubert and chief of operations Mr PA Peens, Director of Civil Aviation held tight control and gave conflicting reports of findings.<sup>2</sup>

- **Eyewitness accounts:** Eyewitnesses on land observed the aircraft flying low, moving parallel to the coast towards East London, and descending with the port wing low. The plane then crashed into the sea. All

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<sup>1</sup> 1967-03-16 J Boyd - SAA = observers

<sup>2</sup> Security Clamp, Joubert statement puzzles, 1967-03-15 Adlard Report - Du Preez offer to dive



eye-witnesses were discredited. All offers of help with the search were repelled by Railway police authorities.

- **Official inquiry findings:** The official inquiry report, headed by Judge Cecil Margo, speculated, without supporting evidence, that the pilot of the plane suffered a heart attack while on approach and the co-pilot was unable to regain control of the aircraft. There is still great contention about the ultimate cause of the aircraft accident.

To date, the families do not believe the official report because they have so much evidence to prove questionable behaviour and activity at the time of the crash.

Moreover, they have been accused of being “conspiracy theorists” while others propagate the lies that have been told and mushroomed over the almost 60 years since the incident.

This represents a constant trauma not only by the inability to lay one’s dear family member to rest with dignity, but further Human Rights Violations by the accusations and disrespect.

### 3. Historical Context

- **Apartheid:** Apartheid was introduced in 1948

The crash of Rietbok happened during the Apartheid era in South Africa. In 1967, the Government of South Africa was increasingly aggressive in its actions against those who opposed the Apartheid government, as they had just banned the African National Congress (ANC) and Pan Africanist Congress (PAC). Two people who were known to criticize the Apartheid government were on the flight, JP Bruwer and Audrey Rosenthal. Bruwer was the acting chair of the powerful Afrikaner Broederbond, and Rosenthal was an American working with the Defence and Aid Fund, a group that helped jailed and exiled PAC and ANC member's families. Both people told family members or friends that they believed the security branch was investigating or following them.

- **JP Bruwer:** Already in 1956, Bruwer said the Government needs to face social problems involved in diplomatic relations with independent African states.

JP Bruwer obtained the B.A. degree with distinction from the University of South Africa in 1945 and the M.A. degree in Bantu languages and anthropology with distinction from the University of Pretoria in 1948

He also served on the government's Advisory Council for Black Education and on many other government bodies, as the most highly qualified advisor on African affairs.

In 1967 Bruwer was acting chair of the Broederbond, but he had gained a reputation as a 'verligte' (enlightened person) and was said to be steering prime minister Verwoerd.

He was beginning to doubt the future of white rule in the country.

While he was a staunch supporter of the concept of **separate development**, he preferred to call it **separate freedoms** and never hesitated to criticize the Government if he thought it necessary.

He wrote the speech Prime Minister Verwoerd was due to deliver before he was assassinated. His family believe Verwoerd was killed to prevent him making that speech.

He attended Verwoerd's memorial service, telling his sister, 'I'm the next one', (1966)

Premier John Vorster, who had been in office for about six months after the assassination of Verwoerd, and the foreign minister at the time, Dr Helgard Muller, approached Bruwer to take up an unprecedented post as a roving ambassador to African states. He was to be based in Zambia, with the approval of former president Kenneth Kaunda.

Bruwer was on his way to discuss this post with Vorster. After the crash this position never eventuated. (see Le Roux, Bruwer Statements)

- **Audrey Rosenthal:** American ANC activist who was also considered a target on the plane. The late Martin Legassick, a left-wing professor of history at the University of the Western Cape, had recruited Rosenthal to work for the International Defence and Aid Fund (IDAF), which provided a clandestine financial lifeline for relatives of African National Congress (ANC) and Pan African Congress (PAC) activists in jail or exile, organisations that had been banned in South Africa in 1966.

Her duties were to have clandestine meetings with elements of the PAC and the ANC that remained in hiding in South Africa. Apparently, she was also gathering intelligence to be used by the South African Freedom Movement.

Former East London mayor and apartheid security police officer Donald Card said a briefcase Rosenthal had been carrying was of great interest to the apartheid government. "We were given

instructions to look for that briefcase. We wanted to see if there was information about who she had contacted in South Africa. She was on the communist list, so we were keen to get the information,” Card said. Another former policeman, who spoke on condition of anonymity, remembered that he too had been instructed to look for the briefcase in case it washed up in the surf at Kaysers Beach.

## 4. Questionable Incidents 1967

- **Conflicting reports:**

- **Location:** On Tuesday 14th March 1967, the day after, Mr Schoeman, Minister of Transport, announced **the plane was found** in 180ft of water.

Lieutenant V.C. Holderniss, Officer Commanding SAS Johannesburg minesweeper was baffled when told of the statement by reporters.<sup>3</sup>

Then it was denied.

Soon after the crash, Mr M J Van Rensburg, Deputy Minister of Transport said the impounded radio-telephone tapes indicated that the pilot knew exactly where he was.

A week later, after a team of divers, sworn to secrecy, returned jubilant, the Secretary for Transport Mr D J Joubert, announced the aircraft had not been found. Divers have since testified that the plane was videoed.<sup>4</sup>

- **Bodies:**

- 21 Bodies were reported to be found then denied.
- Many families were telephoned and asked to come and identify the body of their loved one then cancelled or if they arrived the following day, police denied ever calling.
  - Pieter Bruwer explained, “That night someone phoned from East London, claiming the bodies were in the morgue. Would we come and identify them? He claimed he had actually seen my father, and he even said that he had not been disfigured – merely drowned.”

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<sup>3</sup> 1967 05 05 - SCOPE MAGAZINE TIMES, 5th May 1967

<sup>4</sup> Rietbok people sworn to secrecy

But at the morgue, they were told by a policeman that it had all been a mistake.

"They had found no bodies and would inform us as soon as they did. He was very helpful and said there had been a terrible misunderstanding."<sup>5</sup>

- Julie Venturas' mother got a phone call to say, "We've found a body, and we suspect it's your daughter. Is she wearing a red business suit? Is she thin? Is she young, got black hair, et cetera?". When they answered, "Yes," they said, "Well, please come and identify the body." They were getting ready to go and identify the body, and then they got another phone call saying, "Sorry, it's been a mistake. It's not your daughter. It's an Indian lady who committed suicide." But when they wanted to go and look at the body anyway to make sure, they refused access to the body.<sup>5</sup>
- A body was washed ashore 3 weeks after the crash. It was identified as being from the crash. A post mortem was conducted. The body was buried in an unmarked grave. No families were informed.<sup>6</sup>

Only in 1998 after the SA Aviation Archive documents were discovered, was the post mortem matched to a relative. At that stage the whereabouts of the buried body was unknown.

- About 5 weeks later a naked body with a decomposed face was washed up at Queensbury Bay. The body, suspected to be from the Rietbok, was claimed by SAP and reportedly taken to Cambridge mortuary for a post mortem. No entry exists. No family was notified. A Postmortem was never sited. Apparently, this body of a white male was buried in Duncan village, a black cemetery.<sup>7</sup>
- Fishing boat skipper Joe Neff relates his discovery. "While bringing in the nets, one of my crew spotted this item on the top of the net. 'There was a skeleton there.'

When he radioed to his station, he was asked to bring the body in. And I got into the harbor just after 7:00, all the lights here were out. "And I had to come alongside in the dark. I didn't know why, what the reason was for it, but then, of course, I was totally worried too.

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<sup>5</sup> Carte Blanche Rietbok Mystery TV Episode 1998

<sup>6</sup> Pat East Affidavit, Mortuary register, Post mortem.

<sup>7</sup> Mystery body found Queensbury Bay

They didn't want to make a scene and let everybody know what was going on.

According to Joe, the body was then sent to Cape Town for forensic examination. "Two months later, one of the security police told me it was a body of an Englishman, a 23-year-old Englishman. Wow. He said, 'But that was definitely Rietbok.'"<sup>5</sup> (This matches the identity of Norman Sosnow).

- **SAA Investigator's questionable death**

One of the most suspicious occurrences around this event was the death of the chief SAA investigator. On Tuesday, March 14, 1967, James Boyd and his colleagues arrived in East London from Johannesburg to participate in the investigation. This was normal protocol, least of all to establish causal factors so that civil aviation and airlines could benefit.

