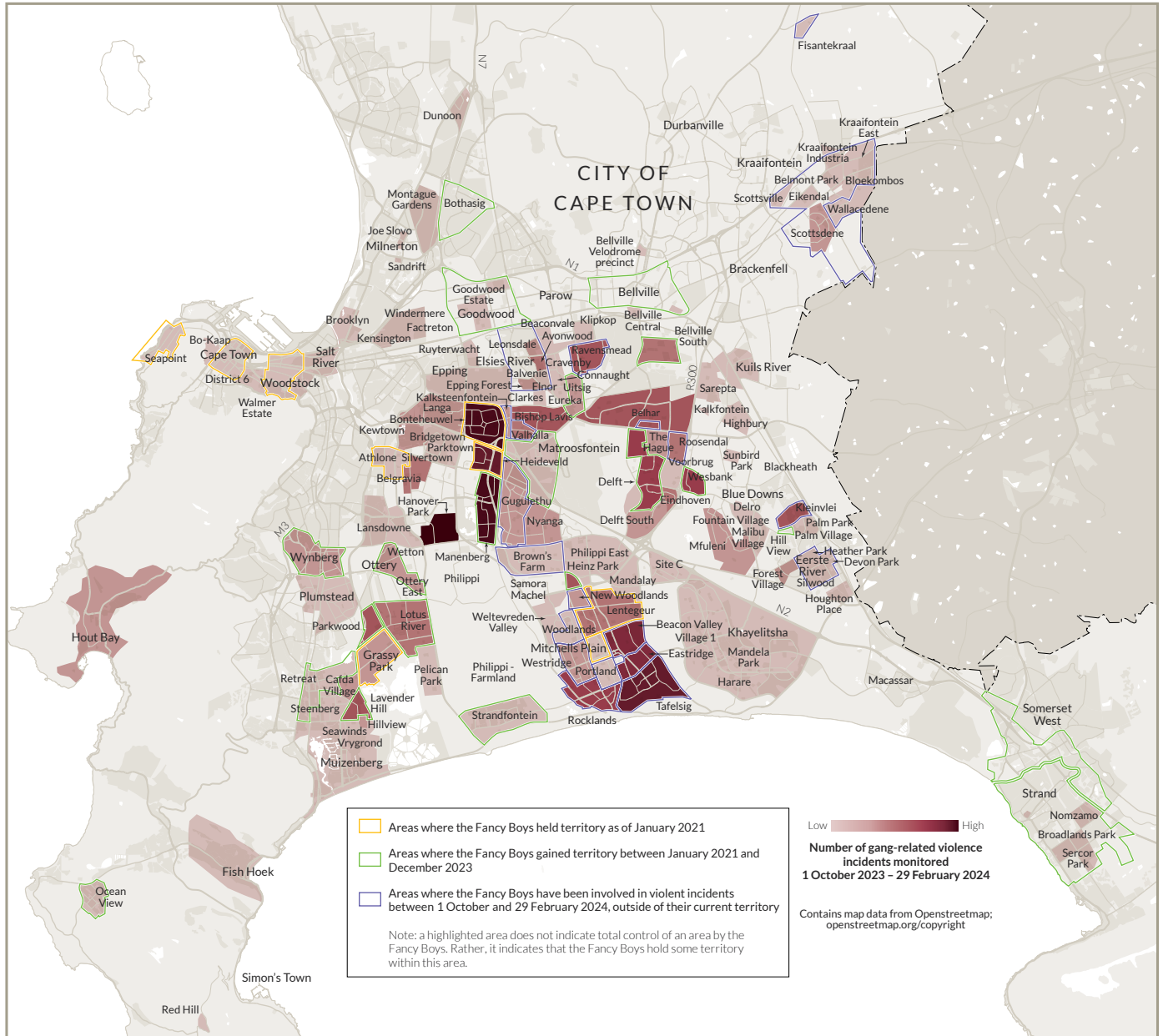




WESTERN CAPE GANG MONITOR



IN THIS ISSUE

Since the last issue, gang violence in the Western Cape has continued unabated, fuelled by continuing gang fragmentation. Between October 2023 and the end of February 2024, our monitoring team profiled hundreds of incidents of gang violence and tracked multiple court cases, which are unpacked here to provide a picture of emerging trends in gang dynamics and state responses.

