



MEDIA RELEASE

Gun Free SA welcomes police destruction of 30,000 unlicensed guns, calls for action to stop leakage risk

Wednesday 17 April 2019: Gun Free South Africa welcomes today's destruction by the police of 30,000 seized and surrendered firearms. The last such destruction took place on 27 October 2016.

Says Claire Taylor, Gun Free SA's researcher, "It is globally recognised that destroying excess, unwanted and recovered firearms, ammunition and firearm parts is the *only* way to guarantee that these are not leaked into the illegal pool of weapons."

International experience shows that firearms, ammunition and firearm parts in storage awaiting destruction are particularly vulnerable to being diverted, with risk increasing once details have been published. The details of the firearms being destroyed today were published on [SAPS' website](#) on 14 March 2019.

South Africa's experience confirms the risk of leakage from gun stores before destruction:

- In 2014 police recovered an arms cache that included guns handed in to the police for destruction during the 2010 national firearms amnesty before they were stolen and sold to criminals, allegedly by corrupt police officials.
- In 2016, Christiaan Prinsloo, a former Gauteng police colonel, was sentenced to 18 years' imprisonment for selling confiscated and surrendered guns, including guns handed in during amnesties, to Western Cape gang leaders.

Leakages like these have two impacts. First, as gun availability increases, so does gun violence. In the six years between 2011/12 and 2017/18, murder in SA increased by 31% and aggravated robbery by 37%; a shocking 41.3% of murders and 59.5% of aggravated robberies in 2017/18 were gun-related. Currently 23 people are shot and killed every day in South Africa, up from 18 a day in 2009.

Secondly, public trust in the police is eroded. When gun owners hand their guns in to the police, they trust the police to destroy these guns. By not destroying these guns, the police fail the public and South Africa as a whole. The result of this loss of confidence is that members of the public with unwanted guns are less likely to hand them in to the police for destruction. Instead, they remain in people's home, where they can be used in domestic violence and suicide or be stolen by house robbers. In 2017/18 members of the public reported the loss or theft of 24 guns every day.

Based on SA's experience of guns earmarked for destruction being leaked from police stores as well as global good practice, on 21 March 2019 Gun Free SA made a written submission

to the police calling for three steps to ensure that weapons earmarked for destruction today are indeed destroyed:

1. Marking of firearms

All firearms scheduled to be destroyed today must be marked prior to destruction to show that the weapon was held within a destruction storage programme.

2. Independent verification

An independent verification mission must be established and tasked with ensuring that firearms, ammunition and firearm parts listed on schedules published on [SAPS' website](#) are still in police stores and are destroyed today.

3. Data sharing

Data sets listing the details of all firearms, ammunition and firearm parts scheduled to be destroyed must be shared with regional and international policing agencies to monitor transnational diversion.

Says Taylor, "Today's destruction is a unique opportunity for the police to take meaningful action to improve national safety by preventing the leakage of guns in police stores and building public confidence in the police."

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

For SAPS' media advisory of the destruction on 17 April, see
<https://www.saps.gov.za/newsroom/msspeechdetail.php?nid=20127>

Ends