

Chapter 4 Review of government reports

Attacks on farms and smallholdings, January-June 1999, CIAC report

The report¹ provides a provincial breakdown of the number of farms and smallholdings that were attacked, and the number of people who were murdered in the attacks, for the period January to June 1999. The report also provides a comparison of the number of attacks on farms and smallholdings (and the number of people murdered) during the first six months of the years 1997 to 1999.

Other relevant findings and comments contained in the report include:

- During the first half of 1999 (the time period covered by the report), attacks on farms and smallholdings were escalating at a rate greater than the increase in crime in South Africa as a whole.
- During the first six months of 1999, the number of murders committed during attacks on farms and smallholdings did not escalate at the same rate as the number of reported attacks. However, the number of murders committed during such attacks increased by 4.5% between the first six months of 1998 and the first six months of 1999. This increase was almost four times as high as the annual increase in the overall murder rate in South Africa between 1997 and 1998.
- While most attacks on farms and smallholdings occur in a random fashion, “a glance at the distribution of attacks both in time and in space does seem to suggest a pattern in at least some areas. It appears as if attacks sometimes tend to occur in clusters, which might indicate that at least some of these attacks could be ascribed to criminal gangs targeting a specific area.”² The report, however, does caution that the CIAC’s limited research capacity does not permit more than a “superficial conclusion in this regard.”
- In a few cases, domestic workers supplied information to criminals regarding the layout and contents of homesteads. Some of the attacks were well planned and preceded by thorough reconnaissance.

- In some cases, police officials were being investigated for having colluded in the attacks. At the time of the report's compilation, the results of these investigations were still outstanding.
- The perception that only white farmers or farm owners were attacked, was incorrect. Criminals targeting farms do not appear to be distinguishing between their victims' skin colour.
- Many of the attacks continue to be of an extremely brutal nature.
- The police service had achieved a generally high success rate in apprehending suspects involved in attacks on members of the farming community, and the courts had imposed heavy sentences on persons convicted of farm attacks.

Attacks on farms and smallholdings, November 1998 – 15 March 1999, Joint Operations report

Between November 1998 and 15 March 1999, according to this report,³ some 284 attacks on farms and smallholdings were reported to the NOCOC. Of these, the SANDF's commando units were involved in 73 incidents, of which 55 provided sufficient information to the Chief Joint Operations for analysis in the report.

The report found that farmers and smallholders who were members of the state's security structures had a higher chance of survival and offered more effective resistance. Thus, 21 (38%) of the attacked farms and smallholdings analysed by the report were occupied by active commando members or SAPS reservists. Overall, 22 persons (out of a total of 113 victims in all the attacks) were murdered in 19 separate attacks on farms and smallholdings. In seven separate attacks, ten attackers (out of a total of 224 suspected attackers) were killed by the farmers or smallholders under attack, or by members of the security forces. In contrast, in attacks where the victims were commando members, only one farmer was killed. Moreover, in 20% of the attacks where the farms or smallholdings under attack were occupied by commando members, the attack was repelled with loss of life among the attackers.

The report further found that:

- In 58% of the attacks analysed, inadequate security measures existed on the attacked farms and smallholdings.⁴ On the remainder of the farms and smallholdings (where adequate security measures existed), almost a quarter (22%) did not utilise the available security measures.
- Most of the attacks (56%) analysed occurred inside the houses on the farms or smallholdings. A further 18% occurred outside the houses; 16% occurred in farm stalls or small shops located on the farms and smallholdings; and 9% occurred at the gate – or on the road – leading to the farms and smallholdings.

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- The motive for most of the attacks (80%) was theft or robbery of property, with firearms, vehicles and cash the most sought after items. In 18% of the attacks, the motive was revenge (mainly to do with past labour disputes).
 - In the attacks analysed, all the victims of the attacks were aged between 49 and 84 years, with 69% of the victims older than 60 years.
 - Virtually all (91%) of the attacks involved three or more assailants.
 - Of the suspects apprehended or killed as a result of the attacks, all were between the ages of 16 and 31 years, and 82% were younger than 21 years.
 - In 76% of the incidents analysed, at least one of the attackers was known to his victims. In 20% of the incidents, all the attackers were known to their victims.
 - In 56% of the incidents, the attackers were armed with firearms, followed by blunt objects (25%), and knives or other weapons (18%).

Attacks on farms and smallholdings, number 1 of 1999, CIAC report

The report⁵ provides a detailed provincial breakdown on the number of farms and smallholdings that were attacked during 1998. The number of murders committed during attacks on farms and smallholdings in 1998 is also provided in the report.