According to Ian Boyd, his son, James Boyd conducted an aerial survey of the crash site and boarded a minesweeper assigned to search for wreckage. The debris was located approximately 130 feet underwater and deemed accessible to divers.

However, he emphasized that their visit to East London was solely for **observation** purposes and not to determine the cause of the Rietbok crash.<sup>8</sup>

"I am waiting for a report from Mr. V. Adlard, Safety Officer of the S.A. Airways, to decide if we are going to spend another day or two in East London or leave immediately."

When advised they were no longer needed, Boyd phoned his wife to tell her he was returning home and that he thought there were "**shady things going on**".<sup>9</sup>

The next day, Friday morning, he was found deceased in his hotel room in the morning. Many questions are raised about the circumstances surrounding the discovery at that early hour.

- Mrs. Boyd was informed that her husband had died of a heart attack. Though Captain Boyd was 51 years old with a history of heart murmur and smoking, he maintained an active lifestyle as a Springbok golfer.

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<sup>8</sup> 1967-03-16 J Boyd - SAA = observers, Sea Keeps Disaster Mystery

<sup>9</sup> 2019 03 17 Mystery of the Rietbok Air Disaster Lingers On

- There are additional anomalies:
  - Captain Boyd died in East London, but the death certificate was signed by a physician in Benoni.
  - The Kayser Beach Mortuary Register contains several notable entries, such as the body **not being admitted** to the morgue despite notification of death at approximately **4.00am / 9:00am** (unclear) on March 17, 1967.
  - Captain Adlard reported **discovering Boyd's body at 9:10 am** after the hotel provided access to the room.
  - Although a post-mortem by Dr. Bloch is cited in the mortuary register as occurring at 10:15 am, there is no official record corroborating this, nor is it clear where the examination took place.
  - His body was flown to Gauteng and cremated in Springs the following Monday, prior to the family viewing him.
  - The family was never afforded the opportunity to view the body, and Mrs. Boyd did not request the cremation
  - The death certificate, dated March 20, 1967, was processed at Benoni Cemetery and lists the "person causing burial," even though the body was cremated before Mrs. Boyd had been notified of her husband's death.<sup>10</sup>

This death traumatised his family thereafter. The family retrieved the urn and were surprised to discover it filled with a "**strange black damp ashes**". To honour James, his family scattered his ashes leaving them no opportunity to do forensic testing at a future date.<sup>11</sup>

So, although Boyd died in East London, the death certificate was signed by a doctor in Benoni.

- The death was given minimal media reporting bar on national radio according to a specific memo citing cause of death being a heart attack.

Meanwhile, members of the South African Railway Police continued to patrol the beach near the accident site.

- **Disappearing evidence:**

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<sup>10</sup> James Boyd Death Certificate

<sup>11</sup> Conversation with Robyn Lichter – see statement

**Margo Report:** The official report omitted to include discussion about much of the evidence available including the location, the video of the plane, the post mortem of the washed up body and control tower tape. The original appendix did not include the full list of items either. These were only included later in the appendix of the online version of Aviation report. (see Le Roux, Bruwer Statements)

## 5. TRC Submission 1998

In 1998 the Associated Families of the Rietbok Aircraft Tragedy (AFORAT) was formed, headed by Helen Brown. It presented a submission to the TRC. Many discussions, a meeting with families and much correspondence ensued. The evidence to support the need for an inclusion was presented. (Bruwer statement). This included

- a. Location of the plane was known. In fact, a map was tabled at the original inquiry
  - i. Divers testified that the plane was located and videoed:
    1. Malcolm Viviers
    2. Paul Du Plessis
  - ii. Underwater Technical Service P/L - Joe Lichtenstein
- b. Conflicting statements about 21 bodies – newspaper reports of being found then denied.
- c. Conflicting messages about bodies for families to identify: families told to come to the mortuary, then that there were no bodies.
- d. Three bodies floating amongst wreckage including a woman described clearly. Reportedly they unable to be retrieved.
- e. All wreckage was confiscated by police and investigation was not conducted by airline investigators, as per normal practice.
- f. Police had impounded radio-telephone tapes from the Control tower on instruction by Mr M J Van Rensburg, Deputy Minister of Transport, so on return to the airport, Pieter Bruwer was then denied a second access.
- g. Secrecy around all involved in investigation. Divers who came forward but then shied away from giving formal written evidence.
- h. Suspicion of the SAA Chief Investigator, Capt. Boyd's death.
- i. Unsubstantiated allegation made about plane crash by a Kimberley man who "occupied a "sensitive" post in the old dispensation and has in his possession not only information on the mysterious disappearance of the SAA passenger plane, the Rietbok, and its 25 passengers 30 years ago, but also a piece of the aeroplane."
- j. Evidence suppressed during initial inquiry
  - i. Tape of radio control tower recording missing which Piet Bruwer heard did not match evidence in Margo Inquiry
- k. 1988 Submarine activity was reported and considered suspicious

- l. Reasons for sabotage suspected.<sup>12</sup>
- m. Martin Legassick submission regarding American Audrey Rosenthal, ANC activist.<sup>13</sup>
- n. A referral was made to Minister of Transport Mac Maharaj, to follow up investigation via SA Civil Aviation Archives but nothing eventuated.<sup>14</sup>

Despite all this evidence, no reason was given for the failure to investigate.

## 6. New Information since TRC 1998

At the time of the TRC submission, referral to the SA Civil Aviation Archives was discussed. A discovery of the "Rietbok File" revealed further alarming evidence.

- o. Appendices to Margo report not originally included or discussed during inquiry
  - i. A map of the location a headless body was found.
  - ii. The Post Mortem conducted on this body.
- p. An official memo to the Minister of Transport that 21 Bodies were found.
- q. A newspaper article reporting that the Railway Police had requested victims photographs from families so they could identify bodies.
- r. Evidence the Underwater Technical Service P/L was paid for considerable work. They were requested and paid to attend the inquiry, but their report was not included.
- s. An unusual payment was made to Judge Margo for his services.

Further evidence has surface.

- t. Payments made to the widows for their silence and no further action, with threats of discontinued pension:
  - i. Mrs Bruwer
  - ii. Mrs Boyd
- u. The body washed up 3 weeks after crash retrieved by SAP and SAA had a post mortem conducted and was buried without notifying families.<sup>15</sup> This relative has been identified.
- v. Another naked body with a decomposed face was discovered 5 weeks later washed up at Queensbury Bay. The body, suspected to be from the Rietbok, was claimed by SAP and reportedly taken to Cambridge mortuary for a post mortem. No entry exists. No family was notified. A Postmortem was never sited.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Johan Bruwer TRC submission

<sup>13</sup> 1998-04-09 Was she the reason for the Rietbok crash?

<sup>14</sup> 1997 01 21 Letter Bruwer - Mac Maharaj - Civil Aviation Referral

<sup>15</sup> Torso Mortuary Register

<sup>16</sup> 1967 mystery body found Queensbury Bay



- w. Fishing boat skipper Joe Neff related that he found a body floating and was ordered to bring it in (in the dark). He was later told the forensic testing identified this as the 23 yr old Englishman (Norman Sosnow).<sup>5</sup>
- x. Diver Richard Kloppe, testified in affidavit that the plane was located and videoed.
- y. Threats: journalists told to cease their reporting
- z. Mortuary registers revealing:
  - i. The headless torso claimed by the SA Police and SAA was buried in an unmarked grave.
  - ii. Capt. Boyd's questionable death registered despite the body not being admitted to the mortuary and notification times raising further questions.

This volume of evidence points to the Human Right Violations not only by the actual crash, failures to investigate to reveal the truth, failures to treat the families and the victims with dignity, but furthermore, failure to hear the case in 1998. To date there is no explanation to satisfy these failures nor justify that this was an accident.

## 7. Request for investigation

While the official inquiry provided a possible cause, it

- omitted crucial evidence at the time
- barred a full investigation
- employed unusual secretive practices and
- claimed it was unable to fully account.

And thereby it failed to provide a clear and comprehensive explanation to the families of the victims. The Violation of Human Rights of the victims and their families have continued ever since.

On submission of our case to the original Truth and Reconciliation Commission in 1998, we spent much time and correspondence to bring forth justice. Suddenly the link was broken without explanation.