In this issue, we focus on three key dynamics that stand out:

- 1 The aggressive territorial push of the Fancy Boys and its implications (see map above and page 2).
- 2 The prosecution of alleged gang boss Ralph Stanfield, which may prove to be a promising step in a sustained and consistent strategy against organized crime figures in South Africa (page 3).
- 3 The theft of firearms from Western Cape police stations and the collapse of high-profile firearms theft cases involving police and gangsters (page 4).



ABOUT THIS REPORT

This is the second issue of the Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime's Western Cape Gang Monitor, an output of our new Observatory of Organized Crime in South Africa. This series of bulletins will continue to track developments in Western Cape gang dynamics each quarter, to provide a concise synthesis of relevant trends to inform policymakers and civil society.

The monitor draws on information provided by field researchers working in gang-affected communities of the Western Cape. This includes interviews with current and former gang members, civil society and members of the criminal justice system.

Fancy Boys capitalize on increasing gang fragmentation

Although gang fragmentation is not a new feature of the Western Cape gang landscape,¹ the current rate of fragmentation is unprecedented.² One contributing factor, as described by gang members in interviews, is that rank-and-file members are becoming disgruntled with hierarchical governance structures. Senior gang members often hoard the profits of criminal activity and live extravagant lifestyles, while junior gang members are thrown the 'scraps'.³ This leads to power struggles as lower-level members form factions to contest the rule of gang bosses and/or lieutenants. Leaders of junior gangs also challenge senior gangs for power, while higher-ranking gang members collude with rival groups to disrupt the top echelons.⁴

This dynamic is best exemplified by the Fancy Boys, a gang that has capitalized on this fragmentation to support an aggressive expansion campaign since early 2022.⁵ The group's expansion is unique in its sheer scale, with the gang having acquired numerous territories throughout the Western Cape, and particularly in Cape Town, in a short period of time. It appears that the gang has been able to strengthen its presence in Manenberg, Wesbank, Woodstock, Bonteheuwel, Heideveld, Oceanview, Retreat and many areas of Mitchells Plain by gaining control over strategic territories.⁶ Despite their rapid expansion, the Fancy Boys are still predominantly seen as a 'second order' gang in terms of the underworld hierarchy and are not among the most resourced and powerful Western Cape gangs, which include the Americans, the Hard Livings and the 28s. However, in recent years, the Fancy Boys have been able to challenge these 'first order' gangs in several areas.

The Fancy Boys have exploited the internal conflict of rival gangs and developed an atypical strategy to strengthen their position: recruiting disaffected members from other gangs.⁷ The Fancy Boys have offered higher wages, more drugs, and better and permanent weapons, essentially learning from the mistakes of the competition to create a more attractive environment for gangsters and aspiring gangsters.⁸

The amalgamation of splinter groups under one stable – in this case, the Fancy Boys – is unique in the present-day gang

landscape of the Western Cape. In some ways, however, it is reminiscent of the rise to prominence of the Americans gang in the 1980s and 1990s, when they waged a violent campaign across Cape Town, swallowing up territory and splinter groups by force. The Fancy Boys are taking a different approach, exploiting the current dynamics to achieve a similarly successful campaign of empire-building.

Gangs normally fight over territories that provide income from the drug trade or act as fertile ground for extortion and protection rackets. In addition to battling for territory, however, the Fancy Boys have also been successfully poaching members of other gangs, whom they then arm, in order to gain a foothold in new areas. Turf wars typically involve the attrition of gang resources, with members injured or killed, and weapons and ammunition sacrificed. Yet the Fancy Boys are, at the same time, acquiring resources by focusing on recruitment, bringing in new members in different territories, which helps their expansion.⁹ Their expansion operations have been likened to corporate raids, in which they attack opposition gangs and incorporate members into their ranks.¹⁰

The Fancy Boys also operate by sending out 'migratory scout parties', usually consisting of a handful of heavily armed gangsters, who enter rival territories and ignite conflicts in an attempt to test their perimeters, scrutinize their resource capacity and establish the viability of their drug selling points.¹¹ In other words, the Fancy Boys are becoming involved in gang fights in areas outside of their territory (as shown on the map above). This is an unusual approach when compared to the strategies of other gangs, and has also contributed to the success of the Fancy Boys' ongoing expansion campaign.

