

## GLOBAL NEWS



### A\$200 TO SWEAR AT AN AUSSI CAB DRIVER!

General nuisances in Sydney (Australia) face stiff on-the-spot fines of up to A\$200 when proposed new regulations are introduced to tighten up taxi services. Using offensive language to tell a taxi driver where to go will cost you A\$200 under the changes, while sneaking your unconfined dog into the taxi - unless it's a guide dog - will be a A\$50 offence. Passengers will face higher penalties if they deem to fight the matter in court.

Other proposals include it being an offence to eat or drink in a taxi. Drivers can now legally toss out not just drunks, but anyone causing annoyance or being a nuisance. Working the other way though, drivers will be penalised for levying a night-time surcharge when there isn't one or trying to discourage passengers from taking short trips. Strooth mate... er I mean fair dinkum old chap!

### BRAZILIAN TAXI DRIVER ARRESTED FOR TERRORISM...

Police in Brazil have arrested a taxi driver who claims he was forming a revolutionary group to carry out robberies and stockpile arms in a bid to overthrow the Brazilian government! The 57-year-old taxi driver, Nelson Karinhio, was arrested at his home in Rio de Janeiro for leading an attempted attack on a police station.

Karinhio admitted that he led the raid to obtain weapons. He said his group was recruiting members for bank robberies to finance his Socialist Faction for National Liberation. Police say they found instructional videotapes on guerrilla tactics at his home, as well as three pistols - one that was allegedly stolen from the police station during the attack! "He said he wanted to build up to an all-out revolution against the government to stop the rich getting richer and the poor getting poorer," a police spokesman told Taxi Globe.

The previous week, Karinhio and 11 others, all in camouflage and carrying machine guns, had marched through the streets of a small town and then stormed into the local police station. They exchanged shots with four officers before stealing a cache of handguns and fleeing. One officer was wounded. All those caught, including Karinhio, were charged with attempted homicide and robbery. Karinhio's taxi driving colleagues all expressed astonishment. "He wouldn't normally even raise his voice," said one...

### USA CAB DRIVER ADMITS "BOOT" HOAX

A 32-year-old cab driver from Milwaukee, Wisconsin, has been arrested for playing a hoax by locking himself in the boot of his car and calling for help on his mobile phone. When released, he told the police that he had been robbed by three people and then locked in the boot. When making the call to police, the taxi driver said that he didn't know where he was, so police and county sheriff deputies searched extensively for the American United taxicab. The sheriff's department helicopter was even called in to aid in the search. The vehicle was finally found several hours later just before dark. The driver was

released from the boot and taken to a nearby hospital. When quizzed by police, he later admitted to having financial problems and told police he faked the car jacking for financial reasons - hoping for cash from newspapers for the story. Charges may be filed against the man for wasting police time.

### MOSCOW GOVERNMENT MINISTER'S CARS USED AS TAXIS!

A BMW with tinted windows and blue flashing light on the roof stops on Moscow's main Tverskaya Street. "Vere to Guv?" the driver asks - or the Russian equivalent - and after agreeing a rouble price to the equivalent of £3 or so, he whisks someone to work in unexpected style. It turns out to be a government minister's car and, as is the case with virtually every other underpaid or unemployed driver in the country, furtive private use of the vehicle is a main source of income! He might make an extra £20 or so a day moonlighting between the minister's appointments and although he may suspect that his boss knows what's going on, he naturally doesn't discuss it with him.

Another man at the wheel of a clean, but ageing Russian Volga, is the personal chauffeur of a senior police officer. His boss, however, actively encourages him to make what he can on the side. He knows full well that no one can survive on his official salary. From coaches to ambulances to thousands of private cars choking the capital's streets, all have become unofficial taxis. Although registered taxi drivers moan about the 'Chastniki' (minicabs) who spend their spare time 'bombing' as it's known in Russian, they have their own territory in the main tourist areas, at hotels, restaurants and railway stations.

In the city centre, yellow cab drivers seem loath to interrupt their snooze or put down their detective novel to take a fare of less than £5. There, at least, if someone else wants to get snarled for hours in traffic jams for less money, that's their business! Other places remain dangerously off limits and the novice Chastniki risks a barrage of obscenities, threats or worse from regulars who jealously protect their turf. An unmarked minibus belonging to the French medical relief organisation Medicins Sans Frontieres, recently had its tyres shot out as it pulled away from Moscow's International Airport with genuine invited guests from overseas. This incident was simply a case of mistaken identity, since the airport's notoriously brazen taxi mafia assumed the vehicle was poaching and decided to teach the driver a lesson!

Meanwhile, the passengers' part in the transaction is simple enough. If they are willing - and stupid enough - to take the risk of travelling with strangers, put your arm out, get ready to haggle over the price and bear in mind that riding with more than one person is a known invitation for trouble especially when under the influence of liquor. In fact, the greatest downside of an activity that seems to feed and clothe a hefty part of the population is that Russia being Russia, too many drivers regard their new passenger as fair game for a 40 minute tirade about the state of the country. At least that part is the same as London...

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