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GOVERNMENT WANTS TO FORCE SOUTH AFRICANS TO FACE EVIL WITH EMPTY HANDS

Early yesterday a so-called draft Firearms Control Amendment Bill of 2017 (clearly endorsed “draft do not copy” on every one of its 148 pages), was circulated on social media. It appears that this document has not been officially distributed by government: firstly, it ought to have been approved by cabinet (which did not happen); and secondly, it should have been published in the Government Gazette by the Minister of Police.

SAGA does not know what the origin of this so-called draft bill is, or who distributed it. Accordingly, SAGA will not react to it. We are aware that the parliamentary programme for 2018 is almost finalised and we doubt whether the Portfolio Committee on Police will deal with any legislation at this late stage. We also expect that all political parties will from now on be fully absorbed by their respective election campaigns and we further doubt whether any attention will be given to fresh legislation until after the elections, the re-establishment of parliamentary committees and re-appointment of members.

The draft document seeks to introduce draconian provisions to the Firearms Control Act, such as scrapping provisions allowing for the possession of self-defence firearms; drastically reducing the number of firearms that dedicated sport shooters and dedicated hunters may possess; drastically amending provisions pertaining to private firearm collectors; reducing the period of validity of competency certificates; introducing stricter requirements for competency; introducing the provision of so-called “valid reasons” for wanting to own firearms; the establishment of a consultative forum, however, without any representative of the firearms community serving on it; and (again) introducing ballistic sampling as a requirement for possession of firearms. These are a few of the proposed amendments contained therein. The PDF document is available on our website.

If this document reflects government’s views towards private firearm ownership, and if this is what government intends introducing as law, then SAGA and the whole firearms community must prepare for “battle”. That said, in a media statement just released, the chairman of the Parliamentary Portfolio Committee on Police has denied knowledge of the draft bill. For the moment we can only advise SAGA members and law-abiding firearm owners of the so-called draft bill and confirm we are following up on this document and will keep you informed of developments.

In the meantime, stay safe and use your firearms safely and responsibly.