

GLOBAL NEWS



Mafia In Moscow Taxi Business?

A recent fight involving 40 Moscow taxi drivers recently erupted at Komsomolskaya Square in Moscow. The square has three train stations; as the official yellow cabs tried to push their way to the front of a queue they were brutally rebuffed by a small army of minicab drivers who attacked them and their cars with knives, tools and baseball bats! Several shots were fired into the air and at least five people were taken to hospital with stab wounds.

Soon after the fight, the head of one of Moscow's biggest taxi firms was murdered as he arrived home to have dinner with his wife and eight-month old baby. As he got out of his car, two shots ripped through his chest and his killer then stood over his lifeless body and put a single shot through his forehead.

Many have long thought that the Mafia were in control of Moscow's taxi service, but now the violence is escalating out of control with few having any doubts that the thirty-year old taxi boss was a victim of the brutal battle to control the Russian capital's multi-billion-ruble taxi market. His firm had close links with the civil authorities and had just won a lucrative contract to transport people from Moscow international airport to the city centre. The main problem was that his fares were one third cheaper than the minicabs that previously serviced the airport and they couldn't compete.

Many minicabs – or chastniki as they are known - were forced to abandon what had been their most lucrative patch since the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991.

The taxi boss paid the ultimate price for taking on Moscow's bombily – drivers who pay protection money to work the city's most lucrative spots, often parting with 20% of their takings for the privilege. Criminal gangs who ruthlessly see off any competition, strictly control their activities and fares, be it the part-timers who cruise about trying to spot a fare or the officially licensed yellow cabs.

That the killing was a professional contract job is certain. Nobody heard the shots because a silencer was used and police later found the gunman's leather gloves and four spent 7.65 mm cartridges. The taxi boss didn't have a chance. He had just got out of his car and still had his car keys in his hand. Moscow, a city of 13 million, has a taxi market with an estimated turnover of £700 million a year and provides rich pickings. Violence has flared up again since the city authorities vowed to regulate the gypsy cabs out of existence and are drawing up legislation to that effect.

Police say that the chances of catching the killer are slim. On average, less than 30% of the capital's contract killings are solved.

Dutch Taxi Drivers "Sexually Assaulting Female Passengers"

Police in the Dutch capital of Amsterdam are investigating claims that taxi drivers in the city are regularly sexually assaulting female passengers. At least 10 women have so far lodged complaints. Even the severity of that possibility pales into insignificance if passenger descriptions given to police confirm that it isn't just one

driver committing the offences, but several! Most of the reported sex assaults were allegedly committed against women returning from an evening out and range from insinuations regarding payment "in kind" to indecent physical contact with the female passengers. According to one Dutch newspaper, police believe that more women have been assaulted than the 10 who have come forward because most assault victims fear the embarrassment of reporting such incidents.

Leaders of the Dutch taxi trade have admitted that these physically violent taxi drivers are giving their industry a bad name and that they are keen for the investigation to be successfully completed. They also added to Taxi Globe that they believe the numbers involved to be small.

Paying Tax Is Theft Says New Zealand Accountant!

The New Zealand Inland Revenue Department have begun investigating the NZ taxi industry in an effort to clamp down on what they describe as 'GST non-compliance.' One financial institution's spokesperson, Steve Crates, told Taxi Globe that this NZIRD initiative could result in the ruination of many taxi drivers. Similar remarks echoed from a Wellington taxi company boss who would only comment if he could remain anonymous. The Manager told Taxi Globe that since the beginning of the current audit, four taxi drivers had resigned and shockingly estimated that around half of Wellington's 2000 drivers were failing to pay their tax "because they thought they could get away with it!"

The NZ Inland Revenue has told taxi organisations that it can prosecute where there is evidence of deliberate non-compliance and that tax evasion was akin to "stealing from the community." The NZIRD told this paper: "We don't believe that the public - either individual taxpayers or other business taxpayers - condones anyone evading their legal tax obligations."

However, Steve Crates looked at the situation rather differently and told us:

"I don't just condone tax evasion; I actively support and encourage everyone to evade taxes! It is a disgrace for people to have their own property forcibly taken from them for the funding of parasitical leeches and services not being used by that taxpayer. The judiciary is absolutely wrong in its view of tax evasion as being theft from the community. The community has no right to a single cent out of the pockets of others. To label keeping your own money as being theft from the community is nothing short of outrageous!"

Mr Crates also expressed strong sympathy for several hundred taxi drivers who will soon have to run from the IRD. "You have done absolutely nothing wrong and have nothing to be ashamed of. You have every reason to be furious as the IRD searches through your records and seeks to bankrupt you. Normally the law would protect you from theft, but this time it is the law that perpetrates it..."

Sadly we suspect that there will only be one winner in this case and while wishing the NZ drivers well, they are unlikely to progress far just on Steve Crates' say so...

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