We request that this commission investigate this case further to provide the following:

- **Truth:** Conduct a thorough and transparent investigation to uncover the full truth of what happened to stop our case being heard and, to investigate the actual incident.
- **Accountability:** Identify and hold accountable any individuals responsible for the failure to hear the case. We also seek accountability for the event, if any, and provide a clear explanation to the victims' families. We seek the truth to be made known publicly.

- **Justice:** Ensure that all victims' families receive closure and justice for the loss of their loved ones.
- **Correct the re**
- **Protection:** Ensure a safe and dignified resting place in the ocean and the current unmarked grave with “**Heritage Protection**” so that this historical event remains sacred, sensitive and not an adventure playground for commercial use, as intended and condoned by the Eastern Cape Provincial Heritage Resources Authority (ECPHRA).

## 8. Conclusion

In the absence of definitive resolution regarding the cause of this crash, the circumstances around this crash have led to much speculation. Several people have claimed that there was a bomb on board.

Our submission has only made claims **with proof** as enclosed.

The Rietbok air crash is a stark reminder of the need for a comprehensive and transparent process to address all stopped TRC cases. We urge the commission to prioritize this case to ensure that the truth is revealed and that all victims receive the justice they deserve. Time is the enemy of those involved as this case occurred so long ago. We are keen to make use of scant living witnesses.

**In conclusion, I make a solemn plea, your honour, that you use your powers to protect our Human Rights and that of the victims by granting Heritage Status to this crash site and the unmarked grave.**

### Contact Information:

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-

## ATTACHMENTS

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- xvii. Carte Blanche Rietbok Mystery TV Episode 1998
- xviii. 2019 04 01 Richard Kloppers Diver Affidavit

xix. 1967-03-16 J Boyd - SAA = observers

#### **INVESTIGATION**

Captain Jimmy Boyd, a former South African amateur golf champion, who headed the four-man investigating team from the Department of Transport, said last night: "Our visit to East London was merely to act as observers and not to establish the cause of the Rietbok's accident."

Captain Boyd said if possible they would return to Pretoria today. "Our mission is completed," he said.

Captain Boyd said "flight recorders" were not in use on any of the SAA aircraft. These record everything that happens in a flight such as speed, height and faults.

In the meantime, members of the Railways and South African Police are still patrolling the beach in the area near the accident.

## xx. Security clamp

He said: "It is quite clear from the reply — which gives the absolute minimum of information — that as long ago as August, 1966, the authorities had decided that an instrument landing system was needed at the airport.

"No tender was accepted, but the Minister did not give any reason for this.

"Now installations will be completed only in 1969 — three years after the tenders were called for.

"I feel that the department should consider whether instrument landing systems and all other safety devices appropriate to the type of aircraft used should not be installed at all airports where aircraft plying for passengers make regular landings.

### Second-hand

"The least that one can expect is that South African Airways' passengers should know that all available precautions are being taken to protect them."

Neither Mr. Schoeman nor his deputy, Mr. Van Rensburg, was in Parliament when questions were put to Mr. Schoeman about the airport itself, altimeters used on South African Airways aircraft and second-hand aircraft bought by South African Airways.

The Rietbok which crashed into the sea at Kayser's Beach, was bought by South African Airways from the Cuban Government.

The Minister of the Interior, Mr. P. M. K. le Roux, who read the answers to Mr. Bennett's questions on behalf of Mr. Schoeman, said tenders had been called for the installation of an instrument landing system at East London Airport. The closing date for the tenders was August 15 last year.

### Altimeters

But, he added, no tender was accepted.

Further questions by Mr. Bennett and Mr. Etienne Malan (U.P., Orange Grove) were held over at the request of Mr. Schoeman.

Mr. Bennett asked whether South African Airways operated any aircraft fitted with radio altimeters. "If so, how many and what type of aircraft?"

Mr. Malan asked how many SAA aircraft in operation on March 1 this year had been bought second-hand, calling for details in respect of each aircraft.

# Security clamp on plane salvage

Staff Reporter

EAST LONDON — The security net surrounding the salvage attempts of the 12-man team of scientists, divers and undersea research experts aboard the East London-based tug John X. Merriman tightened when the men returned last night after their second all-day bid.

Working under a security clamp ordered by the Minister of Transport, Mr. Ben Schoeman, and the Director of Civil Aviation, Mr. D. J. Joubert, the divers would not disclose details about their efforts.

A two-hour conference, ending shortly before midnight, was held in their hotel dining-room on Monday.

The John X. Merriman sailed at dawn yesterday and arrived at the spot, directly off Kayser's Beach and about two miles out to sea, where she had remained anchored the whole of Monday.

### STATIONARY

Again, she remained stationary at the same position — believed to be the location of the wrecked airliner.

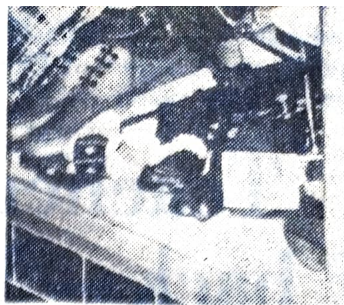
The weather, though overcast, remained fine the whole day. The sea was calm.

A technical hitch in the complex system of underwater communications is believed to have hampered operations on Monday. The divers were apparently unhappy with the type of electronic cable used.

The John X. Merriman returned to East London last night.

Divers were carrying the jaws of three giant sharks which were caught in the search area. But they refused to comment whether they had been bothered by sharks.

The tug will leave harbour today.



## Guerillas surprised by police

JOHANNESBURG — The Botswana Government announced yesterday that a police patrol from Maun surprised 10 guerillas in jungle on the south bank of the Okavango River.

The guerillas fled into South African territory.

The fleeing men, after running through the jungle, paddled across the river into the Caprivi Strip, near the village of Seronga.

The guerillas, thought to have come from Zambia, left eight Chinese carbines, two Bren guns and 2,500 rounds of small arms ammunition in their camp.

The police patrol from Maun had been seeking the guerillas, after a report from tribesmen in the Okavango Swamp. It was led by an unnamed White officer. Not a shot was fired by either side.

The officer said there were eight in a bunch and two lying on blankets a little distance away.

"The moment they saw us they ran," the officer said.

The police patrol was operating 180 miles away from its base at Maun.

## Body not yet recovered

Staff Reporter

EAST LONDON — The body of Mr. Louis Hattings, 23, of Wel-

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xxi. 1967-03-15 Adlard Report - Du Preez offer to dive

Thursday 15th March, 1967, was spent at sea aboard the minesweeper Johannesburg (one of the two that assisted in the search on 13th March, 1967). The area was searched for debris - all traces of the oil slick seen by the Johannesburg had now disappeared - and the various positions of the aircraft's flight path and final crash plotted.

That evening, whilst having coffee in the lounge after dinner, a Mr. du Preez approached and asked for Mr. Boyd. He explained that he was an expert skindiver with specially imported equipment which enabled him to go to depths of 4-500 ft. and that he was an intimate friend of the Venturas family whose daughter had been on board the crashed aircraft. Mr. du Preez had, he said, seen and spoken with Messrs. A. Conradie, N. Louw and T. Kirkwood and that Mr. Trendwell had issued him with a free ticket which had been withdrawn upon his arrival at Jan Smuts. He wanted to assist, freely and voluntarily, because of his attachment to the family. He had the support of the Fire Stations to service his equipment.

Mr. Boyd referred Mr. du Preez to Mr. Peens of Division of Civil Aviation and explained that South African Airways were assisting Mr. Peens' department who were in sole charge of the investigations.





WITH a "ping" the FASTEN YOUR SEAT BELT signs flashed on and the passengers aboard the South African Airways Viscount, Flight 406 from Port Elizabeth to East London, readied themselves for landing. At 6.39 pm, right on schedule, the pilot, Captain Lipawsky, made radio contact with the control tower at East London to report: "Everything's O.K. We're coming in to land." That voice, crackling over the ether through the storm-torn night, was the last sign of life from the Rietbok...

● Retired Mr. Aubrey Ford, a World War I veteran, was taking an evening stroll and darkness had just settled thick and low over Kayser's Beach when he saw the flashing red light of an aircraft sweep out of the clouds. "It was too low, I knew, but the engines sounded fine. Then it disappeared behind the trees and I heard a sound like a thunderclap..."

