



The Ta' Kandja shooting range in disuse after a 13 million project

## Report confirms shoddy work on €13 million shooting range



The Shift Team

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A technical report by government consultant Robert Musumeci confirms that the hasty construction of a new shooting range at Ta' Kandja lacked professionalism and was marred by poor workmanship, rendering the range practically unusable.

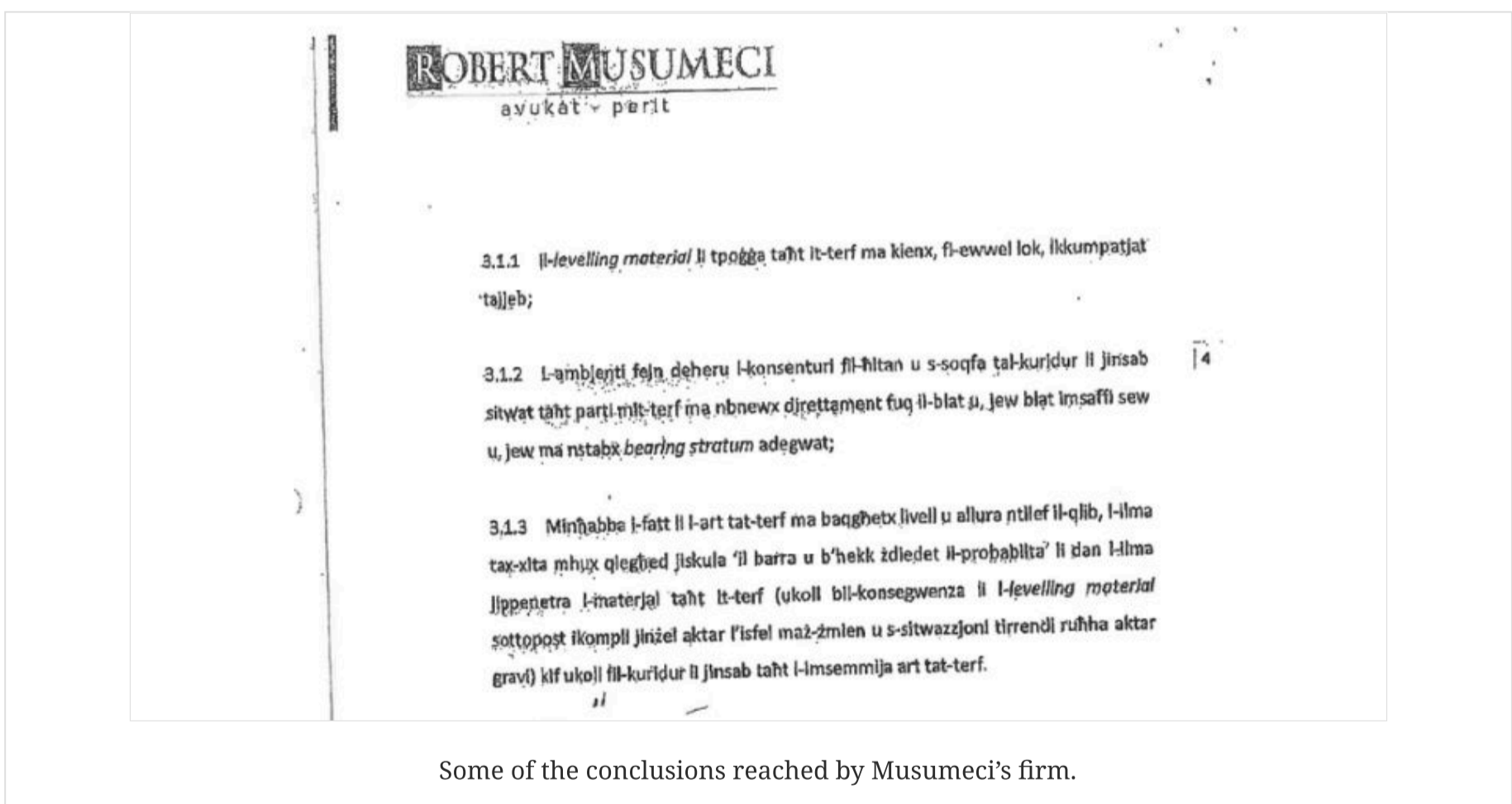
The shooting range was authorised by disgraced former prime minister Joseph Muscat before the 2017 elections and cost taxpayers more than double its original budget.

The Bonnici Brothers of Burmarrad was given the project, supervised by Chris Bonett, the acting CEO of SportMalta at the time. Prime Minister Robert Abela later promoted Bonett to Transport Minister.

In 2020, the Shift exposed the project's [failures](#), including the substandard work and the raft of multi-million-euro [direct orders](#) issued to the Bonnici Brothers without proper authorisation.

The report, published recently in answer to a parliamentary question by PN MP Carm Mifsud Bonnici, sheds further light on the shooting range's sorry state.

According to Robert Musumeci's firm, the Bonnici Brothers' work was not up to scratch, particularly on the long stretches of turf on-site and the tunnels built underneath it.



The report concluded that the turf was laid incorrectly, the gravel underneath it was not compacted according to proper standards, and underground tunnels were poorly constructed, leading to cracks in ceilings, walls, and even the floors.

Due to all this poor workmanship, the range developed areas where rainwater could not drain, forming large puddles in various areas. This made it almost impossible for the range to be used fully.



## Direct orders spiral from €7 to €13 million

The latest report confirms the gross irregularities in turning part of the police academy in Siggiewi into an unusable shooting range.

In 2020, the National Audit Office (NAO) reached [similar conclusions](#), particularly with how the project was administered.

The NAO found that the Bonnici Brothers, whose managing director is Gilbert Bonnici, a former business partner of Prime Minister Robert Abela, received 60 per cent of all contracts through direct orders.

Moreover, the work, worth almost €4 million, was not even covered by performance guarantees as stipulated in public procurement rules.

No approval was sought by the Department of Contracts to cover spiralling costs, and [Chris Bonnett](#) made all decisions and approved the irregular payments.

The NAO audit also found that the Bonnici Brothers, who were also contracted to build foundations for the shooting range, a shooting tunnel, and other work for a total cost of €2.3 million, had started the work even before a contract agreement with SportMalta was signed.

“Authorisations from the right level of authority within SportMalta, namely from the CEO or Head of Finance, wasn’t evidenced, before payment was affected, on 10 of the 15 invoices in the audit sample, for a total cost of €1,051,227 million,” the NAO had said.

Despite the evidence presented in both the NAO report and the analysis by Robert Musumeci’s firm, no one from SportMalta has shouldered any responsibility for the mess at the Ta’ Kandja Shooting Range.

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