

FATAL FAIRLAND SHOOT-OUT

Does it take the streets of Fairland to run red with blood of men, tragically stripped of their existence before residents become involved?

According to SAPS spokesman Sgt. Mark Reynolds, Hillside Quickspar activated a panic alarm at 10:51am to which Eagle Watch Security responded. Sgt. Reynolds was unable to confirm the exact number of assailants but according to witness reports, six men went into the store while two remained in the vehicle outside. Completing the robbery the suspects fled, some in the getaway vehicle while two ran down Sophia Street. Sgt Reynolds informed NMT that the police responding to the call and the suspects were caught between Eagle Watch Security going down the street and the police coming up.



A gun battle ensued in which Const. Michael Maraletse (30) of the Fairland police was shot in his side and arm and later died of his wounds, at Millpark Hospital, while Const. Ntephi Philemon Mesina still lies in a critical condition. Eagle Watch Security officer Pieter Le Roux (24) of Florida was shot dead and officer Charl Froneman lies in hospital in a serious condition with a bullet lodged in his jaw.

Three suspects were arrested at the scene following descriptions and identification from witnesses. Further investigations have led to the arrest of eight more men and the confiscation of a firearm. The involvement of the suspects and the use of the firearm in the incident still needs to be confirmed. The incident is currently being investigated by Capt. Martin Weyers of the Brixton Murder & Robbery Unit.

Tamara Louise who was at the scene shortly after the shooting informed NMT that the men were still alive when she arrived. "It was only 25 minutes after we called the ambulance that they arrived" she said claiming that the lives of the officers could have been saved.



ThSupt. Jaco Oosthuysen, Station Commander at the Fairland Police said that the incident was very tragic. "I hope that the residents will no longer be apathetic. Although Fairland has one of the lowest crime rates, it does not mean that something like this can't happen." he said. He also thanked the community who assisted at the scene and those who have sent their condolences.

"Michael was well liked by everybody and was an excellent police officer. That was why he was on the Crime Unit. He will truly be missed. A distraught Dave Cassey, CEO for Eagle Watch Security, said that the senseless killing were not acceptable in today's norms. "It is time for the community and business to stand up" said Dave, who hopes to have a public meeting to discuss a solution. "The residents have been lulled into a sense of complacency but they must prepare themselves as they are now the targets."

"The lives of the officers could have been saved"

Tave Cassey believes that the solution lies in a petition to the Justice System to rethink the laws. The Justice System guarantees bail to suspects and does not assist the police. Dave suggested that offenders of serious crimes be denied bail. "Unless there are some serious changes," he said "vigilante groups will be brought about and the residents will start taking the law into their own hands."

Theo Ioannou, owner of the Hillside Quickspar who has been robbed eight times in seven months informed NMT that he was obviously next on the hit list. "We cannot continue like this unless we do everything possible to secure our rights as citizens," he said.

Di North, PRO for the Fairland Community Policing Forum, saddened and still in shock said that it brought home the reality to everyone and something had to be done. "Become more involved with the police who work with limited resources," she said "and volunteer to work at the police station, to allow more officers on the street."



Clr. Haniki Kasselmann gave her deepest and most sincere condolences to the families of the two diligent officers who gave their lives to protect the community. Haniki informed NMT that she hoped to launch a "No Crime in Ward 24" Campaign and urged everyone concerned to contact her. "Together with the local police and the Community Policing Forum we will fight crime, realising that neither, central or provincial is doing anything on this major issue. "We the people will govern and we will live in a crime free ward." she concluded