

Good afternoon all

I have copied, below, a statement issued by Dianne Kohler-Barnard MP on the proposed declaration of various devices as dangerous weapons, and the proposed prohibition of carrying these devices in public places, including a public road.

The proposed regulations will mean that you and I cannot carry pepper spray, for example, because the use of the spray might cause someone to fear that they might become injured or disabled through exposure to the spray. (My right to defend myself does not appear to enter the equation.)

PLEASE go through the attached draft regulations and PLEASE SUBMIT YOUR COMMENT on them. (The regulations provide the submission details.)

Best regards

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**STATEMENT BY DIANNE KOHLER BARNARD MP
DA SPOKESPERSON ON SAFETY AND SECURITY**

Proposed banning of self defence devices will leave South Africans at the mercy of criminals

Release, immediate: Sunday 24 February, 2008

Once again the Minister of Safety and Security has utterly sidelined the citizens of South Africa and the Parliamentary process, this time by publishing an extensive list of items which may be used for personal defence targeted for banning, and giving just days for the public to comment.

The DA will at the first available opportunity call for an immediate extension to the deadline for public comment set for mid-March, so that all South Africans may be made of aware of these suggested regulations and use their right to comment.

Having, against massive public resistance, introduced the utterly unworkable Firearms Control Act, the Minister of Safety and Security 's latest suggestions - to extend the powers of the Dangerous Weapons Act - may well be viewed not as a means to deal with the criminals, but rather on disarming beleaguered law-abiding citizens. Indeed, these draft regulations seem to ensure that not only would any attempt to use any object to protect oneself against an attacker ensure that one is then at risk of being considered to be breaking the law, but also merely being in possession of such an object may well put citizens on the wrong side of the law.

Considering the fact that thousands upon thousands of South Africans have been denied gun licences for inexplicable reasons, one must surly ask how exactly the Minister, whose department has failed so dismally with the Firearms Control Act, intends implementing these new regulations?

Will still more SAPS members be taken away from crime prevention and visible policing to nose around flea markets and public braai areas to attempt to apply these regulations?

What this move may well do indirectly is cause uncertainty in people with regards to self defence. If one uses a household knife to defend oneself, will one be charged with being in possession of a dangerous weapon? If one uses a knife at a braai in a camp - i.e. in public, is this an offence? If one then picks it up to ward off an attacker could it not be suggested that ones self defence exceeded the bounds of necessary self defence, allowing one to be charged with assault PLUS possession of a dangerous weapon?

Currently the latest weapons available for individuals to protect themselves against for example car hijackers - pepper sprays, stun guns and the like - are commercially available to any adult. It seems that these would now be classified as dangerous weapons and could no longer be taken along on a car trip as a means of self defence.

Thousands of women currently drive with these 'weapons' on their laps as a means of warding off attackers. Are they now to be criminalised for attempting to protect themselves?

The question needs to be asked of the Minister, if you forbid citizens to carry self-defence devices - are you not actually ordering them to allow an attacker to rape and murder at will rather than risk breaking yet another law aimed at weakening citizens still further?

What options are you leaving South Africans to protect themselves with?

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