At the height of their expansion campaign in mid-2023, the Fancy Boys faced resistance from other gangs hoping to counter their growth.¹² The Hard Livings and the 28s, for example, banded together to fight back after the Fancy Boys entered Manenberg and Wesbank, and recruited members from both gangs.¹³ This unusual alliance suggests that despite being powerful structures in the Western Cape's criminal landscape, the two gangs were unable to counter the activities of the Fancy Boys in their individual capacity. Living amid this turf war, residents of Manenberg reported becoming 'prisoners in their own homes'.¹⁴ However, by

early 2024, the alliance between the 28s and the Hard Livings had ultimately slowed the Fancy Boys' momentum.

As of March 2024, the gang continues its expansion campaign, but with less vigour. In addition to resistance from new alliances, the Fancy Boys' reduced momentum, some say, could be the result of other gangs adopting the same strategy of giving soldiers more money and drugs, and permanent weapons,¹⁵ and treating lower-level members better in an attempt to minimize the risk of them joining other gangs.

The Fancy Boys' development not only provides insight into the changing strategies of some of its rival gangs, but is also a stark reminder of how quickly power can shift in the Western Cape's volatile underworld.

The state tightens its stranglehold on Ralph Stanfield

In October last year, nearly a decade after the state's first attempt to prosecute Ralph Stanfield, the alleged leader of the 28s prison gang and The Firm was denied bail by a Cape Town magistrate.¹⁶ The case against Stanfield, who was arrested in September, along with his wife, Nicole, and two others,¹⁷ on charges of fraud, theft and attempted murder,¹⁸ was marked by the state's determination to oppose bail on account of the alleged threat he poses to witnesses if released. According to a senior source in the National Prosecuting Authority (NPA), the court's decision to deny bail could be part of a longer-term strategic approach to building a stronger case against Stanfield and his criminal network.¹⁹

The nature of the charges Stanfield faces, coupled with the denial of bail, partially on the strength of statements by aggrieved members of his organization and a case made by the Western Cape Anti-Gang Unit, would appear to mark a change in the state's approach to prosecuting extortionists, by pursuing them for other offences rather than for extortion itself.²⁰ According to media reports, Stanfield had allegedly been harassing businesses and government institutions in the Western Cape through extortion and violence.²¹ And recent incidents, such as the murder of City of Cape Town employees and orchestrated violence at construction sites, appear to have elevated Stanfield's alleged criminal activities to the forefront of law enforcement priorities.²²

The 28s are involved in several criminal economies, but according to Magistrate Alta Theart, who ruled on Stanfield's bail application, the gang also has 'access to senior management of SAPS [South African Police Service]'.²³ Stanfield's case was prosecutor-led and compiled largely out of view, with few people in the NPA even aware that an investigation was happening,

possibly to prevent criminal interference in the judicial process.²⁴ Although Stanfield and his wife have already been accused of attempting to obstruct the case against them,²⁵ denying them bail buys investigators time to work with prosecutors to build a case under South Africa's Prevention of Organised Crime Act (POCA), should they decide to do so.

Stanfield's arrest came at a significant moment in a context of escalating gang violence in the province, with law enforcement officials noting that taking the alleged gang boss 'off the street' was also part of a strategy to encourage witnesses to come forward.²⁶ And although the main aim was allegedly to reduce the chance of witness intimidation,²⁷ the state also hopes its efforts to see the alleged gang boss denied bail will signal to potential witnesses that the authorities are committed to this case, and that this could translate into a greater likelihood of Stanfield serving prison time if convicted. The state's focus on denying Stanfield bail may also be a way of trying to disrupt his organization by creating a leadership vacuum.²⁸

The recovery of a firearm and ammunition from Stanfield's Constantia home could prove particularly problematic for him, as he faced similar charges in an earlier case, adding credence to the state's claim that he may be likely to commit further offences if released on bail.²⁹ Stanfield was arrested in 2014, along with members of the 28s and three police officers, on charges of obtaining fraudulent firearm licences by bribing police officers, in the so-called 'guns to gangs case'.³⁰ In that case, which was not initially brought under POCA, the state provisionally withdrew the charges against all accused.³¹ The case was reinstated in 2018, this time under POCA, but the accused have all been released on caution and although Stanfield has appeared in court, the case has yet to be given a final trial date.³²

