



MEDIA STATEMENT:

GUN FREE SOUTH AFRICA CONDEMNS ARMS SCANDAL IN WHICH CORRUPT POLICEMEN ALLEGEDLY SUPPLY ARMS AND AMMUNITION HANDED IN DURING AMNESTY TO CRIMINALS

4 June 2014

Background to Media Statement: On Thursday, 22 May 2014 police raided the Norwood home of Emma and Mark Shmukler-Tishko, seizing an arms cache that included R1 rifles, R4 rifles, R5 rifles, AK-47 rifles and approximately 300 handguns. During the couple's court appearance yesterday (3 June 2014), prosecutor Talita Louw revealed that some of the firearms in the cache had been handed in to the police for destruction during a national firearms amnesty in 2010, but rather than being destroyed these guns were stolen and sold to criminals allegedly by corrupt police officials.

Gun Free South Africa condemns in the strongest possible terms the alleged theft by corrupt police officials of guns handed in for destruction. We call for a complete investigation into how firearms handed in by the public during the 2010 national firearms amnesty have been found in an arms cache discovered in Norwood last month; for every person found guilty of involvement to face the full might of the law as a warning to others; and for every oversight body responsible for monitoring policing in South Africa, including police management, parliament and the Civilian Secretariat of Police, to ensure that systems aimed at safeguarding guns held by the police are implemented.

Internationally and in South Africa there is recognition that one of the most effective ways to reduce gun crime is to reduce the number of guns in circulation.

Says Alan Storey, Gun Free South Africa's spokesperson:

When gun owners handed their guns to the police during the 2010 national firearms amnesty, they trusted the police to destroy these guns. The public played their part - they handed their guns in to the police for destruction. By not destroying these guns, the police failed the public and South Africa as a whole.

That some of these guns have been found in an illegal arms cache makes a mockery of South Africa's public commitment to safety and security by destroying stockpiles of weapons.

Guns are a robust commodity, which means that every single gun leaked by the police to criminals can be used to commit crimes over and over again.

This latest incident is not an isolated case; in 2012 a trunk full of weapons linked to various crimes was stolen from the Mhluzi police station in Middelburg; in 2013 an oversight visit by MPs to various police stations found that firearms asked for could not be found; in 2014, seven firearms were stolen from the police ballistics testing centre in Amanzimtoti despite a warning from KwaZulu-Natal violence monitor Mary de Haas of lax security at the centre.

The theft of guns by the police is a travesty because it completely undermines public confidence that the police will destroy guns handed in for this purpose.

Gun Free South Africa receives regular enquiries from gun owners wanting to hand in guns for destruction but not trusting that the police will destroy them.

Under the Firearms Control Act (2000) the only way to legally destroy a gun is to hand it in to the police for destruction. While Gun Free South Africa has developed a list of steps gun owners can take to ensure their guns are destroyed, ultimately these steps depend on the gun owner keeping a paper trail, with no actual proof that the gun handed in has been destroyed by the police.

The South African Police Service has strict policies and procedures to safeguard guns in police possession, which they clearly aren't implementing - and haven't done for some time. It's imperative that police management and oversight bodies immediately get involved and stop the rot.

How the police handle this latest incident of gun theft allegedly by corrupt officials will determine whether the public trust the police to destroy guns handed in in the future.

Ends