

INSURRECTION

Documentary
24 Minute (2 Episodes)

Counting the cost of South Africa's most violent post-Apartheid uprising

How does one quantify the destruction that resulted from the 'attempted insurrection' of July 2021? With Kwa-Zulu Natal (KZN) as the epicentre of South Africa's most intense scenes of violence, looting and arson ever seen in living memory, media reports offer a mere snapshot of that explosive episode in modern South African history: over 340 deaths, an estimated 150 000 jobs lost and a R25 billion crater in the regional economy.

But for the multi-racial mix of citizens of Durban North, Umhlanga, Phoenix, Verulam, Mt. Edgecombe and Ballito, the reality goes far deeper than this grisly checklist. The fault lines of economic tensions and inequality ruptured, and ordinary people had no option but to take up arms, form improvised barricades and vehicle check points to protect their livelihoods and homes from violent attacks.

This documentary feature explores in-depth interviews with ordinary firearm owners who share harrowing memories of the week of violent anarchy. We hear their accounts of sacrifice, fear, and triumph. We visit the remnants of burnt-out buildings where thriving enterprises once stood, and hear first-hand accounts of lawfully armed citizens who worked side by side with friends and neighbours to mobilise food, fuel and emergency supplies to communities in desperate need.

Veteran filmmaker and producer Uwe Beckman; and actor Jack Devnarain, who was born and raised on the KZN North Coast, recount the events of that fateful week in July 2021 through the haunted eyes of the people who witnessed the catastrophic collapse of law and order. Various neighbourhood watch teams, Community Police Forums, and ordinary people relate first-hand accounts of how armed, responsible citizens resisted repeated attacks by violent mobs where law enforcement authorities failed to contain the onslaught.

Collaborators:

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We explore the South African context for private firearm ownership, and on-going efforts by the South African Police Minister to unlawfully disarm citizens. While the collapse of crime intelligence services subsequently became the subject of an expert panel of inquiry, the scope of the investigation failed to cover the role of armed, trained citizens and their pivotal role in protecting lives and property, even providing ammunition to law enforcement officials who had none when they needed it most. In addition, we examine the role of firearms rights organisations, including the South African Gunowners' Association (SAGA), that continues to promote the rights of private firearm ownership against an increasingly hostile political environment that threatens the rights of citizens to lawfully possess firearms.

This documentary will appeal to anyone with an interest in the events described by President Cyril Ramaphosa as an "attempted insurrection: a calculated, orchestrated effort to destabilise the country, sabotage the economy, and undermine constitutional democracy". We highlight the role of lawfully armed citizens, their rights of firearm ownership, and how training and preparation curbed the onslaught of the country's most destructive episode of public violence, arson and mayhem ever to be recorded in the age of social media.

