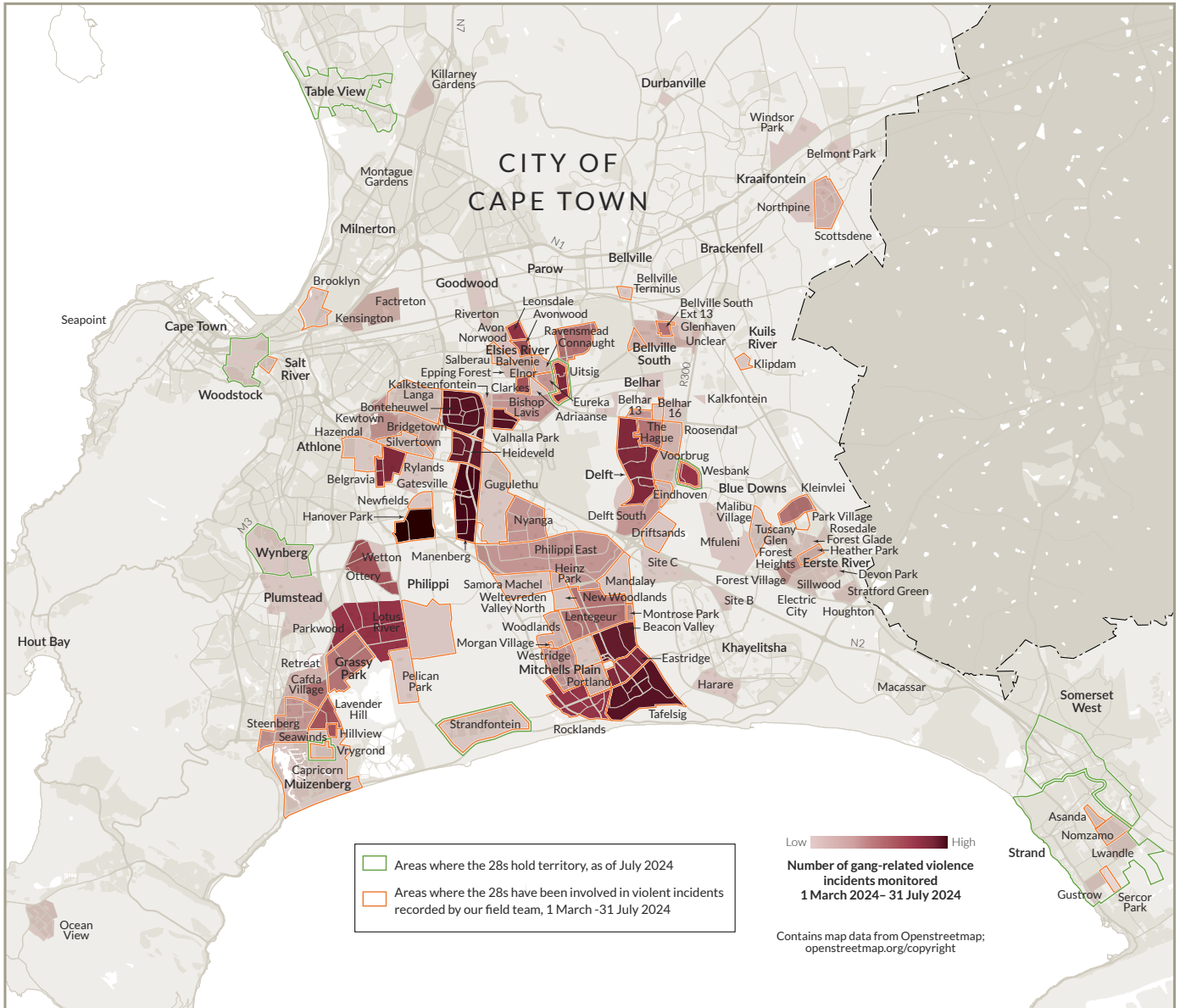




# WESTERN CAPE GANG MONITOR



**IN THIS ISSUE**

In the last quarter, hundreds of shootings have rocked gang territories in the Western Cape. Between June and July alone, some 200 people were shot and killed or wounded. Aggressive pushes for territory continue.