● In the waiting room at East London's airport thirteen passengers glanced anxiously at their watches. The Viscount from Port Elizabeth that was to take them to Bloemfontein and Johannesburg was overdue. Other people who had come to meet passengers on Flight 406 milled about impatiently. Some went to the inquiry counter, only to be told that the plane had been delayed. Then the imagined horror became certainty as the public address system informed the crowd starkly:

"The Viscount on Flight 406 will not be arriving tonight..."

● A dozen African farmhands in the hills around

Kayser's Beach also saw the screaming death-swoop of the Rietbok. Said an African herdboys, pointing out to sea: "It went down over there, Baas. The noise hurt my ears..."

● In the control tower at East London the duty officer strained his eyes peering through the rain to pick up a sight of the incoming Viscount. He had heard Captain Lipawsky report that he was coming in to land, but there was still no sign of the aircraft. There was no familiar scream of feathering turbo-propellers — just the unbroken crackle of static from the radio office and the swish of rain on the control tower roof...

WHAT happened in those vital seconds before the Rietbok, the Viscount on Flight S.A. 406, plunged to destruction in a storm-tossed sea will forever remain a mystery. The 25 passengers and crew members who perished in the worst disaster in the history of South African aviation have gone to a watery grave, and probably never even knew that death was only seconds away when the Rietbok began its blind approach through the scudding clouds, mist and high winds.

Residents at the little village of Kayser's Beach and farmers in the vicinity felt the tremendous concussion of the impact. Mr. Ford grabbed an oil lantern and went through the dripping scrub to the beach. He could see nothing. Heavy rain was falling over the sea.

Mr. Ford's servant girl ran through the rain to Mrs. Marge Sansom, the only person in Kayser's Beach with a

telephone. Mrs. Sansom immediately reported the crash to the police in East London.

News of the tragedy spread rapidly through the city. The shock was felt by everyone — it was difficult for them to realise that such a terrible thing could happen right on their own doorstep.

No more than half an hour after the news of the disaster had been received, two tugs based in East London, the John X. Merriman and the Steytler, were steaming at full speed towards the crash area, carving their way through a rising sea chopped by a 30-knot south-easterly wind. With them was the pilot vessel, the A.C. Craigie.

The two Navy minesweepers SAS Johannesburg and SAS Mosselbaai, which were on a courtesy call, East London, sailed with scratch crews augmented by reservists after repeated efforts to recall their crew members who were on shore leave had failed. Two doctors were taken aboard the sweepers.

Ambulances left for Kayser's Beach and the medical staff at the Frere Hospital, East London, were placed on stand-by. Off-duty doctors and nurses were recalled.

A tug hand from the Steytler, first to arrive on the scene, said later:

"As soon as we got to the area we saw flashing red lights which we thought could have been the plane. We steered for them, but they turned out to be the lights of an ambulance on the beach. We nearly ran aground."

THE two tugs circled the area in a ten-mile radius and the tiny pilot vessel and

two minesweepers scoured the coast for several miles to the east and west of the presumed crash area. All the rescue craft were battered by high seas during the futile twelve-hour search for survivors. A South African Air Force Shackleton from Cape Town arrived over the search area at 1.05 am.

The tugs and the pilot vessel returned early on Tuesday morning, their crewmen haggard and unshaven.

"There was a lot of stuff drifting about — portholes kept afloat by air between the double layers of glass; wood; pieces of seating. We managed to get a little of it, but the waves foiled us most of the time," said one seaman.

The A.C. Craigie returned with a 20-inch silver of the interior lining of the aircraft, a ripped cupboard door, and the contents of a small brown paper package which the police would not disclose.

When dawn broke newsmen on the shore, who had been barred from entering the search area, saw the two minesweepers rolling heavily, steaming up and down the coast. The Shackleton circled overhead and made low dives over the waves.

The sweepers remained out all day. When the Johannesburg returned to port at 5 pm, the exhausted sailors could disclose nothing. All had been forced to sign affidavits binding them to secrecy. But later unconfirmed reports, possibly rumours, indicated that the minesweeper crews had seen great masses of drifting wreckage which they had been unable to recover in the darkness and the rough sea. Others (also

unconfirmed) told of bodies being sighted in the sea — "... a tall man in his shirt sleeves with his jacket floating next to him; a young woman with a red jersey."

But official sources said: ("No bodies.")

AT 1 pm next day the Steytler put to sea and the search was intensified. The high winds were dropping, but the rain still fell in gusty showers.

"We steamed backwards and forwards along the same course for most of the day," a tug man said. "But nothing."

Another said: "The wreckage could have been taken about sixty miles to the west by the strong-flowing Mozambique current by this time."

A party of newsmen who managed to gain access to the search area in a chartered aircraft verified this. "Nothing," they said.

Then Minister of Transport Ben Schoeman's statement was released from Parliament: "The Rietbok has been discovered in 180 feet of water by Navy minesweepers off Kayser's Beach."

No elaboration. Just that, for newsmen — and agonised relatives.

Lieutenant V.C. Holderniss, Officer Commanding SAS Johannesburg, was baffled when told of the statement by reporters. His ship had returned two hours before the SAS Mosselbaai, under Commander D.B. Reeper, who had remained in the disaster area until after dusk.

It was the first Holderniss had heard of it. "I wasn't aware of such a discovery be-

## xxiv. Torso Mortuary Register

97	INO NA	29 yrs	1/4/67	6 pm	Lab Gen	1.55 pm	No Aut
	Luvuyo LUKUE	Gen/Mr.		FRERE Hospital	678 Khy 12	CH BOOTH	3/4/67
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98	INO NA	29 yrs	1/4/67	9 am	Lab Gen	1.55 pm	St 6
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99	FOETUS	Pa 14					1
3/4/67	Holderniss			Lab. Lloydson	Celting	SAR	
CSI COX	Undetermined	Cambridge	20/4/67	SA Airways	Undeter	Signif	Grave NO
L St Adams	Cambridge	7.45 am	East London		Undeter	11/4/67	SAR 2 869 Sec 10
7/4/67				Lab Lloydson			N. 147/67
ST/ST Pernice	Non-	ST Village	11/4/67	L Adams	Non-viable		



# xxv. Torso Post Mortem

CONFIDENTIAL - FOR OFFICIAL PURPOSES ONLY. 120

FORM (Health) 1.  
(as amended, January, 1960.)

REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA.  
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH.

East London  
Post-mortem Serial No. (1) D.R. 98/67  
Exhibit No. (2) \_\_\_\_\_

## REPORT ON A MEDICO-LEGAL POST-MORTEM EXAMINATION.

To the Magistrate of (3) East London  
I, (1) Lionel Shelsley Smith, do hereby certify—  
that (1) S.A. Police mortuary, East London  
I, that at (2) 17th day of April 19 67 commencing at 1.45 a.m./p.m.,  
the partial remains of adult (4) Male (5) \_\_\_\_\_ (6) \_\_\_\_\_  
examined and identified to me (7) —  
II, that this body was identified to me (8) —  
(a) by Dr. P.B. Koch of Principal Dist. Surgeon, East London  
(b) by The body remains found at  
as being that of Meislers Beach at 3.30 p.m. whose reputed age was unknown;  
5 April 1967.  
III, that this body was also identified to me (9) —  
(a) by \_\_\_\_\_ of \_\_\_\_\_  
as being that of \_\_\_\_\_; and  
(b) by \_\_\_\_\_ of \_\_\_\_\_  
as being that of \_\_\_\_\_;  
IV, that the chief post-mortem findings made by me on this body were (10) —  
The torso of adult male person, with European group characteristics  
consisting of portion of neck, trunk, arms and pelvis, with early  
adipocere formation and putrefaction. Findings not incompatible  
with death having occurred some 3 weeks prior to refrigeration.  
See reverse page I.  
As a result of my examination I am of the opinion that the remains  
are those of an adult European male, of about 5'11" in height,  
and about 23 years of age. ; and  
V, that, as a result of my observations a schedule of which follows, I concluded—  
(a) that death had occurred (11) unknown prior to my examination; and  
(b) that the cause/causes of death was/were (12) undetermined  
Dated at Cape Town this 11th day of May 19 67  
Signature [Signature] Qualifications M.B. B.Ch. (Rand), D.P.H. (U.C.T.)  
D.Bact (London), M.C.Path. (Eng).  
Designation (13) SENIOR GOVERNMENT PATHOLOGIST.  
Adviser on Pathology Services, Cape Town.  
For instructions as to the completion of individual paragraphs of this report, section 2.10 of form (Health) 1 (a) should be consulted.  
AFRIKAANSE VORMS IS BY DIE STAATSDRUKKER VERKRYGBAAR.



when stand very position in South sport is insufficient a South African crowd-puller or ater. the cross- runners are not ed good enough to being made scape.

