

Whoa – let's check those stats

Jonathan Deal, founder of Safe Citizen and veteran firearms advocate reviews an article by Adèle Kirsten of Gun Free South Africa (GFSA) in which the organisation (again) seeks to hold licensed private gunowners responsible for guns in criminal hands. Deal addresses Adele Kirsten's opinion in the Daily Maverick - May 27th.

The introduction of Ms. Kirsten's article is populated with impressive-sounding statistics, but a closer look may reveal a convenient deception. Citing, as a central theme, a total figure for guns reported lost or stolen by civilians, apparently between 2020 and 2023, Ms. Kirsten arrives at a sum of 24 'previously licensed guns' entering what she labels as the 'criminal market' daily. How, may one wonder is that figure extrapolated? One would imagine that the simple math involves dividing the amount of stolen and lost firearms into elapsed days. This sounds perfectly reasonable until we consider that the SAPS report in their own statistics, a recovery-rate of those same civilian firearms in the order of 90%. Ergo, if around 90% of those firearms are recovered one would expect the GFSA figures to reflect that recovery, by a difference of around 13 guns a day. The undisputed fact of many guns (a majority of which are probably fully automatic military small arms) coming across our borders appears to not feature in the GFSA statistics – and one has to wonder if this is because those numbers are too difficult to prove or guess – rendering private gunowners an easier target.

Notably, the recovery rate of firearms lost by and stolen from SAPS is in the order of only 30%.

Taking a swipe at political parties who apparently fail to address firearm control in their manifestos, Kirsten plainly suggests that South Africans ought to be voting for the party where she seems to have found a friendly ear.

Yet, GFSA has to be aware of the political-party survey conducted and published by the SA Gun Owners Association specifically around Elections 2024 [Saga Gun Gauge Elections '24](#) in which registered mainstream political parties were provided with an opportunity to state their position on firearms and crime. The results were telling - amongst the parties that responded, virtually unanimous support for lawful private gun ownership - especially for self-defence.

I do not intend to be political around this point, because as a lawful gun owner, who I vote for has nothing to do with Gun Free South Africa, as does my choice to be safely and lawfully armed - but it deserves saying that any political party in SA that takes a position of disarming the public under the crime conditions that we face, is treading on thin ice with those, even non-gunowners who support private firearm ownership.

Predictably, waxing lyrical on 'illegal' guns, Ms. Kirsten adheres to her hackneyed claim that it is guns in the hands of private gunowners that facilitate and drive firearm-related crime in our country.

Hogwash.

If and when the State institutions responsible for our borders, and our community safety and security can operate as they ought to, and stem the flow of firearms into SA, as well as the movement of guns under their control into gangster hands, when the

last pre-1994 arms cache of automatic rifles smuggled into SA by the ANC has been identified and catalogued, when Luthuli House can come clean about its own notorious firearms stash, when the police and the military, the metros and other State agencies who have been caught selling and giving guns to friends ([SSA Guns to Friends](#)) can get a grip on their own firearm control, and finally, when Gun Free SA can eschew a blind and unrealistic ideology and be at least ethically accurate in its public statements, maybe we will have a foundation for sensible discussion.

Then all that will remain is for the government – via a proper police force, to attain a state of affairs where it will reasonably guarantee the safety of the public, and coincidentally the safety of government ministers who themselves may perhaps no longer require the phalanx of highly trained VIP protection officers that fuss around the ANC bigwigs to the tune of tens of millions of rand annually.

When and if such a situation may be presented, perhaps the public will be in a more agreeable mood to approach the conversation, until then, GFSA will do well to focus on more attainable objectives and leave law-abiding gunowners out of this debate.

With reference to the Firearms Control Amendment bill (2021), that Bill that GFSA seeks to make law in our country – how does Gun Free SA believe that a new law will succeed where the current robust legislation is failing? Criminals are freely operating outside of any law – old or new, and if any Minister of Police (perhaps 2024 may see the back of Minister Cele), has any sense, that Bill will be tossed into the dustbin. It is a waste of taxpayer money and police time, and it reads like a Gun Free SA wish list, having been drafted in secret, in consultation with everyone except the people most drastically affected.

The Bill is irrational, unenforceable and belongs down the rabbit hole with Alice in wonderland – it will fail, because lawfully armed South Africans will never voluntarily hand in their best means of protection in a country where criminals’ rule. South Africans need sensible discussion, and effective policing, not ideologically driven nonsense, that if it came to pass, would make lawful South Africans even more vulnerable to criminals.

In a repetitive, almost trite debate, one may ask, why is GFSA even responded to? Simply because the media routinely carries the organisation’s message into households and into the chambers of lawmakers and in the absence of a counterargument, these unopposed ideas can take hold - as we have seen with the Firearms Control Amendment Bill in 2021. It is a fact that firearms are necessary instruments in any modern society in that they underscore the rule of law. A private firearm in the hands of a lawful and competent owner can be a boon to safety and security, and as was experienced in KZN in July 2021, even support the logistically challenged police. It is not helpful for South Africans to adopt an extreme position around lawfully owned guns in private hands – for or against – there is simply too much at stake.