In this issue, we focus on:

- The impact of the trial of alleged 28s gang leader Ralph Stanfield and 12 others on the streets. Has it intensified a power vacuum, or does Stanfield allegedly still exert substantial control?
- The disappearance of alleged Terrible Josters leader Peter Jaggers, a missing cocaine consignment and the practice of cocaine 'drop-offs' in international waters along the Western Cape coast.
- A weekend of killings, the cycle of extortion and a seemingly endless supply of guns and ammunition fuelling violence in Cape Town's gangland.
- How gangsters voted in South Africa's historic 2024 election and where they think the Government of National Unity is headed.



## ABOUT THIS REPORT

This is the third issue of the Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime's Western Cape Gang Monitor, an output of our Observatory of Organized Crime in South Africa. This series of bulletins tracks 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.

### Ralph Stanfield prosecution: What are the impacts beyond the courtroom?

The case against Ralph Stanfield and his co-accused has snowballed in recent months. The 13 accused now face 30 criminal counts, from murder and attempted murder to illegal possession of firearms and ammunition.<sup>1</sup> The case looks set to become potentially one of the most significant prosecutions of alleged high-level gang members that the Western Cape has seen in years. While much attention is focused on the court proceedings, the arrests of Stanfield and his allies are having an impact beyond the courtroom, shaping gang dynamics on the street and in prisons.

The arrest is also shaping two opposing narratives. From the perspective of the police, each arrest has intensified an emerging power vacuum, leaving the 28s, of which Stanfield is the alleged leader, in disarray. Law enforcement sources claim that Stanfield, who has been in custody since September 2023, is 'losing control' of the gang.<sup>2</sup> In the absence of a senior boss to dish out discipline, they suggest the 28s have become vulnerable to attack and members are defecting to rival gangs.<sup>3</sup>

Senior Western Cape gang figures tell a rather different story. They dismiss these claims, saying that Stanfield continues to wield significant control over the 28s street gang from behind bars. 'Ralph Stanfield is still very powerful because he has access to over 100 million rands,' a leading figure in the Americans gang said. 'That means that the 28s have lots of soldiers with lots of guns willing to do his bidding.' The reality is likely to be somewhere between these two ends of the spectrum.

Police meanwhile are wary of gangsters who are at large and who they suspect could disrupt Stanfield's purported control over factions of the 28s and their allied gangs. These include a former ally of Stanfield who worked as his driver.<sup>4</sup> Among the charges against Stanfield is the attempted assassination of this former employee, whose witness testimony helped lead to Stanfield's arrest by the police Anti-Gang Unit last year.

This individual was spotted recently in 28s territory in Bishop Lavis following the arrest of Stanfield's remaining lieutenants

on 27 June, leading police officers in the area to believe he may pose a threat.<sup>5</sup> He is said to be well respected among 28s members in Valhalla Park, a stronghold of the gang, where he was born and raised.<sup>6</sup>

Other 28s members, however, were dismissive of this speculation, reporting that they do not see Stanfield's ex-driver as influential enough to be a threat to the leadership of the gang. It is said that Stanfield still exerts a substantial degree of control over the street gang from his prison cell and instructs understudies who can conduct business on the outside in his stead. According to these sources, there are no credible attempts to usurp overall control of the gang.<sup>7</sup>

Somewhat ironically, the arrest of Stanfield could even serve to legitimize his leadership. Though allegedly leader of the 28s street gang, Stanfield has not previously been formally initiated into the 28s prison gang (see the section below for more detail). Now incarcerated and denied bail, he has reportedly used his wealth and allies who are prison 28s members to buy the allegiance of 28s prison gang members and gain an honorary position among the prison gang.<sup>8</sup> If he is successful, this could consolidate his role as leader and establish a hard link between the 28s prison gang and its eponymous street gang – something that hitherto has been only a loose affiliation.