Stanfield has not been charged with a new POCA offence in relation to the latest allegations, even though the state has scope to do so, as it has in previous cases, such as that of Mitchells Plain drug dealer Fadwaan Murphy, who was initially arrested on a single drug dealing charge that was eventually built up into a racketeering case with more than 100 charges.³³ Instead, the current case against Stanfield is being prosecuted under common law,³⁴ and he faces up to 15 years in prison for a single count of possession of an illegal firearm if he is found guilty. The rationale is that bringing charges under POCA – for which a pattern of racketeering must be established – would considerably increase the state's evidentiary burden without necessarily resulting in a longer sentence.³⁵ In this, the authorities appear to have chosen what they see as a more expedient route to a conviction. The prosecutorial strategy against Stanfield in fact mirrors the approach taken in other high-profile cases, such as that of extortion kingpin Nafiz Modack.³⁶ In both Stanfield's and Modack's cases, prosecutors were assigned early on

to build cases that would convince the courts to deny bail, partially as a way of guarding against criminal interference.³⁷

Stanfield may be facing the first serious legal battle since his arrest in 2014, but the state's ability to successfully prosecute him is by no means certain and will depend on a range of challenges. Imprisonment in South Africa also does not mean that it becomes impossible for a remand detainee to pull strings. If the authorities are serious about the prosecution, they will need to take action to freeze Stanfield's assets, denying him access to any money that may have been criminally obtained, and go after any property he holds that could be the subject of tax or regulatory infringements³⁸ – in the same way that Modack's influence was weakened.³⁹

The state has within its grasp the opportunity to prosecute Stanfield, but it should not stop there. While the arrest of one alleged kingpin may send a strong message to the underworld, and the public, it is important that law enforcement seize on the disruptive impact of this arrest and build other targeted cases and prosecutions against key figures within Stanfield's network. Modelled on this case, the state should also continue to seek to disrupt extortionists through the prosecution of other offences.⁴⁰ To do so, authorities will need to address wider issues within South Africa's criminal justice system, particularly what lies behind the limited application of POCA.⁴¹ Resource constraints, lack of cooperation and endemic corruption are systemic challenges in South Africa's criminal justice system, and the outcome of Stanfield's prosecution, and the fight against organized crime more broadly, hinges on the state's ability to recognize and overcome these obstacles. It needs to muster a sustained and consistent strategy against organized crime figures. The current case against Stanfield and his accomplices may prove a promising step in that direction.

Theft of police firearms and illegal possession ramp up gun violence

In November 2023, it was discovered that 15 firearms had gone missing from the SAP 13 evidence store at the Mitchells Plain Police Station. The loss of the firearms might have gone unnoticed had it not been for detectives who discovered that firearms sent for forensic testing had vanished. When they contacted forensics for the ballistics reports, it was discovered that false entries had been made in the firearm register.⁴²

One police officer has been suspended from duty and faces charges for the thefts.⁴³ Meanwhile, the station commissioner, who, according to one news report, has been implicated in mismanagement, fraud and negligence regarding control of firearms at the police station, was transferred to Bellville Police Station.⁴⁴

The Mitchells Plain Police Station is no stranger to gun theft. In August 2017, 15 firearms and 225 rounds of ammunition went missing from a firearm safe in the police station. In the same month, 18 firearms went missing from the Bellville Police Station's evidence store. While less than half of these have been recovered, some were recovered in gang hotspots and in the possession of at least one known gang member.⁴⁵

One Hawks investigator said that certain controls had been violated at Mitchells Plain Police Station, which meant the due process of safeguarding the firearms was breached, creating an opportunity for corrupt police to exploit.⁴⁶

