

SAPS destroys more than 19,000 firearms

A total of 19,245 firearms - 17,746 of them from KwaZulu-Natal and 1,499 from the Eastern Cape - were destroyed yesterday.

By [Bhekisisa Mncube](#) 1 Aug 2013



The Eastern Cape had already destroyed a total of 12,643 firearms; 5,680 during 2012 and 6,963 earlier this year.

Speaking at a media briefing held at the Reclamation Group, Prospecton (steel recycling plant), west of Durban on Wednesday, Police Minister Nathi Mthethwa heaped praise on the men and women in blue for "work well done".

"Most of these unwanted illegal firearms were seized in various police operations. We thank the police for this. The firearms we are destroying today will be recycled to make gardening tools such as spades," Mthethwa said.

He said every gun that is destroyed is a weapon that is no longer available to be used to kill, injure or intimidate "our people".

He added that the firearm destruction was in keeping with the United Nations (UN) obligations in this regard. The UN designates 9 July every year as Firearms Destruction Day.

"We missed the actual day due to other logistical matters," said Mthethwa.

Among the destroyed firearms were various forms of shotguns, rifles, AK-47s, Uzi automatic guns, 38 pistols, 9 mm pistols, various forms of home-made guns and others.

According to the 24th Destruction of Firearms KwaZulu-Natal Report, a total of 17,257 firearms in KwaZulu Natal were seized in police operations. Fifteen were handed in as part of the amnesty process and 474 were voluntarily handed to various police stations.

The report shows that Durban had the highest number of seized guns. The areas most affected are as follows: Pinetown 1,031, Umlazi 1,627, Chatsworth 870, Phoenix 434, Inanda 1,115, Brighton Beach 1,02 and Durban central had only 414 firearms seized.

Outside of Durban, the highest number of seized guns were found in Empangeni (1,210), Greytown (1,050 of which 36 were AK-47s), KwaDukuza (1,216), Kokstad (1,123), and Ulundi (1,145). The area with the highest number of home-made guns was KwaDukuza at 224.

The minister was at pains to stress that the South African crime situation was peculiar.

"It is the extreme nature of violence in the commission of crime that worries us the most. Even rape is committed using firearms, so are armed robberies and other forms of crimes.

"We appeal to the South African public to help the police in tackling the proliferation of illegal firearms. Crime is not a police matter alone. It is a citizen matter as well," he said.

National Police Commissioner Riah Phiyega decried the escalation in police killings. Phiyega said some seven officers have been killed this week alone - three in KZN and four in the Western Cape. Nonetheless she "heartily" thanked her officers for a sterling job in fighting crime.

"Our business is to fight crime, which is the enemy of the South African freedom," she said.

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