

Special Operations

Introduction

The operational environment for law enforcement, private security and the users of security has drastically changed over the years. Not only have crime figures increased but demands for human rights, safe work practices and general wellness has increased. On the other hand, workforce ethics have drastically declined with much higher numbers of criminal activities internally in traditionally safe environments, whilst corruption is rife in all spheres of the South African society. Unfortunately, against the backdrop of these negative trends, workforce ethics, loyalty, integrity and quality of security forces/ law enforcement employees is declining. This type of work is regarded by many in the labour market, as lower-end employment. With this in mind, as a cost cutter many users of security are not only reducing safeguards but are utilizing lower graded (and trained) and cheaper manned guarding options.

The above raises an alarm . . .

Is traditional manned guarding, partially supplemented by technical applications, adequate to face the threats, challenges and business requirements of the future?

In many instances yes but a gap has developed predominantly between *quality* on the one hand and *efficiency* on the other. There is a role and existence for a different concept:

- Special operations (Special Ops) are typically performed independently or in conjunction with conventional security guarding operations. The primary goal is to achieve a crime prevention or safety (including road safety) objective where a traditional security guarding force requirement does not exist, falls short in manpower numbers or might affect the overall operational outcome.
- Special operations are conducted in a low-profile manner that typically aims to achieve the advantage of speed, surprise, and violence of action against an unsuspecting target.
- Special ops are normally carried out with limited numbers of highly trained personnel that are able to operate in all environments, utilize self-reliance, are able to easily adapt and overcome obstacles, and use unconventional security and safety skills and equipment to complete objectives.

The Team

The Thorburn Special Ops team provide flexibility, support and independence to the Thorburn guarding operations and continue to prove their success not only in the mining sector but also at high-profile hotels and golf estates to name a few. By adding intelligence gathering and investigative capabilities to our teams, we have seen growth both in stature and success rate over the past 2 years. The team is also equipped with a state-of-the-art night vision device, FLIR camera. Team members have received first aid and firefighting training and have specialized equipment such as CO2 rifles & pistols, whilst the vehicles are fitted with console cameras.

The role of the Thorburn Special Ops Team is summarized as:

- crime prevention initiatives
- road safety and general safety enforcement
- adding “visible policing”
- providing flexibility – deployment in assistance to traditional guarding or for independence takeover of certain guarding functions for periods of time
- routing out of illegal workers brought onto site by contractors
- ensuring building sites (within a site) are free of labourers afterhours
- conducting spot-checks within the supply-chain cycle
- acting as an intervention force in difficult situations or just general support
- conducting covert surveillance operations

Investigative series within our Special Ops Unit in 2013 resulted in the 100% recovery of stolen computers and other electronic equipment stolen from a mine in Mpumalanga Province.

Focus Areas

Focus areas are defined by the nature of the industry or sector, in tandem with the operational environment, for instance the operational focus of special ops in a residential estate will differ from that of a mine or industrial site. Site-specific requirements and frequencies of the operations are discussed with our customers to ensure expectations are met.



Special Ops & Armed Reaction Successes

Thorburn's proactivity within a specific area (over a 5-month period in 2013) resulted in at least **58 operational actions** being recorded. Below are a few of the highlights:

- ✓ 23 employees/contractors tested positive for alcohol intoxication
- ✓ A total of 939 alcohol tests conducted for period
- ✓ 794 vehicles searched during stop & search safety operations, of which 11 vehicles had expired customer access disks, while 19 vehicles did not comply to safety standards
- ✓ 3 people were found in possession of company property
- ✓ An employee was caught using his access card to give access to other employees
- ✓ Reclam truck attempted to remove copper cable from premises – value recovered R20 000
- ✓ 25 head lamp batteries confiscated from Willard Company as they failed to present a tool list
- ✓ Contractors found working without required PPE in plant environments
- ✓ 5 employees were found in unlawful possession of new overalls
- ✓ employees found in unauthorized possession of drilling machine, fans & equipment
- ✓ 2 persons found in possession contraband during search
- ✓ 16 people found to have been transgressing the speed limit



We give security

a GOOD name