Community members in areas where the 28s hold territory report that they are now being tested by other gangs,<sup>9</sup> and their territories have also seen violence and volatility of late. A community source Bishop Lavis, for example, reported that, since the incarceration of Stanfield and his associates, there has seemingly been less control over junior members of the gang, and more unpredictable shootings taking place as these members pursue their own vendettas and disputes.<sup>10</sup>

Yet some of these dynamics can be viewed within the broader pattern of Western Cape gang activity, and not solely as a consequence of the Stanfield case. As the GI-TOC has reported on previously,<sup>11</sup> the Fancy Boys have been aggressively expanding their territory for the past two years, poaching members from many rivals, not just the 28s. They have achieved this in part

by offering gang members better access to drugs, weapons and money.

Unpredictable shootings between young, lower-ranking gang members are not an issue experienced solely by the 28s. In general, the influx of firearms to Western Cape gangs, which means more guns ending up in the hands of young gang members, and an unprecedented rate of gang fragmentation have led to more unpredictable and deadly violence.<sup>12</sup> The recent death toll is testimony to this. The Cape Crime Crisis Coalition, an alliance of civil society organizations, estimated that between June and July 2024, some 200 people were shot and killed or injured across the region.<sup>13</sup>

The importance of the Stanfield case cannot be discounted. If successful, it would provide a textbook template for future gang prosecutions. Stanfield's arrest came amid escalating gang violence in the Western Cape, and police officials noted that

taking the alleged gang boss 'off the street' was also intended to send a signal to witnesses to come forward without fear of intimidation.<sup>14</sup>

That police and gang sources have differing narratives on the impact of the case beyond the courtroom is not surprising. While the police are right to be wary of the possible violent fallout of the case and potential faction-fighting within the 28s, there is also likely to be some truth in the assertion by gang members that Stanfield remains influential even while incarcerated.

The history of the Firm and the evolution of the 28s is a prime example of how gangs evolve, adapt and re-establish themselves under new leadership. This resilience must be acknowledged in any attempts to meaningfully disrupt gang activity. The arrest of Stanfield and others is a necessary first step, but without continual and concerted efforts, it might prove only to be a temporary setback for the gang. ■

## THE PRISON GANG, THE STREET GANG AND 'THE FIRM'

The 28s street gang,<sup>15</sup> allegedly headed by Ralph Stanfield, is often referred to in court documents, by the police and in the media as 'The Firm'. But in Cape Town's underworld, the term is rarely, if ever, used and is considered outdated and inaccurate.

The Firm came into being in the 1990s, amid an onslaught on drug dealers and gangs by the vigilante group People Against Gangsterism and Drugs (PAGAD). In response to PAGAD's attacks, Ralph Stanfield's uncle, Colin Stanfield,<sup>16</sup> negotiated a *pax mafiosa* with other gang bosses in an effort to create a unified response to PAGAD. That alliance was dubbed The Firm.<sup>17</sup>

The Firm became largely obsolete once the state began arresting and prosecuting PAGAD leadership figures and members, effectively crippling the vigilante group's activities.<sup>18</sup> The name 'The Firm' fell into disuse.

In 2004, after Colin Stanfield's death, his handpicked successor was his nephew, Ralph. Charismatic and media savvy, with a shrewd eye for political opportunities, he was a new generation of gang boss.<sup>19</sup> But unlike his uncle, Ralph was not an *ndota*<sup>20</sup> – an initiated member of a prison numbers gang, who had to go through a rite of passage behind bars. Nevertheless, under Ralph Stanfield's alleged leadership, the street gangsters who had once formed part of The Firm, became known as the 28s.

The original 28s gang was formed in the prisons of South Africa. It has a century-long history and forms part of the 'Number' – the term used to refer to the three prominent prison gangs in the country (the others being the 26s and 27s).<sup>21</sup>

In the past, prison gang members did not conduct operations or even speak of the gang when outside of prison. This changed after the end of apartheid, when some underworld figures saw the utility of its hierarchical structure in gang activity outside of the prison walls and transplanted it to the streets. The strict membership induction practices were relaxed, to the chagrin of the older Numbers gang members, who saw this as a sacrilegious weakening of their order.<sup>22</sup>

Even today, members from the *ancien regime* of the 28s prison gang refuse to recognize the 28s street gang or Ralph Stanfield, who was not initiated into the Number in prison, as having the same bloodline as the prison gang. But the lines have become blurred. The new order of 28s argue that an awaiting trial prisoner, like their leader, can become an *ndota*.<sup>23</sup>

Outside prison, various gangs, including the 28s street gang, the Americans, Hard Livings, Ghetto Kids, JFKs and others mimic the initiation rites of the old-order prison number gangs and use them to confer upon their members a sense of collegiate identity.

