

# FIGHTING CRIME BY HEARING

Seven sentences have been removed from this article. Choose the sentences A-H the one which fits each gap. There is one extra sentence which you do not need to use.

Sacha van Loo cannot see, but he uses his highly developed listening skills to solve crimes.

Sacha van Loo is not your typical detective. He carries a white cane instead of a gun. Although not entitled to carry a firearm on the job or make arrests, van Loo is like a blind Sherlock Holmes, whose disability allows him to pick up clues that sighted detectives might miss. He is one of six blind police officers working in a ground-breaking unit that analyses taped or video recordings of suspects in criminal investigations.

It all started when Paul van Thielen, a director at the Belgian Federal Police, heard about a blind police officer working in the Netherlands. (1) \_\_\_\_ Van Thielen was sure that blind people could be better than sighted people at listening to surveillance recordings and interpreting them. He set up the first blind police unit in Belgium, after a law was passed giving police extended powers to secretly record suspects who might be involved in serious crimes, such as child abductions and murder.

Initially, there were some fears about working with blind people. (2) \_\_\_\_ To deal with these concerns, van Thielen organized sensitivity training for the sighted officers, with blind volunteers. "At first when members of the police hear the blind people were coming to work here, they laughed and told me that we were a police force and not a charity," said van Thielen. "But attitudes changed when the blind officers arrived and showed their determination to work hard and be useful."

Attitudes were not the only things to change. (3) \_\_\_\_ Lifts with voice-activated buttons were installed and each blind officer was given a special computer with a Braille keyboard and a system that translated pictures on the screen into sound. Van Loo also carries a small global positioning system

device with a voice that directs him to his destination, street by street.

At work, Sacha van Loo's talents have not gone unnoticed. (4) \_\_\_\_ When the police listen in on a suspect making a phone call, van Loo can identify the number instantly by listening to the tones. By listening to a voice echoing off a wall, he can figure out whether a suspect is speaking from an airport lounge or a crowded restaurant. And from the purr of an engine, he can detect whether a suspect is driving a Peugeot, a Honda or a Mercedes.

Van Loo explains how his hearing has become so well developed. "I have had to train my ear to know where I am. It is a matter of survival to cross the street or get on a train. Some people can get lost in background noise, but as a blind man I divide hearing into different channels. It is these details that can make the difference between solving and not solving a crime." (5) \_\_\_\_ "Some of the things I have to listen to can be very disturbing." He says. "I have overheard criminals plotting to commit murder, drug dealers making plans to drop off drugs and even worse."

Despite his handicap, his parents taught him at an early age to be independent. (6) \_\_\_\_ "My parents accepted my blindness, which also helped me to accept it," he said. Van Loo attended an ordinary high school as well as a special school for the blind, where he learned how to use a cane and to read Russian in Braille.

On top of his well-developed hearing, Van Loo is a trained translator who speaks seven languages, including Russian and Arabic. (7) \_\_\_\_ While other officers have taken hours to identify the nationality of a suspect by their voice, van Loo just uses the "library of accents in his head" to do the job quickly.

A He had heard about Sach van Loo's super hearing from another police officer.

B A lot of money was spent to make life easier for the new blind officers in the police station.

C This led him to consider how blind people could use their strong sense of hearing to help fight crime.

D In fact, his sense of hearing is so sharp that his power has been compared to those of a superhero.

E These skills make him more than invaluable to the police force.

F Some officers felt unsure about how to behave around their new workmates and believed they would need extra assistance.

G Dealing with his blindness through his life has also given him the strength to deal with the stresses of the job.

H Van Loo's father even took him to the movies and taught him to drive a car by guiding his hands on the steering wheel.

