



“CAUGHT IN BETWEEN”

The Involvement of the Private Security Sector in the Taxi Violence in KwaZulu-Natal: Focus on Ntuzuma, Piesang and Other Areas

A Summary of Research Findings

This brief presents a summary of research findings for the involvement of the Private Security Industry in Taxi Violence. This research topic was considered as high priority area in the financial year 2014/15, and was commissioned by the Private Security Industry Regulatory Authority (PSIRA) in order to offer the decision makers within PSIRA a better understanding of the involvement of the private security industry in taxi violence. This is aimed at enabling PSIRA to begin to respond to the industry’s needs and challenges. The Senior Researcher of the Research and Development Unit, Dr Sabelo Gumedze, was responsible for the research. He was supported by colleagues, Ms Margaret Gichanga and Ms Sibongile Dlamini.

Summary

The commissioned research was undertaken during the 2014/2015 financial year. This was on the basis that the private security industry in South Africa plays critical role in the provision of security in South Africa particularly as a contributor to crime prevention. The focus of the commissioned research was the salient features of the involvement of the private

security industry in taxi violence. The research objectives for this research were as follows:-

- ✚ To uncover in much detail the involvement of the private security sector in taxi violence in KwaZulu-Natal, with much focus on Ntuzuma, Piesang and other areas.

- ✚ To enhance better regulation of the private security industry and to exercise effective control over the practice of the occupation of security service provider in the public and national interest and the interest of the private security industry itself.
- ✚ To ensure that compliance with existing legislation by service providers is being promoted and controlled through a process of active monitoring and investigation of the affairs of security providers.
- ✚ To understand the extent to which the private security industry is involved in taxi violence in KwaZulu-Natal and other areas with a view of advising PSIRA on what role it should play in addressing this violence that continues to threaten the safety of commuters in particular and the public in general.
- ✚ To uncover the dynamics around non-compliance to the Private Security Industry Regulation Act 56 of 2001 and determine how this sector and the general regulation of the industry can be addressed to foster greater compliance.
- ✚ To determine the role which SAPS can play in addressing the violence within the context of inspections, which is provided for in terms of the Private

Research Methodology

This report is informed by face-to-face engagements, participatory observation and individual interviews in order to elicit opinions, perceptions (and possible suggestions) about the involvement of the private security sector in taxi violence.

Background information was obtained from newspapers and verified during unstructured interviews. A meeting with private security providers was also convened in Kwazulu-Natal where the views from the industry were gathered.

Research Findings

The research revealed some of the following research findings:

- ✚ PSIRA has not been part of initiatives aimed at addressing the taxi violence from the perspective of regulating the private security industry simply because the involvement of the industry in taxi violence is a new phenomenon.
- ✚ During the field research, there was a high risk of being shot at unless PSIRA organized a joint operation with the SAPS.

✚ The PSIRA inspectors did not wear any bulletproof gear during the inspections. This was too risky for their work, which involves conducting inspections of heavily armed security guards.

✚ PSIRA inspectors were not competent to inspect the firearms used by the private security officers during their work.

✚ It was observed that the use of uniforms which resemble that of the South African National Defence Force (SANDF) uniform was not uncommon.

✚ Other security providers had begun wearing regalia, which conceals the firearms carried by security guards involved in rendering services in the taxi industry in public spaces.

Ntuzuma/Piesang Area

✚ During the field research, an operation was conducted at the Piesang illegal taxi rank and no security guards were in the vicinity.

✚ The second operation was conducted at the Ntuzuma illegal taxi rank and again no security guards were found.

✚ The last operation was undertaken at the T-junction where taxis from Piesang and Ntuzuma meet. There were no security guards in this junction but at a close distance from this junction were static vehicles occupied by taxi owners who kept a close eye on taxis that pick up and drop off passengers.

✚ A further observation was made at the Nhlungwane area along Ntuzuma access road, it was noticed that private security vehicles were patrolling and monitoring the ranks as well as the pick-up spots.

Inanda Area

✚ During the field research, there were visible private security vehicles at the kwaSeme illegal taxi rank.

✚ Some security guards were manned at the KwaGetsemame station and carried rifles and pistols.

✚ It was also observed that these guards were in plain-clothes and the firearms they carried obviously intimidated the public and commuters.

✚ The idea of having private security guards at this taxi rank and pick up spots and stations was to protect

the taxis from hitman (Inkabi), who were allegedly hired to eliminate competitors including the taxi drivers. In itself, this presented a security threat to commuters as it posed a risk of being shot at during any ensuing crossfire violence.