## The Western Cape as a drop-off point in global cocaine supply routes

On 30 June, the alleged leader of the Terrible Josters gang, Peter Jagers, and an associate, William Peterson, disappeared after travelling from Cape Town to Gauteng for a meeting. A few days after the apparent abduction, Jagers's wife reportedly received two voice notes from a man claiming to be a member of a Colombian drug cartel. The man told her that her husband was on his way to South America and that she had '24 hours to return the stuff, or we will come after your families'.<sup>24</sup>

The 'stuff' in question was allegedly a shipment of between 500 and 700 kilograms of cocaine that had been dropped into the ocean from a bulk carrier some 80 nautical miles off the Western Cape coast, in a maritime trafficking method that is becoming increasingly common in coastal areas around the world. The shipment had reportedly been lost at sea due to bad weather, and Jagers, who was allegedly responsible for overseeing its retrieval, had failed to account for the loss. Jagers was summoned to the meeting in Gauteng to 'explain himself' and has not been seen since.<sup>25</sup>

The incident adds to a growing body of evidence documenting the activities of foreign organized crime groups in South Africa.<sup>26</sup> These groups often work in collaboration with Western Cape gangs,<sup>27</sup> including the Terrible Josters, a group deeply embedded in the transnational drug trade. However, the incident also highlights a related dynamic at play along the Cape coast – the role played by the region as a transit hub in transnational drug trafficking routes.<sup>28</sup>

The significance of the Western Cape coastline in the global drug trade was reinforced by a separate incident, on 19 July, when police officers arrested two men in the town of Stilbaai. The suspects, a South African man and a Serbian national (initially misidentified by police as Russian), were found with 400 bricks of cocaine valued at R252 million.<sup>29</sup> Investigators believe the shipment, which was tagged with a GPS tracker, was deliberately dumped overboard from a bulk carrier originating in Latin America as it passed through Western Cape waters, with the intention that it would be retrieved by a smaller boat for onward transit.<sup>30</sup>

Both incidents appear to have involved the same maritime delivery method. The technique, one of many evolving cocaine delivery methods used by criminal groups, entails dropping sealed bales of watertight cocaine bricks overboard from a bulk carrier near a predetermined delivery point. A GPS tracker marks the bales for retrieval by a smaller boat, and the crew on board the bulk carrier communicate with their accomplices by satellite phone once the drop has been completed.<sup>31</sup> Drop-offs allow drug traffickers

to deliver smaller volumes of cocaine – typically a few hundred kilograms – along a ship's route. By conducting these transfers in international waters, traffickers exploit legal limitations on vessel searches. This tactic is particularly effective in a country like South Africa, which has limited capacity to patrol its maritime territory.

The Stilbaai seizure and the missing merchandise at the centre of Jagers's kidnapping may seem unrelated,<sup>32</sup> but taken together they suggest that cocaine drop-offs – a long-standing practice – are increasingly being detected along South Africa's coastline. Earlier evidence of this technique being used locally is in consignments of cocaine that have washed up on the country's beaches at various points in recent years, with notable incidents in Jeffrey's Bay in 2021, when 46 kilograms of cocaine was found by people walking their dogs and in Mossel Bay seven years earlier when a plastic drum containing 25 cocaine bricks washed ashore.<sup>33</sup> Sensational headlines in the international media about cocaine-hungry sharks suggest that this is part of a wider phenomenon,<sup>34</sup> and evidence of a global insatiable appetite for the drug.