Colin Bryden



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(ER) LIMITED  
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3254 or 6908



## TV may help Rietbok search

Daily Dispatch Correspondent  
JOHANNESBURG — Television on closed circuit could help tremendously in the undersea search for wreckage of the crashed SA Viscount, Rietbok— and there is a suitable unit in Durban.

This was established yesterday when investigating whether it would be feasible to employ TV in the hunt off the East London coast, as has been done with spectacular success abroad.

The special waterproof camera — and screen unit that could be used — belongs to the Durban Corporation which needs it to inspect the city's underwater sewerage pipeline.

It has 300ft. of cable — putting the camera within easy reach of the roughly 180ft. depth at which the wreckage of the Rietbok is believed to be lying — and the necessary light fixtures.

### SCANS

In operation, the camera is lowered by cable from a ship and scans the sea-bottom, transmitting what it "sees" to the closed circuit screen on board.

"It would be best to send a diver down with the camera which might otherwise drift around too much," Mr. D. J. Simmons, managing director of the Rand firm that supplied the equipment to Durban, said yesterday.

"The advantage of this to sending down divers only is that the view recorded by the camera can be studied on board by engineers and experts who know exactly what to look for."

### COMET

"The first time underwater TV was used — in 1951 — it located at 200 feet the wreck of the British submarine, Affray — in the English Channel — after 100 ships, depth-sounding devices, divers and spiritualists had failed.

About three years later, special underwater TV cameras were used to locate the wreckage of a Comet which crashed into the Mediterranean with the loss of 35 lives.

The camera-and-screen unit owned by the Durban City Council is possibly the only suitable apparatus for such underwater search work in South Africa.

### DIVERS

"We certainly don't normally have that particular kind of equipment in stock," Mr. Simmons added.

Meanwhile the Department of Transport is negotiating with private deep-sea diving firms to



CAPTAIN JIMMY BOYD

## Sea keeps disaster mystery

Staff Reporter

EAST LONDON — The mine-sweeper, SAS Johannesburg, with an Inspector of Civil Aviation, Mr. P. A. Peens; V.I.P.s and Pressmen, yesterday visited the scene of the Rietbok's fatal plunge.

"I think everyone, especially the reporters, were most disappointed, because all they could see was the deep blue sea," the captain, Lieutenant V. F. Holderness, said last night.

"A bad lunch on board must have made their outing all the more disappointing," he said. Lieutenant Holderness said they left the harbour at 10.45 a.m. and returned at 2 p.m.

"There was nothing to see," he said. "The oil which was seen coming to the surface at the point of the crash on Tuesday had disappeared."

### INVESTIGATION

Captain Jimmy Boyd, a former South African amateur golf champion, who headed the four-man investigating team from the Department of Transport, said last night: "Our visit to East London was merely to act as observers and not to establish the cause of the Rietbok's accident."

Captain Boyd said if possible they would return to Pretoria today. "Our mission is completed," he said.

Captain Boyd said "flight recorders" were not in use on any of the SAA aircraft. These record everything that happens in a flight such as speed, height and faults.

In the meantime, members of the Railways and South African Police are still patrolling the beach in the area near the accident.

## Farmers blame drought and higher costs

Daily Dispatch Correspondent

PRETORIA — The Government may to raise the price of bread later this year, learned here yesterday.

At recent meetings with the Wheat Control Board, farmers demanded a price.

The board, it is understood, has made recommendations to the Government, and an about the price is expected in the next few weeks.

The wheat price was raised last year to R6.21 a bag. If the Government had not raised the subsidy on bread the price would have risen to at least ten cents a white loaf.

The subsidy has been raised on a number of occasions during the past ten years despite repeated recommendations from the Wheat Board that it should gradually be reduced and the price of bread should be allowed to increase to an economic level.

### Costs

The subsidy now totals about R22 million a year and in the view of some authorities the subsidisation limit has been reached.

Any further increases in costs, should it was stated, be passed on to the consumer.

Farmers have based their claims for higher prices this year on increased production costs and the fact that drought last year cut the crop to 6 million bags—about eight million bags less than the national need.

Because of this, the Wheat Board has arranged for the importation of a record quantity of wheat—about 8 million bags at a cost in foreign exchange of about R35 million.

## Go-ahead for new swim bath

By Ted Allen

EAST LONDON — The up-town swimming bath had been given the green light, the Deputy Mayor, Councillor Edgar Glass, said at a civic function last night.

Councillor Glass was welcoming personalities and team managers to the South African Life Saving Championships, which



MISS CAMILLE

## Rhode girl Rag Q

Staff Reporter

GRAHAMSTOWN— and successive year girl has been elected University's Rag Queen. Miss Jill Campbell,



MISS EMILY

Two East London



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#### Resolution

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Smith said he had  
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Vorster.

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is were confidential.

#### Understanding

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at one common road is  
wer," Mr. Smith said. —

Smith gave his interview  
Sallsbury Sunday Mail.

a town with

## Joubert statement on Rietbok wreck puzzles public

**EAST LONDON**—Public speculation about the security-shrouded attempts to locate the missing airliner Rietbok, which disappeared two weeks ago with her 20 passengers and crew of five somewhere in the sea off Kayser's Beach, heightened after the Secretary for Transport, Mr. D. J. Joubert, announced that the aircraft had not been found.

## Man draws knife — shot by police

**EAST LONDON** — An African caught by the CID while breaking into premises in Belgravia Crescent at the week-end, was wounded and is under police guard at Frere Hospital.

Miss P. Godden, of 16 Belgravia Crescent, telephoned the police after she had heard a noise in her back yard.

Det. Constable P. K. Davouren, accompanied by Det. Constable A. Muller, parked their car a distance from Miss Godden's home. They found an African attempting to break into a storeroom in the back yard.

#### DOOR FORCED

When accosted by the detectives, the African pulled out a knife and attempted to stab Det. Constable Davouren. A shot was fired and the man was wounded in the leg.

Afterwards it was found that the door of the servant's room on Miss Godden's premises had been forced.

A number of burglaries have been committed in the area in the last two weeks.—DDR.

## Kart crash: man dies

For four days a 12-man team of divers and salvage experts contracted by the Department of Transport tried to locate the fuselage.

Mr. Joubert said the divers had investigated all the targets pointed out by electronic equipment as possible metallic objects — but all these had been "rocks on the sea bed."

He said the search had been called off temporarily pending a decision on what further action could be taken.

#### MARKER BUOY

The search team began operations a week after the Minister of Transport, Mr. B. Schoeman, had announced that the aircraft had been located "in 180 feet of water off Kayser's Beach" by a Navy minesweeper.

But the owner of the firm appointed to dive for the wreck said their task was merely to locate the wreck — and from then on to await instructions.

The search team remained anchored for two days over a spot less than two miles off Kayser's Beach in water which according to fishermen is no more than 80 to 100 feet deep.

A red marker buoy was left at the spot.

#### JUBILANT

The team returned three hours before schedule on Wednesday evening and according to witnesses at their hotel, were "in a jubilant mood."

A manager of the firm cashed a R50 cheque "for the boys to have a celebration."

One of the divers was overheard to say: "It (the plane) is still in one piece."

More clues lending credence to the theory that the Rietbok is still intact — presumably with the bodies of her 20 passengers and crew of five safety-belted in their seats — are the lack of wreckage and bodies. — DDR

## 500 gre Max at airport

**EAST LONDON** — Max E top British entertainer, v fers appearing before audience to making f appearing on television, here yesterday.

"I am now in a financ tion to choose the shows he said.

The world is his stage to jet travel.

"Even four years a couldn't travel like toda have had to think twic giving a show in Johan then travelling 1,000 i Cape Town for another ance," he said.

#### REWARDING

Back in South Africa absence of two years, he l making television shows tain to scripts which i minimum of words and th num gesticulations.