The report presents the results of a survey of 207 Eastern Cape farms, conducted during August and September 1998. The survey was conducted by the CIAC in the Eastern Cape, in co-operation with crime prevention components of the SAPS. The survey focused mainly on elderly people living on farms as older people are more likely to be targeted by criminals attacking farm residents. Some of the survey's findings were as follows:

- Of the respondents, 60% either did not own a dog or had dogs which 'did not command respect' (ie, the fieldworkers did not feel intimidated or frightened by the dogs).
- Of the farmers' homes covered by the survey, 55% did not have security gates.
- In 56% of the houses surveyed, the fieldworkers (who did not announce their visit before the time) found that the security gates or doors leading into the homes were unlocked or open.
- Of the houses surveyed, 55% did not have burglar guards on their windows, and 39% did not have external lighting.
- Of the farmers interviewed, 81% did not carry a firearm with them. However, more than half of the farm houses surveyed contained five or more firearms.
- Of the farms surveyed, 17% did not have any means of communication with the outside world other than a Telkom landline telephone. Most farms (56%) had a 29 mHz radio and just over a quarter (26%) were connected to the Marnet/Nearnnet radio system.

The survey concluded that most farmers surveyed were not sufficiently safety conscious in respect of their own personal security, and the security of their farmhouse and its inhabitants. “The answer to the threat [against farmers] will have to be found in increasing security consciousness among potential victims and close cooperation among all concerned, as well as improved information and intelligence gathering.”⁶

Attacks on farms and smallholdings, number 2 of 1998, CIAC report

The report⁷ deals with the period prior to the rural safety summit held in October 1998. The report analyses the attacks – and the murders committed during such attacks – on farms and smallholdings which occurred during the first six months of 1998.

The report warns that the police’s crime code list does not provide for a category of crime defined as ‘attacks on farms and smallholdings’. The crimes committed during such attacks are recorded under their relevant crime codes, such as murder, robbery, or rape. The crime code list also does not define, nor make provision for, the occupation of crime victims, or the type of premises on which crimes occur. The CIAC’s statistics relating to attacks on farms and smallholdings are consequently dependent on *ad hoc* reports from police stations. Moreover, the CIAC farm and smallholding attack figures do not include crimes committed against members of the farming community which did not occur on farms or smallholdings. The statistics reflect only those crimes which were committed on farms and smallholdings.

The report provides the CIAC’s definition of a farm or smallholding attack:

Acts aimed against persons or residents, of workers at and/or visitors to farms and smallholdings, whether with the intent to murder, rape, rob or inflict bodily harm (cases relating to domestic violence, drunkenness or resulting from commonplace social interaction between people – where victims and offenders are often known to one another – are excluded). Moreover, all actions aimed at disrupting farming activities as a commercial concern, whether for motives related to ideology, labour disputes, land issues, revenge, grievances or racist concerns like, for example, intimidation.⁸

Crimes committed and motives

The report looked at attacks on farms and smallholdings in the first half of 1998, and came to the following conclusions:

- Armed robbery was the most common crime (committed during 58% of all attacks over this period), followed by attempted murder (21%), murder (17%), and burglary (15%).

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- In respect of property robbed or stolen in attacks during the first half of 1998, cash was taken most frequently (in 38% of reported attacks), followed by electrical appliances (30%), firearms (28%),⁹ and vehicles (24%).
 - In over a quarter of the reported incidents (27%), nothing was stolen or robbed. There were a number of explanations for this. For example, the victims offered resistance (22% of the cases where nothing was taken); the suspects were surprised at the scene of the crime (14%); and the criminals had the intention to commit non-property crimes such as rape (8%). However, in 26% of the cases, no reason was found why nothing had been robbed or stolen during the attacks.¹⁰
 - No pattern in terms of preferences for the day of the week when attacks occurred, could be discerned. However, attacks were more prevalent at certain times. Thus, 25% of attacks occurred between 8h00 and 12h00, and 44% between 16h00 and 24h00.
 - A total of 58% of the victims were attacked inside their homes, and 45% outside their homes.¹¹ In almost two-thirds of the incidents where victims were attacked inside their homes, the attackers gained unforced entry into their victims' homes.
 - In just over a quarter (26%) of the incidents, the victims were ambushed by criminals lying in wait for them. In such cases, the attackers were hiding in the farmyard (in 28% of cases where the victims were ambushed), inside the homesteads (20%), at farm entrances (17%), and in outhouses (11%).
 - In about two-thirds of the incidents, the attackers used firearms – primarily handguns – to commit their crimes.
 - In 51% of the incidents, the attackers fled the crime scene on foot, followed by using the vehicles of their victims (24%), and using their own vehicles (9%).
 - According to the investigating officers of the attacks, "financial gain and/or economic gain" was the motive for 83% of the attacks. In a further 3.4% of the cases, the motive was murder, followed by theft of a firearm (2.8%), rape and revenge (1.9%). In 6% of the cases, the motive was unknown.

