

# MK vets fight over spoils

Aloe Ridge flat-grabbers ‘have been kicked out’

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FORMER military veterans who invaded a housing complex in Pietermaritzburg two weeks ago are now at each other’s throats over the spoils of their operation.

The war veterans took over more than 100 residential units at the city’s flagship housing project, Aloe Ridge in Westgate-Grange after overpowering employees working at the complex.

However, some of the war veterans who were initially part of the group allocated flats now claim that they have since been kicked out by those claiming to be the masterminds of the invasion.

“I was here from day one when the operation was launched, but last week these people calling themselves commanders forced me and the other comrades to hand back the keys.

“They told us we will not be allowed to occupy the houses as there [are] more deserving comrades.

“When we tried to resist we were forcibly removed from the premises and threatened with violence should we return,” said an expelled occupant claiming a former member of the Azapo’s Azanian National Liberation Army (Azanla).

The largest of its kind across the entire KwaZulu-Natal province, the Aloe Ridge project with 950 units is designed to help low-income groups access rental accommodation within the city.

According to the Azanla ex-combatant, who alongside two other expelled invaders met The Witness outside the housing complex yesterday afternoon, individuals who are not members of SA’s former liberation movements were recently spotted walking into the complex.

“We were told that many of the people that are now occupying the units we were ejected from are young people who can’t be members of Azanla, Africanist

Congress' Azanian People's Liberation Army (Apla) and former Mkhonto weSizwe ex-combatants.

"We suspect that the guys calling themselves allied forces ... are now selling the units and pocketing the money," said the former Azanla member, who did not want to be identified for security reasons.

More than 650 of the 950 apartments have already been leased to low-income tenants while the 120 that are currently occupied by the war veterans are part of the 300 units that were in the process of being allocated to beneficiaries — mainly people earning below R7 500 a month.

The complex is owned by non-profit company (NPC) Capital City Housing, which has already secured a court interdict against the invaders.

The Witness yesterday found the gate to the complex locked, with some invaders spotted gathered in groups inside the complex.

While Babo Mndaweni, an Azanla ex-combatant who is the co-ordinator of the invasion, conceded that there had been fights over units, he said he was not aware of the selling of the apartments.

"What I can confirm is that there had been people who did not want to follow rules and wanted the operation to go according to their wishes.

"However, as the leadership we can't allow any conduct that will make us come across as ill-disciplined people.

"I can confirm that all the internal challenges we have been facing since arrived here have been addressed and what we are now focusing on is the negotiations currently under way between us and Capital City Housing," Mndaweni said.

On the locked gate, Mndaweni said the war veterans resolved to lock it to maintain order.

"We noticed that people who we didn't know were also coming in and we worried that we will be held responsible if something wrong happened inside the complex," he said.

The R353 million housing project, which was launched in 2014, was officially opened by former president Jacob Zuma in April last year.

Sixty percent of the R353 million came from a government housing grant while the balance was raised through loans.

By late yesterday afternoon it was not yet clear whether Capital City Housing intends enforcing the court interdict it obtained to force the veterans out.

The NPC's chief executive, Ivor Caldecott, could not be reached for comment.

The Democratic Alliance (DA) in the province said it will be demanding answers from Human Settlements MEC Ravi Pillay on the invasion.

"The DA expects MEC Ravi Pillay to explain how matters were allowed to deteriorate to this point and to act to rectify them," DA provincial human settlements spokesperson George Mari said.