

# South Africa uses new tech to fight vicious gun violence

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In this photo taken Friday, Aug. 17 2018, police search a suspect for guns and drugs during a raid on a known drug house in Mannenburg, Cape Town, South Africa. As gunshots ring out in one of South Africa's most dangerous neighborhoods, a new technology detects the gun's location and immediately alerts police. (AP Photo/Nasief Manie)

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South Africa is the first country outside the United States to implement the "shotspotter" audio technology, which is also being used to fight wildlife poaching on the other end of the country in Kruger National Park.

The technology's use in Cape Town's notoriously violent Cape Flats area has contributed for the first time this year to a conviction in a gang shooting. Police hope more will follow.

"About 13 percent of gunshots are reported by the public. Now we respond to every single incident, very rapidly," said City of Cape Town Alderman J.P. Smith, who instituted the technology in the Manenberg and Hanover Park neighborhoods in 2016. "It's accurate to between 2 meters and 10 meters (6 feet to 33 feet) of where the shot was fired."

The recovery of illegal guns has jumped five-fold in the areas where the shotspotter is used, Smith said. The technology also provides accurate data about gun [violence](#).

The technology operates by acoustic sensors which are placed throughout a neighborhood and Cape Town plans to expand its use from the current 7 square kilometers to 18 square kilometers (3 sq. miles to 7 sq. miles).



In this photo taken Friday, Aug. 17 2018, a policeman searches a suspect during a raid on a known drug house in Mannenburg, Cape Town, South Africa. As gunshots ring out in one of South Africa's most dangerous neighborhoods, a new technology detects the gun's location and immediately alerts police. (AP Photo/Nasief Manie)

South Africa has one of the highest rates of murder in the world. On Tuesday, police announced that the rate was up about 7 percent, with 20,336 people murdered between April 2017 and March, compared to 19,016 in the previous year. Many were linked to gang violence in Western Cape province, whose capital is Cape Town.

The national homicide rate of 34 per 100,000 people spikes in parts of the Cape Flats to up to 250 per 100,000, according to the University of Cape Town.

"The Cape Flats violence has its roots in apartheid policy," said Simon

Howell of the nonprofit African Policing Civilian Oversight Forum. "When colored people (South African term for people of mixed race) were forcibly evicted from their areas and dumped in the Cape Flats, people lost all their social ties that used to form an identity."

Gangs evolved from that treatment of the mixed-race population during white-minority rule, say experts.

"Violence begets violence," said University of Cape Town criminologist Guy Lamb. "Since 1994 we've had high levels of unemployment, poverty, inequality . and these dynamics have fed into the high violent crime rate."



In this photo taken Friday, Aug. 17 2018, police search for guns and drugs during a raid on a known drug house in Mannenburg, Cape Town, South Africa. As gunshots ring out in one of South Africa's most dangerous neighborhoods, a new technology detects the gun's location and immediately alerts police.(AP Photo/Nasief Manie)

Lamb lamented the fact that the national police force is not using the new technology.

Howell, however, questioned it as an effective response to Cape Flats gun violence.

"It has its role to play, but unfortunately in South Africa policing is our primary response and that is never going to solve the issue," he said.

One Manenberg resident, Shakier Adams, explained what life is like on the Cape Flats.

"Growing up, you are literally caught in crossfire on a daily basis. You have to be careful who you speak to, where you go, whoever you associate yourself with."

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