The report's author analysed questionnaires completed by detectives investigating attacks on farms and smallholdings during the first half of 1998. The questionnaires required detectives to provide their reasons why the attacked farms and smallholdings were selected for attack. A large number of detectives indicated that they did not know of a reason why the farms and smallholdings were chosen by criminals.

The majority of questionnaires which provided a suspected reason stated that the attacks were related to the fact that:

Residents of farms and smallholdings are perceived to be soft targets. In order of importance, other suspected reasons referred to the existence of shops or farm

stalls on the premises, that a personal dispute existed between the perpetrators and the victims involved, the financial status of the owner, information that cash could be robbed on a specific farm, that the suspects were familiar with the layout of the farm involved, the fact that the premises were isolated or that bad security measures existed, or that the property concerned bordered on an informal settlement.¹²

The report sought to determine whether any relationship could be established between victims of farm and smallholding attacks and the perpetrators of such attacks. In 4.5% of the incidents, it was found that one or more of the suspects involved in the attacks were employed by their victim(s) at the time of the attack. In another 2.2% of the incidents, the suspects had been employed by their victim(s) in the past. In 1% of the incidents, the suspects were relatives of their victims' employees. The report concludes that the "vast majority of attacks are committed by strangers who are unknown to the victims, which means that farm attacks can be considered as mainly belonging to the category of stranger crimes."¹³

Victims' particulars

Some 510 people were victimised in the 357 attacks on farms and smallholdings which occurred during the first half of 1998. The following categories of victims were identified by the report:

- Most (46%) of the victims owned the property where they were attacked; 23% were workers on the property; 4% worked on the property as managers; 19% were relatives of one of the above groups; and 8% were guests on the property.
- Most (69%) of the victims were white, followed by blacks (23%), Asians (5%), and coloureds (3%). Of the murdered victims, 74% were white, 17% black, 3% Asian, and 6% coloured.
- Of the victims, 13% were murdered. Of those murdered, 71% were older than 50 years of age. A further 38% of the victims were injured during the attacks (of which more than half sustained serious injuries).
- Most (58%) of the victims were male.
- A third (33%) of the victims were aged 60 years or older. A further 33% were aged between 40 and 59 years, and 27% of the victims were aged 20 to 39 years.

Accessibility of attacked farms and smallholdings

The report's author analysed the relationship between attacked farms and smallholdings, and their distance from the nearest public road.

It emerged that just over a third of the attacks (36%) occurred on farms and smallholdings which were situated less than one kilometre from the nearest public

road. In a further 38% of the attacks, the distance was between one and four kilometres; in 13% of the attacks the distance was between five and nine kilometres; in 4.5% of the attacks the distance was between ten and 14 kilometres; and in 3% of the attacks the distance was 15 or more kilometres.¹⁴

Suspects involved in the attacks

The report found that 894 suspects were known to be involved in the 357 attacks on farms and smallholdings in the first half of 1998. The following findings were made in respect of the suspects involved in the attacks:

- A single suspect was involved in 17% of the incidents; two suspects in 26% of the incidents; three suspects in 22% of the incidents; four suspects in 11% of the incidents; five suspects in 6% of the incidents; six suspects in 5% of the incidents; and more than six suspects in 1% of the incidents. In 11% of the incidents, the number of suspects could not be established.
- At the time the report was written at the end of 1998, some 342 suspects had been arrested and charged in connection with 145 attacks on farms and smallholdings. Of the arrested suspects, 97% were South African citizens and 3% were foreign nationals.
- Of the arrested suspects, 93% were black and 7% were coloured. All the arrested suspects were male.
- Of the arrested suspects, 22% were under the age of 20 years; 55% were aged 20 to 29 years; 17% were aged 30 to 39 years. The remainder (6%) were older than 40 years, or their ages were unknown.
- Most of the arrested suspects (70%) were unemployed at the time of their arrest. A further 14% were labourers, and 7% school pupils.