SMOKING GUNS: TWO DECADES OF FIREARM CRIME

- 2004:** Rashied Staggie found guilty of weapons theft from Faure police base. Alleged mastermind, former police officer Roderick Collins, found guilty of illegal firearm possession.
- 2008 to 2015:** Colonels Christiaan Prinsloo and David Naidoo coordinate mass transfer of firearms from SAPS stores in Gauteng to gangs in the Western Cape.
- 2014:** Ralph Stanfield and his wife and sister are arrested and charged with supplying gun licences to known gangsters. The Central Firearm Registry is raided and three police officers arrested.
- JUNE 2016:** Prinsloo pleads guilty to supplying Western Cape gangs with police firearms and is sentenced to 18 years in prison.
- OCTOBER 2016:** Charges against Stanfield and co-accused provisionally withdrawn.
- AUGUST 2017:** In a Bellville police station inspection, 18 firearms are discovered missing from SAPS 13 evidence store; firearms audit and inspection of SAPS Mitchells Plain Community Service Centre safe content reveals 15 handguns missing.
- OCTOBER 2017:** Police search a known gang member and find a 9mm firearm, revealed to be one of the guns stolen from the Mitchells Plain police station in August.
- MAY 2018:** Charges against Stanfield and co-accused reinstated, totalling 109 counts in what has been dubbed the 'guns to gangs' case.
- JUNE 2020:** Nafiz Modack and 16 other suspects, including current and former police officers, are arrested and accused of being part of a criminal network that generated fraudulent firearm licences for criminals.
- SEPTEMBER 2020:** Lt Colonel Charl Kinnear is assassinated outside his Bishop Lavis home.
- OCTOBER 2020:** Two more police officers arrested for being part of the Modack gun network. Prinsloo released after serving four years of his 18-year sentence.
- MAY 2021:** Modack and two others are charged with the murder of Kinnear.
- JANUARY 2022:** Police confirm reports that 158 firearms have gone missing from the Norwood police station in Gauteng. Further investigations put this figure at 174. The station commander resigns.
- NOVEMBER 2023:** Police minister Bheki Cele informs parliament that between April 2020 and November 2023, 357 firearms and 148 rounds of ammunition went missing from SAP 13 evidence stores; 15 firearms and eight imitations reported missing from SAP 13 evidence store. A detective is arrested and the station commissioner transferred.

This situation, however, is by no means unique to Mitchells Plain and Bellville police stations, and theft of firearms from police stores is a countrywide problem for the police and a threat to communities in gang-infested areas. For example, in 2016, a senior police officer, Colonel Christiaan Lodewyk Prinsloo, admitted being part of a network that operated for about eight years and supplied more than 2 400 firearms from the police armoury in Gauteng to gangs in the Western Cape. By 2016, police had recovered 900 of these weapons, which had been linked to 1 060 murders.⁴⁷

And in November 2023, the police minister told parliament that between April 2020 and November 2023, 357 firearms went missing from SAP 13 evidence stores across the country.⁴⁸ However, this figure may not be the complete picture, because in most cases the thefts were only discovered by chance. For example, in 2021, 174 firearms that had gone missing from Norwood Police Station in Gauteng happened to be discovered when police were tracing firearms seized from a cash-in-transit heist gang – one of which was supposed to be in the custody of the Norwood station.⁴⁹

The pattern of theft of firearms from police stores would appear to be partly the consequence of the general lack of repercussions facing officers who flout controls and remove firearms. Referring to the 357 missing firearms, the police minister said that six people had been arrested in connection with these offences, none of whom were members of the police service.

Theft of firearms from police stores is not the only firearm-related problem experienced by the police. In January 2024, SAPS indicated that between April 2021 and July 2023, 1 725 police-issue firearms were recorded as lost or stolen.⁵⁰ In 2023, the Portfolio Committee on Policing expressed concern that SAPS had lost 742 police issue firearms in the 2022/23 financial year.⁵¹

Ongoing systemic corruption and dysfunctionality in the Central Firearms Registry would also appear to allow gang bosses and other criminal actors to fraudulently acquire firearm licences, giving them access to lethal weapons and ammunition.⁵² In the Western Cape, Ralph Stanfield has been in court, along with several police officers and associates of Stanfield, for their alleged involvement in fraudulently acquiring firearm licences.⁵³ In this case, the network involved operated between the Western Cape and Gauteng. This is not the only example of such networks operating between Gauteng and the Western Cape. In 2020 Nafiz Modack was arrested along with 18 police officers for their involvement in a similar case. However, in May 2023 the charges in this case were withdrawn after the state failed to provide the court with the necessary Prevention of Organised Crime Act (POCA) authorization from the National Director of Public Prosecutions required for the racketeering aspect of the case to be brought.⁵⁴