With the ideal port, road and air infrastructure required by global drug cartels and virtually no capacity to interdict drug shipments, South Africa has evolved into a major transit node for cocaine flowing east and west.<sup>35</sup> This has become evident also in the emergence of new trafficking routes, including a container-based route transporting cocaine between Santos in Brazil and Durban that came to light through a series of seizures in 2023 and 2024.<sup>36</sup> Although Durban is a significant point of entry for cocaine, traffickers are increasingly using less busy points along South Africa's vulnerable coastline, as attested by the seizure of 973 kilograms of cocaine intercepted in 2021 on a ship off Saldanha Bay.<sup>37</sup>

Drug syndicates are continually developing new delivery mechanisms, as diversified distribution methods ensure that more cocaine reaches the market.<sup>38</sup> The use of cocaine drop-offs as a delivery mechanism should not, however, be seen as an indication of improved law enforcement responses or surveillance at ports, where even the most technologically advanced facilities are still able to scan only a tiny percentage of containers.<sup>39</sup> Rather, it is the logical outcome of a fast-growing and highly entrepreneurial industry, with more cocaine being produced today than at any other point, and prices at the 'farm gate' at their lowest.<sup>40</sup>

While the two events in mid-2024 highlight South Africa's increasing attractiveness to cocaine traffickers, the country has also become a pivotal location for the operations of Chinese synthetic drug syndicates, European organized crime groups, notably from the Western Balkans, and heroin and methamphetamine smugglers from Afghanistan and Iran.<sup>41</sup> ■

## Firearms acquisition fuelling cycle of gang violence

Multiple incidents of gang violence were recorded in Cape Town in a short space of time in mid-August. In Imizamo Yethu, Hout Bay, gunmen allegedly belonging to a gang involved in perpetrating acts of extortion opened fire on three spaza shops located in Molokwane Street on 16 August 2024. Three Somali shopkeepers were killed and six others injured.<sup>42</sup>

The extortion of foreign-owned businesses has reportedly been occurring on a large scale since 2017 after waves of violence directed at small-business operators compelled them to cave in to the extortion demands made by gangs.<sup>43</sup> This incident in Hout Bay highlights the readiness of extortion rackets to resort to violence to ensure the success of their practice. According to Jenni Irish-Qhobosheane, a group's willingness to use violence is an essential ingredient of extortion, as targets need to believe that failure to comply with demands will result in harm.<sup>44</sup>

A gunfight between the Rude Boys and the Firm Boys occurred in Valhalla Park on 17 August. It is alleged that the two groups are fighting over territory to carry out extortion practices.<sup>45</sup> Previous interviews conducted by the GI-TOC in the area indicated that the Rude Boys gang was on a revitalized mission to take over territory in the Bishop Lavis precinct (which includes Valhalla Park) since the arrest of Ralph Stanfield in September 2023 along with his associates.<sup>46</sup> According to a gang expert, this is in line with patterns of the past where gangs attempt to take over rival territories after the arrest or removal of leadership figures.<sup>47</sup> Additionally, previous GI-TOC research indicates that extortion is becoming increasingly entrenched in society as many gangs seek to diversify their income streams.<sup>48</sup> While the drug trade, and the consequent competition over drug-selling territories, remains a priority for gangs, the

extortion economy has also become a primary source of income, and is no longer viewed as a sideline cash generator, with gangs violently clashing over lucrative extortion turf.<sup>49</sup> Innocent people are frequently caught in the crossfire of these gang conflicts, as was the case during this incident in Valhalla Park, in which a 14-year-old girl was seriously injured.<sup>50</sup>

On the same day, a mass shooting occurred in Galilee Walk, Hanover Park, which saw seven teenagers between the ages of 14 and 18 being shot and injured. Information gathered by the GI-TOC suggests that this incident was gang-related and linked to an ongoing conflict between the Americans and Inglorious Bastards gangs.<sup>51</sup> This incident appears to have been a retaliatory attack carried out by the Americans, who had been on the receiving end of an attack a week prior at the hands of the Inglorious Bastards. Americans gang members, allegedly in search of members of the Inglorious Bastards, approached the group of teenagers. A verbal confrontation between the two parties ensued, resulting in the shooting.<sup>52</sup>