CIAC Quarterly crime report, number 3 of 1998

The report¹⁵ provides a detailed provincial breakdown of the number of farms and smallholdings that were attacked during 1997. The number of murders committed during attacks on farms and smallholdings in 1997 is also provided in the report.

The report provides a detailed analysis of the attacks that occurred during 1997. This includes, *inter alia*, the types of crimes committed during attacks on farms and smallholdings; the *modus operandi* employed by the attackers during the attacks; the motives associated with the attacks; information on the victims of the attacks; the accessibility of the attacked farms and smallholdings; and information on the suspects involved in the attacks. The findings of the report do not differ markedly from those contained in report number 2 of 1998 which analysed the attacks on farms and smallholdings that occurred during the first half of 1998 (see above).

Attacks on farms and smallholdings, Britz report

The report¹⁶ contains the findings of investigations conducted between January and May 1998 on farm and smallholding attacks. The investigation was undertaken by the head and deputy head of the police's serious and violent crimes unit, assistant commissioner Suiker Britz and director Errol Seyisi, respectively.

The report deals with 305 attacks on farms and smallholdings that occurred during the first five months of 1998. To establish the motives for these attacks, 191 suspects arrested in connection with the attacks investigated were "subjected to thorough interrogation and were questioned by different role players."¹⁷

The report's authors also investigated information received from the state's intelligence agencies, the South African Agricultural Union (now called Agri South Africa), and the public. Use was also made of informants to gather information on farm and smallholding attacks and the perpetrators behind them.

The report came, *inter alia*, to the following conclusions:

- "Irrefutable evidence exists that the motive for approximately 99% of the attacks on farms and smallholdings is common criminality, with robbery being the prime incentive ... at this stage no evidence is available to suggest that any sinister forces are responsible for the attacks. However, there have been a few incidents where racial tension, dismissals and conflict between employer and employee played a contributing role in the attacks."¹⁸
- A distinction has to be made between attacks on farms and attacks on smallholdings. A large proportion of farm attackers live in the vicinity of the farm (or even on the attacked farm itself), or have friends or relatives who live on or near the farm chosen by the attackers. Many of the people who attack smallholdings live in informal settlements in the vicinity of the smallholdings they attack.
- Farmers are considered a 'soft' target because of their isolated position. This is not the case with most smallholders who usually live close to cities and towns.

Notes

- 1 J C Strauss, *Attacks on farms and smallholdings 1 January – 30 June 1999*, Crime Information Analysis Centre, September 1999, Pretoria.
- 2 *Ibid*, p 9.
- 3 Brig-Gen J F Lusse, *Research report: Attacks on farms and smallholdings: November 1998 – 15 March 1999*, Chief of the South African National Defence Force (Joint Operations), March 1999, Pretoria.

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- 4 By 'inadequate security measures', the report means no or ineffective burglar bars before windows/doors; no outdoor lighting; and no or an ineffective early warning system such as dogs, geese, or bells on security fences/gates.
 - 5 J C Strauss, *Attacks on farms and smallholdings*, number 1 of 1999, Crime Information Analysis Centre, May 1999, Pretoria.
 - 6 *Ibid*, p 17.
 - 7 J C Strauss, *Attacks on farms and smallholdings*, number 2 of 1998, Crime Information Analysis Centre, December 1998, Pretoria.
 - 8 *Ibid*, p 2.
 - 9 In most incidents, more than one firearm were taken. Overall, 185 firearms were taken in 98 incidents where a theft or robbery of a firearm(s) occurred.
 - 10 J C Strauss, *Attacks on farms and smallholdings*, number 2 of 1998, *op cit*, p 15.
 - 11 Adds up to more than 100% as some victims were attacked both inside and outside their homes during the same incident.
 - 12 J C Strauss, *Attacks on farms and smallholdings*, number 2 of 1998, *op cit*, p 18.
 - 13 *Ibid*, pp 20-21. Care needs to be taken, however, in the analysis of these figures. The figures refer to known suspects only. In many cases, victims did not get a proper look at their attackers, and in others, no witnesses survived the attack to identify the suspects involved.
 - 14 In 5% of the cases, the distance between the attacked farm or smallholding and the nearest public road was unknown.
 - 15 The incidence of serious crime, January to June 1998, *Quarterly Crime Report 3/1998*, Crime Information Analysis Centre, September 1998, Pretoria, pp 20-42.
 - 16 K J Britz & M E Seyisi, *Attacks on farms and smallholdings*, August 1998.
 - 17 *Ibid*, p 9.
 - 18 *Ibid*, p 18.