- ✚ It was also gathered that one of the security companies was owned by a taxi business owner, thus creating a conflict of interest.

KwaMashu Highway Open Space

- ✚ Security guards were seen arresting a group of men who were suspected to be hit men and in possession of a considerable number of firearms and ammunition.
- ✚ The brandishing of firearms was also commonplace in these areas. Private security guards behaved more like members of a military wing of the private security industry.
- ✚ The vehicle used by the some private security companies resembled those used by the SAPS.

Mandeni Area

- ✚ There were a joint operation between PSIRA and SAPS at

Mandeni taxi rank, where it was gathered that certain members of the SAPS had allegedly informed the taxi industry about the planned operation, thus compromising the intended joint operation.

- ✚ It was alleged that one of the notorious taxi owners had an affair with a Warrant Officer at the Mandeni police station thus making it difficult to protect information related to any planned police operation.

- ✚ It was observed that the security company's vehicle and uniforms had an insignia, which resembled that of the SAPS.

- ✚ The security guards operating at the taxi rank wore a uniform, which resembles that of SANDF.

- ✚ Some of the security guards operating in the bus rank were not linked to the Private Security Company they were working for, as ascertained through information found in the PSIRA database.

Sebokeng

- ✚ A total number of 11 rifles and a handgun were confiscated from security guards allegedly hired by

one of the taxi associations involved in the conflict.

- ✚ The security company involved in the taxi violence in Sebokeng posed a serious security threat to the safety and security of commuters in Sebokeng.
- ✚ Thirteen security officers patrolling the site were recorded as being registered with PSIRA and linked to a notorious security company based in KwaZulu-Natal.
- ✚ The security guards were in possession of their PSIRA cards, with the exception of one.
- ✚ The PSIRA database reflected that that all of the security officers had a training level up to 'grade C.'
- ✚ Minor discrepancies were identified in so far as inconsistencies regarding training levels. For example, the PSIRA name list of security officers suggested that some of the security officers were trained up to a 'grade B' level, while the database was showing a 'grade C' competency.
- ✚ A noticeable contravention of the PSIRA Act was the uniform worn by the security officers which closely resembled that of the SAPS.

✚ The SLA stated that there would be five armed officers at the Palm Springs rank. However, there were thirteen armed officers, all of whom were armed at the rank. This was in contravention with the service level agreement which was presented to PSIRA inspectors.

✚ Three handguns were confiscated from the safe at the offices of the company concerned. This was done by the SAPS special unit.

✚ It was also discovered that the safe was not properly mounted to the wall according to CFR regulations.

✚ It was gathered that there were personal handguns that were also kept in the company's safe.

✚ Three rifles were confiscated at the site by the SAPS special unit, as they were found not having matching serial numbers with the firearms permits.

Recommendations

As informed by the research findings, the following recommendations are made:-

- ✚ Taxi ranks should be declared gun-free zones

- ✚ There must be a visible policing in the taxi ranks.

- ✚ More advanced technology to root out identity fraud should be implemented.

- ✚ Stricter penalties for uniform infringements should be imposed.

- ✚ Regulations of taxi industry including the governance of taxi associations should be implemented in order to minimize the overtrading and eliminate the rivalries between the taxi associations.

- ✚ A compensation fund must be established by PSIRA, which will ensure that all victims of violence are compensated, should there be any violence erupting.

PSIRA

- ✚ PSIRA needs to invest in human resources in order to ensure that PSIRA inspectors are able to conduct frequent inspections on private security providers rendering a service in the taxi industry.

- ✚ PSIRA inspectors must be competent to handle firearms in order to also ensure compliance. They should also be provided with bulletproof gear in order to be safe.

Conclusion

The private security industry continues to grow at an exponential rate due to a variety of reasons, including high crime rates and the steady growth of the economy. The involvement of the industry in the taxi industry illustrate the demand for security and the major role which the security sector plays in this space.

The primary objects of the PSIRA are to regulate the private security industry and to exercise effective control over the practice of the occupation of security service provider in the public and national interest and the interest of the private security industry itself.

It is therefore important for PSIRA to ensure that this role is effectively carried out as part of addressing the taxi violence, which has become a ticking bomb in many parts of South Africa.

For more information on the full report, *Canine Protection: Dogs and Dog Handlers in the South African Private Security Industry*, contact the Research and Development Unit, PSIRA. Email: Research.Development@psira.co.za; Tel. 012 337 5500