Given this cocktail of firearm illegality, gangs in the Western Cape appear to have been given access to significant quantities of guns, some of which are linked to inadequate control of firearms under the jurisdiction of the police. This has not only ratcheted up levels of gun violence, but also affected how gangs operate. Some gang bosses have set themselves up as intermediaries facilitating illicit firearm deals, selling them not only to their own members but also supplying other criminal networks in a bid to increase their influence, revenue and criminal interests.⁵⁵

We are closely tracking firearms cases in which police have been accused or charged with supplying firearms and firearm licences to underworld figures. A disturbing pattern is emerging, however, with at least half a dozen cases never making it to court or collapsing and being withdrawn before going to trial. ■

Notes

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- 3 Interview with a member of the Rude Girls, Rocklands, 15 February 2023; Interview with a member of the Americans from Heideveldt, 3 March 2023.
- 4 Interview with a member of the Americans from Heideveldt, 7 March 2023; Interview with a member of Ghetto Kids, Hanover Park, 15 May 2023.
- 5 GI-TOC, Western Cape Gang Monitor, Issue 1, October 2023, <https://globalinitiative.net/analysis/western-cape-gang-monitor-issue-1>.
- 6 Interview with a member of the Fancy Boys who was formerly in the Hard Livings, Lenteguur, 1 November 2023; Interview with a member of 28s, Bonteheuwel, 4 November 2023.
- 7 Interview with a member of the Fancy Boys who was formerly in the Hard Livings, Lenteguur, 9 November 2023; Interview with a member of the Sexy Boys, Belhar, 13 November 2023.
- 8 Interview with a member of the Sexy Boys, Belhar, 22 June 2023; Interview with a member of the Dixie Boys, Manenberg, 18 April 2023; Interview with a member of the Clever Kids, Manenberg, 3 October 2023.
- 9 Interview with a member of the Hard Livings, Manenberg, 7 December 2023; Interview with a member of the 28s, Wesbank, 17 January 2024; Interview with a member of the Dixie Boys, Manenberg, 26 September 2023; Interview with a member of the Clever Kids, Manenberg, 8 November 2023.