All three of these incidents, as is the case with much gang-related violence in Cape Town,<sup>53</sup> highlight the ease with which gangs are able to access firearms and ammunition. In the extortion economy, there is a cycle in which profits are used to buy more guns, enabling the gangs to grow their territories, and so the pattern continues.<sup>54</sup> The cycle of drugs and firearms follows a similar pattern in other areas of the Cape Flats. Additionally, firearms are being assigned to gang members for them to carry permanently, as opposed to the past where they would have to return the weapons after having completed a specific task for the gang.<sup>55</sup> This new trend was initially introduced by the Fancy Boys gang in a bid to recruit gang members, and it appears that it has since been adopted by other gangs.<sup>56</sup> According to a gang expert, the fact more gang members are carrying firearms means that altercations between rival gangs are more likely to result in shootings.<sup>57</sup>



Number of gang violence incidents recorded Cape Town, July 2023 to July 2024.

SOURCE: GI-TOC



## From bullets to ballots

Just as a little over 58%<sup>58</sup> of registered voters in South Africa turned out to cast their ballots in the 2024 national election, so too did many gangsters. Their political views, voting patterns and party allegiances, and their disdain for politicians and politics mirrored those of many other South Africans in a watershed election.

Following the election, we interviewed gang members of various ages and from different gangs. This is what they said.

Yes, I voted and I definitely voted for the DA because I don't want Cape Town in the ANC's hands, because they are thieves and they will do what they did in the other provinces and steal the monies allocated to various departments, so that there's no service delivery. I voted that way so my children and grandchildren can live better lives. We need to give this new Government of National Unity some time to get its footing to prove itself and make a difference. I hope that they can honour their promises and that the ANC won't be able to steal as much now that other parties are involved in the government. ]

– 'Boeta', Fancy Boys gang, 45

I don't vote for fuckers who do *fokol* for our people and only know us when we must vote. The government stays the government – but with a new name and the same *skelm naaiers* [crooked fuckers]. They keep getting richer and our people continue to struggle. ]

– 'Mr H', Spoilt Brats gang lieutenant, 42

I won't reveal my party, as that's my secret. Our party did well and I'm looking forward to seeing what's happening over the next five years. I'm excited with the GNU, as it's the first time we actually have a democratic government where not only one political party decides the destiny of all our people, but a voice for everyone who casts their votes. What I'm seeing now already says the voters of this beautiful country decided what they wanted and how they want our country to be governed. ]

– 'Mr C', 28s gang, 37

It is our responsibility to take care of the communities, which we do. ]

– Member of Dixie Boys gang

This Government of National Unity is just a smoke screen for them to steal more and then to blame each other. There are a lot of ex-prison members in parliament, but my wife says that we must give these fuckers a chance. She is a DA supporter. She still believes in the white man's promises, but I will just be quiet and sit here on the pavement. ]

– 'Mr K', Mongrels gang, 39

It's Gayton McKenzie all the way, my bro. I must *koppel* [link] myself with the Patriotic Alliance, because they are definitely looking out for the Coloured people. How can you expect me to vote for the DA when all those *verkrampte whites* are still part of the DA? The DA only fucking cares about white people or rich people: they don't give a fuck about servicing our communities at all! If you go into their areas, then you see clean streets, but here in Hanover Park and Mitchells Plain there is *kak* all over the streets. ]

– 'Yster', Americans gang, 53

For me, there were actually a couple of *befokte ouens* [fucking cool candidates] that would have made great leaders if I had voted this year. But me, I am an old gangster and so I don't really give a fuck about politics, because I know how the politics works. It never works for the people and that is why we stepped into the underworld, because it can work for you in the underworld, because it's *mos* a matter of a *boef* working with a *boef* [thug working with a thug]. *Ja*, it was the gangsters working with the government, because they are even bigger *skelms* [crooks]. It is only the criminals that win in this type of climate, the communities must only suffer and that is why it is our responsibility to take care of the communities, which we do! ]

– 'Deacon', Dixie Boys, 58

## Notes

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