This is to get acro language barrier so they shown throughout the wo

He has even received f from behind the Iron Cu

"Television is more rev than film making as the ces are bigger," he said.

After East London he m to Port Elizabeth and Blo tein before taking a sho His next engagement will Birmingham on April 14.

He was given a big w to East London yesterc nearly 500 people — from parents to grandchildren of the biggest crowds e greet an entertainer at the airport.—DDR.

## Firemen ma go on strik

**NEW YORK** — The presid the Uniformed Firemen's ciation said yesterday New City's 10,500 firemen would a work slowdown this week sibly on Thursday or Frida

Mr. Gerald Ryan said the men would respond only to and emergency calls.

The firemen have been ing without a contract since July. Last week they vote turn down the recommenda of a fact-finding panel and au ise both the slowdown and a rendum on a total strike.—A



# Mystery of the Rietbok

52 years after doomed aircraft crashed into the sea, tragedy still haunts families of the deceased.  
John Harvey investigates

## Speculation of apartheid era cover-up

Wednesday March 13, marked 52 years since South African Airways Flight 406 plummeted into the sea in 1967 on its approach to East London, killing all 25 people on board.

What caused the Rietbok air disaster remains a mystery and continues to trouble the surviving relatives of the doomed passengers. The failure to recover the victims' bodies and the presence of two high-profile figures on-board fuelled speculation about a nefarious cover up by the apartheid government.

The official inquiry, headed by judge Cecil Margo, suggested the captain, Gordon Benjamin Lipawsky, might have suffered a heart attack, resulting in him losing control of the Viscount, and that his first officer, Brian Trenwith, was unable to regain control before the Rietbok crashed into the sea.

However, in his book *Final Postponement*, Margo pointed to structural failure as the reason for the crash. Margo died in 2000.

Navy diver Malcolm Viviers in 1998 suggested the wreck had in fact been located soon after the crash and claimed that via a video monitor on the SAS Johannesburg, he had seen the bodies of passengers still strapped into their seats in the plane.

Dr David Klatzow, an imminent Cape Town-based independent forensic scientist who pointed out flaws in the investigation of the 1987 Helderberg air disaster, was approached about 15 years ago by some relatives of victims of the Rietbok disaster.

Klatzow told the Daily Dispatch he could not recall the names of these family members but remembered that they had told him they had been called to the state mortuary to identify the bodies after the crash.

However, when they arrived at the mortuary, no bodies were to be found.

"But I was also shown a post-mortem report showing that one of the family members had died of multiple injuries," Klatzow said. "So there was a post-mortem report without a body."

He said there was no question that the investigation into the Rietbok crash had been a "sham", and said Margo was notorious for having covered up for the apartheid regime.

"I called him a crook, even when he was still alive," Klatzow said.

JP Bruwer, at the time the vice-rector of the then University of Port Elizabeth and acting chair of the Broederbond, was on board the doomed plane.

Bruwer's eldest daughter, Griet le Roux, 75, told the Dispatch about the aftermath of the crash. "My brother and his wife got a phone call on the night of the crash."

"At the time they were living in Picketberg in the Western Cape. The mortuary asked them to drive to East London to identify the bodies," Le Roux said.

"So they drove to East London, but when they got there, the people at the mortuary told them there had been a mistake and there were no bodies."

Bruwer was en route to Johannesburg, catching the connecting flight from East London. He was due to be picked up by Le



TRAGIC END: The Daily Dispatch carried all the news and pictures of the Rietbok disaster in 1967 which killed all 25 people on board.



Roux at Jan Smuts International Airport (now O R Tambo) in Johannesburg.

"We found out later that somebody else had booked his flight from Port Elizabeth to East London. We don't know who," Le Roux said.

In 1998, families of victims approached the Truth and Reconciliation Committee asking for the government to reopen the case, a request that was not met. This was the first time Le Roux had the opportunity to meet members of other victims' families.

"There was one lady who told us how she had also been called by the mortuary workers, who even described the dress her daughter was wearing and the ring on her finger. But again, when they got to the morgue, there were no bodies," Le Roux said.

"What I want to know is what happened to the bodies, where did they bury them?" she asked.

Le Roux said her brother had a pilot's licence and wanted to fly over the area where the Rietbok had gone down.

"They [people at the airport] told him at the airport that the air space was blocked."

"But he was allowed to hear the final tape recording from the crew's communication to East London airport. He said there was nothing funny in the voice of the pilot, that all seemed normal. He had a friend with him, and he wanted his friend to also listen to the tape recording. But when he asked the airport officials to hear the tape again, they said there was no tape recording."

She said the mystery deepened about a month after the crash when officials paid a visit to her late mother, Cora, demanding she sign a letter stating that she would not talk about the crash to anyone. Another strange incident occurred several weeks after the crash, Le Roux said.

"My younger brother, Johannes, who was in Standard 10 at Pearson High School in Port Elizabeth, had two secret service officers [state security] coming to the school. My brother and some other pupils had dropped off my father at the airport, and so they asked him if he had seen my father boarding the plane with his own eyes. It was like they were making sure it was the right person who was dead."

Prior to his death Bruwer had begun to draw attention from hard-line, right-wing elements in the ruling National Party, and had begun to form good relationships with leaders of recently-independent states, such as Malawi's Hastings Banda.

"A few weeks before the crash, a minister who was in charge of ambassadors paid a visit to my parents at their home. He wanted to appoint my father as a roving ambassador for African countries," Le Roux said.

"This was one of the reasons that my father was flying that night. He would also be addressing a meeting of university students while he was there."

Le Roux claims her father was targeted because he had the ear of the then leader of apartheid South Africa, Hendrik Verwoerd, and was trying to persuade him to soften apartheid policies.

"My father wrote the speech Verwoerd was due to deliver before he was assassinated. We think Verwoerd was killed to prevent him making that speech."

"My aunt told me that after my father attended Verwoerd's memorial service, he told her, 'I'm the next one'."

Ian Boyd, himself a commercial pilot, is the son of the late James Boyd, who at the time the Rietbok crashed was a pilot for SAA.

On Tuesday, March 14 1967, James Boyd and fellow crew members arrived in East

London from Johannesburg as part of the salvage operations.

According to Boyd, his father had flown over the crash site and also went onboard a minesweeper dispatched to look for the wreck.

"They located the wreckage. It was about 130 feet below, easily accessible to divers," he said. My father remained in East London for the rest of the week, but on the Friday he was found dead in his hotel room at seven o'clock in the morning. My question is who goes sneaking around other people's hotel rooms at seven in the morning?"

Boyd's mother was told that her husband had died of a heart attack.

"My father was 51 years old. He was healthy. He was a Springbok golfer. The odd thing is that there was no post-mortem. That weekend they flew his body back [to Gauteng] and he was cremated in Springs on the Monday. We were never shown the body. It was even announced on the radio that a pilot had died of a heart attack. We only had the memorial service on the following Tuesday."

"Before he died, my father phoned my mother to tell her that he thought there were shady things going on. And then he died."

"So you had two SAA pilots, Lipawsky and my father, apparently dying of heart attacks in the space of a week."

Another curious aspect is that although his father died in East London, the death certificate was signed by a doctor in Benoni.

East London resident Ralph Morgan contacted the Dispatch with another intriguing piece of information.

"In 1967, I was a member of the Rover Motorcycle Club in Port Elizabeth. Four of us were going to drive up to the grand prix in Johannesburg, and one of the chaps wrote a letter to his family in Johannesburg asking if we could stay with them," Morgan said.

"Some months after the Rietbok crash, the chap received the letter back from the post office. The post office apologised for the state of the letter, but explained that it been involved in the Rietbok crash."

"The chap brought the letter to the club, and I saw it myself. The ink was smeared and it wasn't in a good state."

Capetown Emlyn Brown has spent more than two decades searching for the SS Waratah, a cargo liner steamship that disappeared between Cape Town and Durban in 1909 with 211 people on board.

Years back he was contacted by family members of the Rietbok victims to track down the wreckage.

In September 2000, the vessel the Ocean Stroom, which was equipped with a high-tech oceanic profiling system, was in the vicinity of East London. This technology allowed sonar signals to look "under" the sand bottom.

Brown was not able to be on board himself but his colleagues searched a 19km<sup>2</sup> area off Kayser's Beach.

