



MEDIA STATEMENT

GFSA welcomes arrest of 16 people for gun licence fraud, corruption

17 June 2020: GFSA welcomes the recent arrest of 16 people, including police officials and gun dealers, for firearm licence-related fraud and corruption.

Says Adèle Kirsten, GFSA's Director: "While we commend SAPS for this decisive action, these arrests are long overdue. GFSA has repeatedly called for concrete action, including a forensic audit of all firearm licences and authorisations issued since November 2010, which is when we first became aware of corruption in SA's firearm control management system."

In a written submission to a Committee of Inquiry to Investigate Unscrupulous Dealers in Firearms and Illegally-Operating Firearms Training Institutions established by the Minister of Police in May 2013, GFSA urged the Committee to carefully examine the entire firearms control management system to identify systemic weakness, instead of seeing incidents of fraud, bribery or corruption as isolated and disconnected.

According to SAPS, the 16 were arrested following a three-year investigation led by the National Anti-Gang Unit in the Western Cape into how several people, including Cape Town underworld figures and their family and friends fraudulently obtained seemingly legal firearm competency certificates, licences and temporary authorisations.

What this demonstrates is that, similar to the 2015 Chris Prinsloo case*, fraud and corruption in the firearms management chain does not only involve corrupt police members – it involves a number of role-players including gun dealers and business owners; which in turn shows that this type of fraud is systemic rather than a once-off, random act.

Says Kirsten, "It is abuse of the firearms control management system that puts all of us at risk. We are hopeful that the systemic failure of the firearms control management system will be exposed during court proceedings, providing valuable information to strengthen the system."

In response to these arrests, GFSA reiterates our call for both a forensic audit of licences and authorisations issued since November 2010 as well as a systemic review of the firearms control management system.

Says Kirsten, "Government has been promising an amendment to the Firearms Control Act for years. These arrests are an opportunity to review the firearms control management system, and close loopholes in both policy and implementation."

* High profile cases of fraud and corruption involving firearms include:

- Christiaan Prinsloo, a senior police officer who is serving 18 years for stealing and selling 2,000+ guns in police stores to gang leaders on the Cape Flats.

- Brigadier Mangwani, Section Head of the Central Firearms Registry (CFR), who was suspended with immediate effect and later dismissed for bribery and corruption related to firearms licensing.
- Three CFR officers who were charged with issuing fraudulent gun licences, including to 28s gang kingpin Ralph Stanfield, his wife and sister; though charges against the three were dropped in October 2016, they have since been reinstated.
- In 2013 Dave Sheer Guns was identified by the Hawks as being at the centre of a large-scale corruption racket involving bribery and creating fraudulent permits to export weapons and ammunition to conflict countries including Sudan and Syria. An employee claimed that she paid bribes to police officers and lied to clients as part of her job as a sales manager. To date, there have been no arrests.

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