



PARLIAMENT
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NATIONAL COUNCIL OF PROVINCES

MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT

Hon. Nicholas Gotsell

Tel: +27 (82) 376 6257

Email: nicholasg@da.org.za

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Provincial Police Commissioner
Lt Gen Thembisile Patekile
Western Cape

Email: patekilet@saps.gov.za

Dear Provincial Commissioner

7 DAY NOTICE - WESTERN CAPE ANTI-GANG UNIT RESOURCING & FIGHT AGAINST GANG WARS IN THE WESTERN CAPE

In the first three days of this month 21 murders and 27 attempted murders were committed on the Cape Flats – all gang related.

Last week I wrote to you to convey my utter dismay at the state of disarray in the basic structure of the Anti-Gang Unit and the disinterest shown by senior management in the South African Police Services in resourcing this specialised unit. The failure by SAPS Western Cape to properly equip and resource the Unit was reflected in the crime statistics released for the third quarter of 2023/24 and it was evident when my colleagues, Ian Cameron and Lisa Schickerling, visited the Unit last month.

The recent statistics reflected 263 murders which were linked to gang-related crimes in the Western Cape – the highest in SA - with Mitchells Plain, Delft, Elsie's River and Bishop Lavis highlighted as the hotspots. From your own ranks, officers have indicated that they themselves are concerned about the disjuncture between investigations and prosecutions which are evident from SAPS documentation; in fact, despite growing calls for prosecution-led investigations, they appear to be counterproductive.

The Anti-Gang Unit was launched on 2 November 2018 in Hanover Park with the primary goal of tackling gang-related violence and criminal activities in the region; this initiative was ostensibly a response to community demands regarding rising gang issues; however, it is increasingly becoming plain for everyone to see that this was only a campaign gimmick ahead of the 2019 National and Provincial Elections.

The reason for this deduction is the simple fact that during the oversight visit mentioned above I had learnt that more than six years since the Unit was launched, it still does not have a fixed establishment, it is wholly underfunded and 50% of its vehicles are not operational. In a show of fanfare, the SAPS showered shiny BMW vehicles upon the unit in 2018, only to learn that these are too expensive to maintain and there after replaced them with a fleet of vehicles that do not conform to the standards an elite unit such as the Anti-Gang Unit require and which falls far short of the contingent of members currently fighting gangs from the Faure Farm.

The Anti-Gang Unit comprises members who are passionate about making Western Cape communities safer. This deduction is borne from the fact that many of the members who form the core of the unit voluntarily joined it at its inception. The fact that these members have to put their lives at risk on a daily basis, in areas that are nothing less than war-torn, without a fully-fledged fixed establishment and with the full complement of members, technical assistance and crime intelligence which it deserves, is nothing short of treachery. It is treacherous to the members of the South African Police Service's Anti-Gang Unit and it is treacherous to the people of the Western Cape – particularly those who live on the Cape Flats and in other communities plagued by gang wars.

In 2018 President Ramaphosa was quoted as saying: “The Anti-Gang Unit is an indication that government has heard the pleas of the citizens who are crippled with fear because of gangsterism, and government is now acting to tackle the problem head-on.”

The only tackling that is taking place is that of our own players by SAPS senior management's ineffectiveness and neglect.

The SAPS senior leadership presented an anti-gang strategy to Parliament's Portfolio Committee on Police on 12 February 2019 which it undertook to execute through a stabilisation and normalisation process. The first stabilisation process was to start in the Western Cape with Operation Thunder and is reported to have created much excitement amongst all specialised units. An extract from the meeting, held 5 years ago, reads as follows:

“Gen. Sitole said resources invested in the anti-gang unit include allocation of R10 million to Operation Thunder and redeployment of 150 officers from outside the Western Cape. The anti-gang unit has a strength of 193 members and 89 vehicles presently. A review of the personnel plan of SAPS has been

initiated to complement the anti-gang strategy and 3 700 officers that graduated from the SAPS college have been distributed across the various formations. Recruitment has been reviewed to 5 000 per year from 300 per year to complement personnel plan shortages. There is migration from the strategic framework to a local government framework that includes moving resources for anti-gang combating purposes.”

What happened to Operation Thunder and the stabilisation process?

Last week, on national television, you asserted that the SAPS is dismantling gangs in the City of Cape Town. This was a blatant lie. Over the past weekends, several people have died on the Cape Flats due to gang wars. This includes, inter alia, a mother who has lost two children within the space of 14 months as result of gang shootings on the Cape Flats and the murder of a pregnant 17-year-old who bared witness to a gang shooting.

I am mindful that all the letters I have written to you, the Provincial Police Commissioner, in the past month have gone unanswered. Instead of attending to the problems I have pointed out in respect of the Flying Squad, the 10111 Commend Centre, the POP-Unit and the K9-Unit, members have been chastised for speaking out.

Your silence in respect of the issues regarding crucial SAPS units is deafening.

I therefore request that you take the time to consider this letter and those that predates it and advise me, **within 7 days of receipt hereof**, what reforms you and your senior management have installed for the people of the Western Cape – and those that protect them. This not only includes the issues regarding resources and operations of the Anti-Gang Unit and an answer regarding Operation Thunder - it also includes previous issues raised regarding the Flying Squad, the 10111 Command Centre, the K9-Unit and the Anti-Gang Unit.

Our findings over the past weeks were that passionate SAPS members are left without their proverbial fire power. It is your job to ensure that these units are well resourced and fully equipped to enable a unified force against crime.

Your failure to address these urgent queries within 7 days will leave me with no other choice than to request the Chairpersons of both the Standing and Portfolio Committees on Police to interrogate:

1. Western Cape SAPS Management's roll out of Project Thunder and prioritisation of resourcing the Anti-Gang Unit in the Western Cape;
2. Western Cape SAPS Management's efforts in ensuring the success of the Anti-Gang Unit;
3. Western Cape SAPS Management's failure to properly equip and resource the Flying Squad, the 10111 Command Centre, the K9-Unit and the Anti-Gang Unit.

I look forward to your urgent reply.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'N Gotsell', enclosed within a hand-drawn oval.

NICHOLAS GOTSELL MP

MEMBER OF THE SELECT COMMITTEE ON SECURITY & JUSTICE