The expedition came across two debris fields and fragments of wreckage were found. These ranged in size from a few metres to 57m.

"One large object appeared to be a wing, although smaller fragments were difficult to identify. The main fuselage was not located and it was thought most likely buried, due to general oceanic forces dispersing the wreckage over a thirty-four year period," Brown said.

Because the wreckage was inconclusive, it was almost impossible for them to say exactly what happened to Flight 406.

East London author and investigator Alan D Elsdon, a former policeman who wrote a book called *The Tall Assassin*, posits that a bomb was placed on the Rietbok by a member of the Bureau of State Security (BOSS).

While his book is billed as fiction, Elsdon insists it is "95%" true.

## Doomed plane's history...

The doomed Rietbok had a fascinating history prior to the crash on March 13 1967.

The Viscount was part of the first V818 series built for the Compania Cubana de Aviación SA and once belonged to the late Cuban leader Fidel Castro. It was bought by South African Airways in 1962.

On June 6 1966, the Rietbok landed at Cape Town Airport, carrying Robert Kennedy, brother of the late John F Kennedy, and his wife Ethel who were in SA for a six-day anti-apartheid tour.

Kennedy delivered the "Day of Affirmation" speech at the University of Cape Town. Two years later, Robert Kennedy was assassinated in California during a presidential campaign.

On March 13 1967, the plane was travelling from Port Elizabeth to East London which it was approaching in bad weather. At 2,000 feet, (609m) the crew reported to East London Airport that they had the coastline in sight. The Rietbok crashed a minute later. —Source: Vickers

Viscount Network



## xxix. Boyd Mortuary Register

83	James R Boyd.	W. 50 years	T. V. L.	12/15/67 12 noon Queens Hotel East London 17/3/67 $\pm$ 4am.	1 Keeler Str Berkburg. Pilot	11.55 am Body not admitted procurary
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E.P. taken	Harmonidge	Conway	20/3/67	last	20/3/67		
V.T. AD (are.)	Conway	Body	not	admitted		14/3/67	
to A. Alford	Heart	to	in	in	Natural	10.15 am	E.C.
17/3/67	Disease.					17/3/67	
N.D. Hosi	Sto	20/3/67	N.D. Hosi				

## xxx. James Boyd Death Certificate

[illegible]

## xxx. Bruwer - Conflicting Statements about bodies 21 bodies

### 2. Conflicting statements made to the media in 1967 about the recovery of bodies.

On March 14, 1967, the morning after the Rietbok disaster, it was widely reported – in newspapers as diverse as *Die Burger* and the *Rand Daily Mail* – that 21 bodies had already washed ashore, and that there was little hope that the other four people on board would be found alive. (According to *Die Vaderland* of March 15, 1967, this information was also broadcast over the radio.) In a page one lead the Afrikaans paper *Dagbreek* added the Rietbok had been found in 70 feet of water.

However, by March 15, 1967 these initial reports were all denied by officials connected to the investigation into the disaster. According to *Die Vaderland*, the origin of “the rumour” – that 21 bodies had washed ashore – could not be established.

## xxxii. 21 bodies – newspaper

The image shows the front page of the newspaper **DIE BURGER**, dated **14 MARCH 1967**. The main headline is **S.A. Vliegtuig Val Met 25** (S.A. Aircraft Falls With 25). Below this, a large sub-headline reads **Ergste Ramp: 21 Lyke Reeds uit See** (Worst Disaster: 21 Bodies Already Out of Sea). To the right of the sub-headline is a photograph of the Rietbok aircraft in flight. Other headlines include **EGPAAR VERMOOR BY CRADOCK** (Couple Missing at Cradock), **3de RAMP IN 33 JAAR** (3rd Disaster in 33 Years), **FAMILIELEDE HOOR RAMP-TYDING** (Family Hears Disaster News), **Laaste Kontak** (Last Contact), and **Transvaler Gaan Nie Saamsmelt** (Transvaal Does Not Melt Together). The newspaper also features advertisements for **KLAVIERE** (Pianos) and **VEILIGE BUITEBANDE** (Safe Tires).



## South African Plane Crash Takes 25 Lives

EAST LONDON, South Africa (AP) — The airliner which U.S. Sen. Robert F. Kennedy chartered during his visit to South Africa crashed into the Indian Ocean Monday night, apparently killing all 25 persons aboard. An American woman was reported among the victims.

It was the worst air crash in South African history.

Col. C. R. Botha, the divisional police commissioner, denied a report that 21 bodies had been washed ashore during the night.

The South African Press Association said the American woman passenger was Audrey Rosenthal, a doctor of philosophy in history from the University of California who was also a graduate of the University of Michigan.

The news agency said she was between 27 and 30, had been working in London for more than two years as a consultant on teaching aids, and was making a six-week tour of South Africa to set information about conditions and life in the country.

The South African Airways Viscount was traveling from Port Elizabeth to East London.

The last message from the plane gave no indication that anything was wrong, East London airport officials said.

THE MODESTO BEE

Tuesday, March 14, 1967

## Criminal Charges Are Filed Against The Maker Of Child-Deforming

AACHEN, Germany (AP) — Criminal charges were announced today against the makers of thalidomide, the tranquilizing drug blamed for the birth of thousands of deformed children in many countries.

More than five years after the worldwide scandal over the effect of the drug on pregnant women, nine officers and scientists of the Chemie Gruenthal pharmaceutical firm were accused formally of inflicting bodily injury and negligent manslaughter.

Local prosecutors said evidence collected since 1961 proved a definite link between the once popular drug and the wave of deformed babies.

In about 20 countries, from Austria to the Philippines, an estimated 6,500 children were born with missing or maimed limbs or with other serious defects to women who reportedly took thalidomide during pregnancy. Several thousand more were believed to have been stillborn.

### Shortage Of Pilots

WASHINGTON (UPI) — Reflecting a continuing shortage of pilots, the Defense Department has ordered a review of 1,864 qualified fliers now serving in desk jobs who might be available for duty in Vietnam.

The charges against the manufacturers were announced at a news conference by chief prosecutor Heinrich Gierlich, 56, in a courthouse office crammed with thousands of files on the case. The prosecutors who conducted the long investigation, Josef Havertz, 34, and Eberhard Knipfer, 35, sat by his side.

Up to a million thalidomide pills were produced daily by the Gruenthal firm at Stolberg, near Aachen, before a West German pediatrician, Prof. Wilfried Lenz, pushed the alarm button at a medical congress in November 1961.

Lenz, startled by the mysterious increase of congenital malformations, found that 14 mothers of deformed babies had taken thalidomide during their early pregnancy.

His disclosure spread a wave of panic among pregnant women.

Some among them, an American who traveled much public Belgian woman, pleaded child manslaughter in German court.

Gruenthal of thalidomide five days after warning Aachen, filed by a West German started the litigation. H. complaints from

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xxxiv. 1967 03 13 - 21 Bodies Found - Rietbok Memo

G. M. Leslie

-3-

I must add that Col. Pretorius of the SAP telephoned at about 2200 hours and advised me that 21 bodies had been found. This information was passed to Mr. Swanepoel of South African Airways. On being asked if he could take this as official, I replied, considering the source of the information, he could.

Mr. Stephenson advised the SAP that the weather was unflyable, cloud base about 100 ft. continuous drizzle and visibility 200 yards. This was at about 2255 whilst I was speaking with Col. Pretorius. This information was passed to all concerned.

I would like to say that at no time did the aircraft give any indication of distress nor was there any sound of an unmodulated keyed transmitter.

I cannot add anything to the above.

Certified as correct.

(Sgd.) G. M. Leslie  
S.A.T.C.  
East London  
15th March, 1967.

Witnesses: Sgd. J. Barnard 3620

Sgd. V. J. P. Adlard (Air Safety Officer)

East London: 15th March, 1967.



## Mystery body found in sea

**EAST LONDON**—Mystery surrounds the discovery yesterday morning of the naked body of a White man on the beach at Queensberry Bay, 16 miles north of East London.



**MR. HILL**

Investigations are being made to determine whether it is a body from the crashed Viscount, Rietbok.

The direction of the major ocean current—the Mozambique Current—is away from the area and the likelihood, say police officials, of bodies being washed in that direction is a “physical impossibility.”

