The new generation of Rebel is armed with guns and knives, wears designer labels and uses the gang’s one-in-all-in charter to bolster their standover power in the drug trade. But a series of police raids and internal fighting between the new breed Rebel and their old school counterparts is tearing the gang apart. Four years ago the Rebels outlaw motorcycle gang announced their arrival in the Top End with the high-profile heist of 14 firearms including 12 9mm pistols and two pump-action shotguns from a naval vessel. Since then bashings and shootings have attracted more unwanted police and media attention.

The arrest and jailing of several high-ranking club members, the seizure of firearms, hauls of methamphetamine and cannabis have crippled the gang. Territory police have laid 128 drug charges, seized 21 firearms and 562g of meth with an estimated street value of more than $350,000 from Rebels members and associates. Police have also seized more than 7kg of cannabis. Monday’s raids on a Rebel member’s Humpty Doo home in which police seized firearms, knives and methamphetamine were the latest in a series of drug busts targeting the gang’s illegal activities. Of the club’s 20 fully patched members and associates, six are in prison, one has been released on parole and another is on bail. While police stings and raids have pegged back the gang’s operations, their own internal power struggle between young Rebels and their older counterparts has split the Darwin chapter down the middle.

Territory police Gangs Taskforce Detective Senior Sergeant Mark Stringer says despite the several high-ranking members serving time in prison, the Rebels’ recruitment drive continues. He says the Rebels’ recruitment policy is less stringent than the rival gangs and has a reputation of taking in anyone. Stringer says Rebels nominees only face a six-month wait to become patched members, compared with two years for the Hells Angels and Banshees. The Rebels have a long list of nominees wanting to prove themselves in the criminal middle. He says the nominees are given the task of cleaning the clubhouse and working behind the bar and cooking barbecues at social functions and to carry out bashings on demand. “The unique thing about the Rebels is it’s really easy to join. They’ll take anyone who comes along. With the other clubs it’s a lot harder to get into,” he says.

Stringer says the faces of the patched members and known associates are well known to police. He says most associates were recruited from the Territory after interstate members established the new chapter. But Stringer says the glitter and glamour of Queensland’s Surfers Paradise and Sydney’s Kings Cross proved too much of a drawcard for interstate members to remain in the Territory. In the past nine months the Gangs Taskforce have made several arrests as the fighting among Rebel members escalated. In July, police arrested Shaun Josef Ryk, then aged 42, after he forced a bus driver to pull over on the Stuart Highway at Pinelands and began verbally abusing him, before pulling open his window and punching him in the face.

During his arrest police found an unregistered sawn-off rifle, ammunition, a hunting knife and bike gang paraphernalia. The aggravated assault charge against Ryk was dismissed but he was fined $1300 and given a six-month suspended prison sentence for the remaining offences. In October, Andrew Summerville was arrested at the Rebels’ then clubhouse at Darwin Airport. He says most associates were recruited from the Terri- 

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The theft was reported to police and within days the vests were returned. It is understood a former Rebel member who had been kicked out of the club stole three vests from the Virginia home of the gang’s current president. The theft was reported to police and within days the vests were returned. No official complaint was made to police.

He was jailed in October for three months for an assault in a Mitchell St bar in November 2014. Police arrested a 31-year-old Rebel at Darwin Airport in November after he allegedly arrived on a flight from Melbourne with 14g of methamphetamine in his suitcases. The seizure had an estimated street value of up to $20,000.

The man remains in custody ahead of a court hearing on March 14. In January, the internal fighting between the younger Rebels and older members escalated. It is understood a former Rebel member who had been kicked out of the club stole three vests from the Virginia home of the gang’s current president. The theft was reported to police and within days the vests were returned. No official complaint was made to police.

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