

SPECIALISED SERVICES

Jonathan Boucher
Director Specialised Services



How Thorburn Security Solutions helps businesses to minimise the cost and impact of protest action.

The power of protest played a pivotal role in South Africa's hard-won democracy and is firmly entrenched in the Constitution as a right for people to make their voices heard. However, if handled incorrectly, protracted strikes and protest actions can have deleterious effects for a business's finances, employees, assets and reputation.

In 2021, **Bloomberg reported** that the South African steel industry strike, which lasted for 17 days, cost the industry about R500-million, with a concurrent loss of about R100-million in wages. The **Mail & Guardian** meanwhile reported that the nationwide unrest which broke out in July last year put about 150 000 jobs at risk and cost the economy an estimated R50-billion in output. These examples alone highlight why it is in employers' and employees' best interests to manage negotiations and protest action peacefully and in a way that causes minimal disruption to business continuity and job stability.

"Businesses need to take a holistic approach to managing a strike, however, most organisations are either insufficiently prepared or take a siloed, reactionary approach, which can extend the duration of a protest and add cost for businesses," says Jonathan Boucher, Director: Specialised Services, Thorburn Security Solutions. "Additionally, the longer a strike is drawn out, the more likely it is that emotions will escalate, increasing the possibility of risk to people's lives, business assets, and a company's reputation."

Thorburn Security Solutions Specialised Services has extensive experience in managing all aspects of protests and strikes to help companies and protestors swiftly and safely reach resolutions and concurrently minimise cost, damage to assets, and reputation.

"We offer an integrated service solution that takes a holistic approach to the strike action cycle, says Boucher. "By following international best practices and making use of the best available training and technology we mitigate risk through effective communication, crowd control and legal responsiveness."

The solution includes comprehensive training to prepare management teams for what to expect in the event of a strike, as well as access to a specialised legal team which swiftly responds with advice and the relevant legal documentation at various stages of a strike action.

Thorburn's "boots on the ground" approach starts with its extensive intelligence network, which includes excellent relationships with various state departments, trade unions, employer bodies, the SAPS as well as national and international security bodies. These relationships ensure that Thorburn remains informed and is one step ahead of potential strike or protest action.



Intelligent Protection

Meanwhile, Thorburn's highly trained Specialised Services team will conduct a risk assessment and tailor a strike-action plan accordingly. Everything is meticulously planned and documented to ensure legislative compliance and best practice.

"Ideally the most successful outcome is to resolve issues as quickly and peacefully as possible, however in the event that a strike does take place we are optimally positioned and well equipped to deal with whatever level of risk-mitigation response is needed," says Boucher.

"Our strike action team is highly trained and equipped with the best available weaponry – from non lethal to less lethal and lethal. They are also supported by a full range of armoured vehicles, helicopters, drones and thermal surveillance instruments."

Thorburn's surveillance vehicles and drones offer 360 degree thermal cameras with video analytics to feed information back to an on-site mobile command centre as well as to its state-of-the-art National Control and Command Centres (NCCs) where intelligence officers monitor crowds, pinpoint individual instigators, identify firearms, fires and areas of escalation to feed information back to security officers on the ground.

Because Thorburn's officers are all trained to exacting standards, additional officers can be mobilised from other parts of the country, if needed.

Helicopters are also available to track suspects and for rapid response, and emergency evacuations if the situation requires it.

"Our helicopter and drone pilots are all highly trained, accredited and compliant with the relevant aerial and statutory requirements," says Boucher. "The drones can be dispatched to patrol areas and identify issues that can't be picked up by the naked eye, especially when lighting is poor. They can also be used to verify coordinates and to maintain video records of the strike or protest as it unfolds."

All documentation, video and photographic material is stored on a hard drive, which is then handed to the client after the protest action as evidence for any civil, criminal or internal disciplinary action they may want to take.

"Additionally because we are part of the Tsebo Solutions Group, we can also offer additional services such as catering for employees who choose to remain on-site during protest action, secure transport for these staff members and the rapid deployment of cleaning teams to clean up after a strike," says Boucher. "All of which makes us uniquely positioned to help our clients return to business as usual, quickly, effectively and as cost-effectively as possible."

a **TSEBO** solution