- 10 GI-TOC Western Cape Gang Monitor, Issue 1, October 2023, p 2, <https://globalinitiative.net/analysis/western-cape-gang-monitor-issue-1>.
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- 12 Interview with a member of the Young Gifted Six Bob, Woodstock, 18 January 2024; Interview with a member of the 28s, Mitchells Plein, 22 December 2023; Interview with a member of the Sexy Boys from Elsies River, 17 February 2024.
- 13 Interestingly, none of the gang members earlier poached by the Fancy Boys had rejoined their old gangs by the time this conflict broke out.
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- 15 Interview with an Americans member in Bonteheuwel, 7 March 2023; Interview with a member of the 28s in Westridge, 12 March 2024.
- 16 Samane Jnr Marks and Caryn Dolley, Alleged 28s boss Ralph Stanfield denied bail after court hears of 'dishonesty' and 'a clear motive to kill', *Daily Maverick*, 30 October 2023, <https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2023-10-30-alleged-28s-boss-ralph-stanfield-denied-bail-after-court-hears-of-dishonesty-and-a-clear-motive-to-kill>.
- 17 A third suspect was added during the bail application. See Philani Nombembe, Notorious 'gang boss' and wife's bail hearing stirs courtroom drama, *Sunday Times*, 10 October 2023, <https://www.timeslive.co.za/sunday-times-daily/news/2023-10-10-notorious-gang-boss-and-wifes-bail-hearing-stirs-courtroom-drama>.
- 18 For the list of charges against Stanfield and his co-accused, see Christiaan van Renen, Affidavit deposed for the state by investigating officer Christiaan van Renen during bail application in *State v Stanfield and others*, Cape Town Magistrates' Court, Case no. 16/0564/2023.
- 19 Interview with a senior state advocate with the NPA with detailed knowledge of the state's case, 19 March 2024, by phone.
- 20 This line of thinking was offered by Mervyn Menigo, Deputy Director of Public Prosecutions at the NPA, at the Business Against Crime South Africa Extortion Conference in Cape Town on 22 February 2024.
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- 22 Mahira Duval, City of Cape Town blacklists companies allegedly linked to construction mafia, *Cape Argus*, 20 December 2023, <https://www.iol.co.za/capeargus/news/city-of-cape-town-blacklists-companies-allegedly-linked-to-construction-mafia-86ad6684-dc0b-4fb8-ab48-8833a88c9d04>; Caryn Dolley, Risky business – City of Cape Town blacklists companies linked to 28s gang case accused Nicole Johnson, *Daily Maverick*, 21 December 2023, <https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2023-12-21-risky-busi-ness-city-of-cape-town-blacklists-companies-linked-to-28s-gang-case-accused-nicole-johnson>; Construction mafia | CT city officials in safe houses due to threats, *eNCA*, 16 January 2024, <https://www.enca.com/news/construction-mafia-ct-city-officials-safe-houses-due-threats>.
- 23 Ruling by Magistrate Alta Theart during bail ruling in *State v Stanfield and others*, Cape Town Magistrates' Court, 30 October 2023. See also DM Thulare, Ruling on bail appeal in case no. A135/2022 and CC47/2021, *State v Elcardo Adams and Alfonso Cloete*, 17 October 2022, <https://www.saflii.org/za/cases/ZAWCHC/2022/201.pdf>. A similar statement was made by Judge Daniel Thulare in his ruling on the bail appeal in *State v Elcardo Adams and Alfonso Cloete*, cases no. A135/2022 and CC47/2021, <https://www.saflii.org/za/cases/ZAWCHC/2022/201.pdf>.
- 24 Interview with a state advocate with the NPA, 19 March 2024, by phone.
- 25 Ruling by Magistrate Alta Theart during bail ruling in *State v Stanfield and others*, Cape Town Magistrates' Court, 30 October 2023. See also Mahira Duval, Nicole Johnson's new bail application hits a snag, *Cape Argus*, 5 January 2024, <https://www.iol.co.za/capeargus/news/nicole-johnsons-new-bail-application-hits-a-snag-f70b3e1f-7bb1-45ff-89ce-da52fdac8a6>.
- 26 Interview with a senior state advocate with the NPA with detailed knowledge of the state's case, 19 March 2024, by phone.
- 27 Caryn Dolley, Cops destroyed documents in guns-to-gangs case – more allegations, *News24*, 4 May 2018, <https://www.news24.com/news24/cops-destroyed-documents-in-guns-to-gangs-case-more-allegations-20180503>.
- 28 Interview with a senior police officer with detailed knowledge of the operations of the Western Cape Anti-Gang Unit, 29 March 2024, by phone. It is possible that other gangs have tried to take advantage of Stanfield being in custody, with recent attacks in two of the 28s strongholds, Beacon Valley and Valhalla Park.
- 29 Christiaan van Renen, Affidavit deposed for the state by investigating officer Christiaan van Renen during bail application in *State v Stanfield and others*, Cape Town Magistrates' Court, Case no. 16/0564/2023; Ruling by Magistrate Alta Theart during bail ruling in *State v Stanfield and others*, Cape Town Magistrates' Court, 30 October 2023.
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- 31 Caryn Dolley, Cops destroyed documents in guns-to-gangs case – more allegations, *News24*, 4 May 2018, <https://www.news24.com/news24/cops-destroyed-documents-in-guns-to-gangs-case-more-allegations-20180503>; *Stanfield and others v Minister of Correctional Services and Others* (5075/2003) [2003] ZAWCHC 46; [2003] 4 All SA 282 (C); 2004 (4) SA 43 (C), High Court of South Africa, 12 September 2003, <https://www.saflii.org/za/cases/ZAWCHC/2003/46.pdf>.
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- 37 Interview with a senior state advocate with the NPA with detailed knowledge of the state's cases in both the Stanfield and Modack cases, 19 March 2024, by phone.
- 38 Interview with two senior City of Cape Town officials in charge of operations at the city's safety and security directorate, Cape Town, 19 March 2024.
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