

**Refugee Review Tribunal  
AUSTRALIA**

**RRT RESEARCH RESPONSE**

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**Questions**

- 1. Do taxi drivers in South Africa have extensive criminal networks where they could trade information on someone's whereabouts?**
- 2. Is their influence contained to one specific area or province?**

**RESPONSE**

- 1. Do taxi drivers in South Africa have extensive criminal networks where they could trade information on someone's whereabouts?**
- 2. Is their influence contained to one specific area or province?**

No information was found in the sources consulted as to whether taxi drivers have access to criminal networks through which they can gain information on an individual's location. Sources do, however, report criminal activity within the South African taxi industry including violent crime, endemic "taxi wars" and an increasing "crossover into gangsterism" (Dugard, J 2001, *From Low Intensity War to Mafia War: Taxi violence in South Africa (1987 – 2000)*, May, Violence in Transition Series, Vol. 4, Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation website <http://www.csvr.org.za/papers/papvtp4.htm> – Accessed 17 August 2007 – Attachment 1).

A 2001 report by Jackie Dugard, Senior Programme Officer in the Political Affairs Division of the Commonwealth Secretariat, titled *From Low Intensity War to Mafia War: Taxi Violence in South Africa (1987 – 2000)* provides a comprehensive explanation regarding the emergence of violence and crime within the South African taxi industry. According to the report recent taxi violence can be attributed to the deregulation of transport during the late 1980's and early 1990's and the subsequent growth in violent taxi associations. Dugard reports that these taxi associations, also known as motherboards "focus on the violent

protection of spheres of influence” and are responsible for most of the violence in the taxi industry. According to the report motherboards use hit squads or professional assassins against other taxi associations. Threats of violence and actual violence are also used to extract money and compliance from other taxi drivers. Dugard claims that “there is hardly a city or town that has not experienced a taxi war or wars in recent years”. The report also describes the “overlying of gangster dynamics on the taxi industry”. Dugard describes this as “an increasingly visible phenomenon” with the potential to “drive the taxi wars to new heights of violence”. Dugard states that police involvement and bureaucratic corruption are also factors contributing to ongoing taxi violence (Dugard, J 2001, *From Low Intensity War to Mafia War: Taxi violence in South Africa (1987 – 2000)*, May, Violence in Transition Series, Vol. 4, Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation website <http://www.csvr.org.za/papers/papvtp4.htm> – Accessed 17 August 2007 – Attachment 1).

On 9 May 2007 *Cape Argus* reported that taxi violence has “left 22 people dead and 38 injured” in the Cape Province. The article attributed taxi crime to competition between rival taxi companies over lucrative routes. According to the news report a Commission set up to investigate the taxi industry was concerned by the “influence and control gangs have had on the industry”. *Cape Argus* report that:

The deadly battle over some of the Cape’s lucrative taxi routes is set to rage on after a major taxi organisation admitted it would continue to muscle in on its rival’s turf.

Taxi violence across the province has left 22 people dead and 38 injured, with fights continuing between the Congress of Democratic Taxi Associations (Codeta) and their bitter rivals Cape Amalgamated Taxi Association (Cata) over routes in the greater Bellville area.

The war between the two rival organisations goes back 13 years. A 2001 report by the Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation confirms that the initial conflict began when Cata broke away from Codeta in 1994.

It said the newly formed Cata, with its “gangster-style hit-squad or protection unit”, eventually matched and surpassed the strength of Codeta.

Criminologists told the *Cape Argus* that the ongoing battle was not only centred around taxi routes but also around the allegiance of members.

Another concern raised by the Ntsebeza Commission – set up by the government in 2005 to investigate the taxi industry – was the influence and control gangs have had on the industry (Hawker, D 2007, ‘Taxi War Hots Up as Codeta Eyes Kraaifontein’, *Cape Argus*, 9 May, allAfrica.com website <http://allafrica.com/> - Accessed 17 August 2007 – Attachment 2).

A 2005 article by *BuaNews* reports that a “Commission on Taxi Violence” was established in the Western Cape of South Africa to investigate taxi violence. According to the article the Commission reported that hit-squads targeting rivals were the main form of violence in the taxi industry. *BuaNews* provided the following report on the taxi industry:

An industry run mafia-style, a culture of lawlessness where hit-men reign supreme and a licensing body fraught with corruption – these are some of the findings in a report published today by a commission that investigated taxi violence in the Western Cape.

The report, presented by the commission’s chairperson, Dumisa Ntsebeza, singles out the prevalence of hit squads as the main cause of violence in the taxi industry.

“They are hired by the older generation of drivers to commit acts of murder against rivals,” the report reads.

“The older, more experienced owners are usually responsible for selecting the targets, planning the logistics, recruitment of the hit men and collecting monies to pay for the services of the hit men,” it reads.

Despite collecting an average of R500 000 in operator-subscription fees on a weekly basis, taxi associations don’t have any form of accounting system in place. Because of this lack of accountability, taxi association bosses are able to abuse funds, and in many instances use thousands of rands for bribes and paying for hit men, the report says.

...The Commission on Taxi Violence was instituted by Western Cape Premier Ebrahim Rasool three months ago, following a breakout of taxi violence in the province that left several people dead (Ndou, C 2005, ‘Taxi Violence Report Condemns Taxi Industry Bosses’, *BuaNews*, 6 September, allAfrica.com website <http://allafrica.com/> – Accessed 17 August 2007 – Attachment 3).

## List of Sources Consulted

### Internet Sources:

#### **Government Information & Reports**

Immigration & Refugee Board of Canada <http://www.irb.gc.ca/>

UK Home Office <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk>

US Department of State <http://www.state.gov/>

US Department of State website <http://www.state.gov>

#### **United Nations (UN)**

UNHCR <http://www.unhcr.ch/>

#### **Non-Government Organisations**

Amnesty International website <http://www.amnesty.org/>

Freedom House <http://www.freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page=1>

Human Rights Watch <http://www.hrw.org/>

International Helsinki Federation for Human Rights <http://www.ihf-hr.org/welcome.php>

Human Rights Internet (HRI) website <http://www.hri.ca>

#### **Region Specific Links**

Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation <http://www.csvr.org.za/>

#### **Search Engines**

Google search engine <http://www.google.com.au/>

#### **Online Subscription Services**

allAfrica.com <http://allafrica.com/>

### Databases:

FACTIVA (news database)

BACIS (DIMA Country Information database)

REFINFO (IRBDC (Canada) Country Information database)

ISYS (RRT Country Research database, including Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, US Department of State Reports)

## List of Attachments

1. Dugard, J 2001, *From Low Intensity War to Mafia War: Taxi violence in South Africa (1987 – 2000)*, May, Violence in Transition Series, Vol. 4, Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation website <http://www.csvr.org.za/papers/papvtp4.htm> – Accessed 17 August 2007.
2. Hawker, D 2007, 'Taxi War Hots Up as Codeta Eyes Kraaifontein', *Cape Argus*, 9 May, allAfrica.com website <http://allafrica.com/>- Accessed 17 August 2007.
3. Ndou, C 2005, 'Taxi Violence Report Condemns Taxi Industry Bosses', *BuaNews*, 6 September, allAfrica.com website <http://allafrica.com/> – Accessed 17 August 2007.