However, it is believed a subsidiary counter-current runs inshore and other officials say this could have carried the body from the Rietbok crash area to where it was found.

### BY WOMEN

A police spokesman said last night no White had been reported missing in the area.

The body was found by two African women in flood debris near the mouth of the Buluga River, a mile from Queensberry Bay.

The discovery was reported to a camper, Mr. R. D. Hill of Fort Beaufort who notified the police at nearby Armada.

“The body was almost completely obliterated by masses of debris washed up on the beach,” said Mr. Hill.

“It was about 20 feet from the water — on the high-water mark — and appeared to be intact. The body was completely naked.”

Police removed the body to the Cambridge mortuary.

A senior police officer reported the body “in a bad state of decomposition.”

A post mortem will be held shortly.

Police in the area are conducting a check on missing persons.

## Sangster dies in Canada

**MONTREAL** — Prime Minister Donald Sangster of Jamaica died yesterday in the Montreal Neurological Institute, where he had been fighting a prolonged battle after a brain haemorrhage. — SAPA-RNS.

## Prince now holds a licence

**LONDON** — Prince Charles passed his driving test yesterday. — SAPA-RNS.

### xxxvi. 1998-04-09 Was she the reason for the Rietbok crash?

Audrey Rosenthal was described as the “American woman with the briefcase” by former security police officer Donald Card. Card, who later became mayor of East London on a liberal ticket, said his police superiors had been obsessed with Rosenthal.

Martin Legassick, professor of history at the University of the Western Cape, said he had recruited Rosenthal – whom he described as an “adventurous and lively” postgraduate student – to work for the Defence and Aid Fund, a group run by Canon Collins, dean of St Paul’s Cathedral.

The group was, at that stage, trying to provide clandestine financial support for members of African National Congress and Pan Africanist Congress families back in South Africa who were struggling as a result of their loved ones being in exile, jail or detention. The fund was supported by both liberation movements.

Legassick said he and Rosenthal had met in London during the heady days of 1966, when the Sixties cultural and political revolution was getting into swing. He had fled South Africa earlier following the clampdown on resistance by the apartheid government and the banning of the ANC and PAC.

While London was a rocking city, the struggle in South Africa was at its lowest ebb. Legassick was by then a supporter of the ANC and worked closely with its exiled political leadership, which had informally set up First World headquarters in the city and was very active.

He said of that South African political period: “The security branch had their hands free to look at everything.”

For the 27-year-old left-wing South African intellectual, with his intense eyes magnified by thick black spectacles which would not be out of place in retro-rave subculture today, Rosenthal must have represented a breath of fresh air.

She was fresh out of the University of California, and from the photographs he took of her, appeared to be a beautiful 27-year-old exhilarated by the radical times she found herself living.

A yellowing photograph he kept of her shows an attractive dark-haired young woman with a broad smile.

Her job for the Defence and Aid Fund was to travel to South Africa, meet secretly with the remnants of the underground movements and assist them in receiving desperately needed payments from the fund.

”She was recruited to make contact with friends and families and to find out how to send money clandestinely to them, as this was forbidden.”

She left for South Africa and travelled extensively. At the time of her death, she was on her last visit, to the Eastern Cape.

Legassick said her last letter to him from Cape Town had recorded that the security branch was on to her. ”She wrote from Cape Town that she thought she was being followed and she left very hurriedly for the Eastern Cape. The next thing I heard of the plane crash.”

Legassick kept his terrible secret for more than 30 years. But this week (April 1998) he handed over his photographs of Rosenthal and an obituary he wrote at the time.

It reads, in part:” Through some accident or fate, she died in mid-stride, expressing through involvement her attitude to South Africa: South Africa should be honoured.

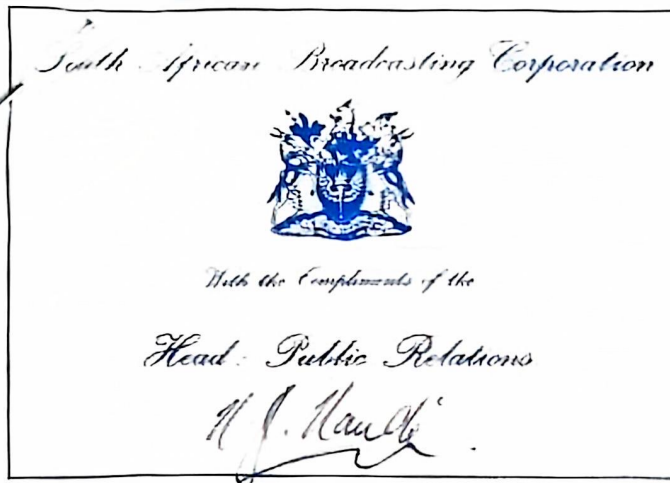
”She had been in South Africa for five weeks, in Johannesburg, Natal, Zululand, Cape Town, the Eastern Cape and Transkei, gathering information for the banned Defence and Aid Fund on political prisoners and their families, and on impending political trials, and renewing or establishing contacts between those working for Defence and Aid in South Africa and the offices of Defence and Aid in London.

” She was also gathering information of use to the South African freedom movement. ‘She worked,’ wrote one person who met her in South Africa, ‘beautifully and conscientiously.’

” Throughout her trip she acted with courage, insight and determination. Though she died, she sent out a great deal of information, and her last letters were posted a day before she boarded her last flight.

” This she did, and did well, and as an American, she did it for South Africa and for mankind. I believe that she deserves to be remembered now, and when South Africa is free, as one of South Africa’s heroines.”

xxxvii. 1967 03 17 OFFICIAL memo about J Boyd death 5.00pm



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5 P.M. BULLETIN

ON FRIDAY, 17 MARCH 1967, 5 P.M.

The leader of the four-man team from the Department of Transport investigating the Viscount air crash near East London, Capt. J.R. Boyd, died in his sleep last night. He was due to return to Pretoria today. It is understood that Capt. Boyd had heart trouble a year ago, and had to retire from flying.

He was 51 years old, and at the time of his death he was Deputy Operations Manager at Jan Smuts Airport.

Captain Jimmy Boyd was one of South Africa's best-known amateur golfers. He was one of the few players to win both the National Open and Amateur titles. He won the amateur championship three times -- in 1948, 1950 and 1958 -- and was the Open Champion in 1953.

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## Still no bodies from wreck

Staff Reporter

EAST LONDON — A Railway Police spokesman confirmed last night that no bodies have so far been found from the Viscount "Rietbok" which crashed into the sea off Kayser's Beach on the night of March 13.

At the request of the Railway Police, a set of pictures of the people who were on board the plane was delivered yesterday.

★ The pictures were supplied through the co-operation of South African morning newspapers, including the Daily Dispatch.

### IDENTIFY

"We wanted the pictures to help us identify bodies of the wreck in case they are washed up or discovered by divers," a spokesman said.

"No bodies or parts of a body have yet been recovered," he said.

"Except for a few pieces of debris which have been washed up along the coast there has been nothing to report.

"Members of the Railway Police are stationed at points along the coast.

Opinion is that if any bodies are still in the area where the Rietbok plunged into the sea they might be washed up during the spring tide this week-end.

### IN TENTS

Railway Police have been sleeping in tents at their stations along the coast. Some of them are without regular supply of fresh water.

Yesterday there was no activity at the scene of the crash.

The diving team from Cape Town did not continue operations and the minesweeper S.A.S. Johannesburg was also absent.

Three of the nine divers returned to Cape Town yesterday.

It could not be confirmed if the search has been called off.



MR. S. J. BAARD.

## New reports on flying saucers

Staff Reporter

EAST LONDON — Another unidentified flying object has been sighted over East London by two men, Mr. S. J. Baard and Mr. Crosby Introncy.

Mr. Baard, a supervisor at the East Bank Location Bus Service, was travelling home from work on the Douglas Smit Highway near Duncan Village on Tuesday night. Mr. Introncy, an African bus inspector, was with him.

"Suddenly I saw this colossal round light hovering in front of us, orange-red in colour," he said.

### VANISHED

"It seemed stationary for a few seconds then it vanished in a coloured streak, red on the outside and blue-red in the middle.

"It was moving in the direction of Cambridge. The object might have been five or ten miles up, but it was so big it looked closer.

"When I realised what had happened, I developed gooseflesh. I have seen enough planes and meteorites to know this definitely.