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Name of Interviewer: De Wet Potgieter

Name of interviewee/s: Inspector Joppie van Staden

Name of translator (if any): De Wet Potgieter

Name of transcriber:

Notes on access and use (if any):

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De Wet	I am talking to Inspector Joppie van Staden, retired inspector in the police who were until 2000 attached to the bomb disposal unit of the police. Jopie, tell us the circumstances, the nature of your work and you say there were lots of bomb threats. Describe some of the most gruesome and difficult bombs you had to defuse.
Joppie	Yes, the most important was soon after I started with the unit at the end of 1990, the Hallmark bomb, but I will tell you now that it was not really planted. It was state propoganda.
De Wet	So what you are telling me is that it was not an ANC bomb?
Joppie	No.
De Wet	Who was it?
Joppie	The police themselves.
De Wet	So it was in fact a publicity stunt?

Joppie	Yes, totally, and in fact it was a 136kg bomb. No names and no pack drill, but the funny thing is that the people who build the bomb went to difuse it again. Then it is easy peezy.
De Wet	Explain where the bomb was planted and the circumstances and the impact if it exploded. I still clearly remember at the time there were newspaper reports about that building. If it had gone off in the centre of town the damage would have been immensely.
Joppie	In comparison with the Church Street bomb, it was between 28 and 37kg. And it exploded outside in the open in the street. That one was inside a building. Hallmark is close to the courts, the advocate chambers and verything was in close proximity.  Most probably that whole block from Paul Kruger Street down to Church Square would have been severely damaged. It was all Russian explosives. That whole block would have been destroyed.
De Wet	What year are we talking about?
Joppie	1990.
De Wet	I understood it was inside a mini bus taxi and it was parked in the parking area of that building and that building is about fifteen storey high.
Joppie	Hallmark building and it was in the parking area on the first floor. It was a taxi and it was Russian explosives. The people who assembled that bomb went and difuse it. Some of them even received medals afterwards.
De Wet	But it was never made known?
Joppie	Would never tell because propaganda is propaganda.
De Wet	Are we talking about George Hammond and his people?
Joppie	Mmmm. Yes. And the way he explained how he defused it was very strange to me because on course he told us in particular not to do it that way. You do not grab all the wires at the same time and simply cut them off.  With the danger of a short circuit because you never know where the powers comes from, why then do it like that? It was the only way out because time was of the essence. All you do is to separate the time switch from the bomb. As simple as that. You take away the power supply... it is clear as daylight.