



# GLOBAL INITIATIVE

AGAINST TRANSNATIONAL  
ORGANIZED CRIME



# TOW TRUCK WARS

1. How organized crime infiltrates  
the transport industry

Yvon Dandurand

JUNE 2021

### **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

The author wishes to acknowledge the assistance of Raelyn O'Hara, researcher at the International Centre for Criminal Law Reform. The author would also like to thank The Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime's publications team for their work.

### **ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

Yvon Dandurand is a criminologist, professor emeritus of the School of Criminology and Criminal Justice, University of the Fraser Valley, B.C., Canada, as well as a fellow and senior associate at the International Centre for Criminal Law Reform and Criminal Justice Policy, and a member of the Global Initiative Network of Experts.

© 2021 Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime.  
All rights reserved.

No part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means without permission in writing from the Global Initiative.

Cover: © York Regional Police  
Design: Ink Design Publishing Solutions

Please direct inquiries to:  
The Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime  
Avenue de France 23  
Geneva, CH-1202  
Switzerland  
[www.globalinitiative.net](http://www.globalinitiative.net)

# CONTENTS

- Summary..... 1
- Introduction.....2
  - Mobility industries and their vulnerability.....3
- Criminal infiltration of the tow truck business..... 5
- The tow truck wars ..... 8
  - In Canada.....8
  - In Australia ..... 11
  - In the US ..... 11
  - In South Africa ..... 12
- The role of violence ..... 14
- Conclusion and responses..... 16
  - The regulatory approach ..... 16
  - The law enforcement angle ..... 18
- Notes ..... 20

## SUMMARY

This policy brief focuses on a small but especially vulnerable type of transportation business that has been prone to infiltration by organized crime groups through violence, intimidation and corruption: the vehicle-towing services industry. This type of criminal infiltration has been observed in different countries

and it involves violent confrontation and competition for a share of the market. As such, this brief provides an opportunity for a comparison between patterns of infiltration and the use of violence by criminal organizations, as well as a review of law enforcement and policy responses.

### Key points

- The transportation sector is exceptionally vulnerable to criminal influence. A whole transport business area can be hijacked and exploited by criminal groups for decades without effective countermeasures being deployed to protect it.
- In many parts of the world, the lucrative towing-services business has been targeted by organized crime and this has led to violent confrontations, sometimes referred to as 'tow truck wars'.
- The use of targeted violence and the enforcement of a business cartel is how criminal organizations are exerting control over aspects of the transportation sector, including towing services.
- The transport industry often occupies a liminal space between the licit and illicit business spheres, which calls for coordinated law and regulatory enforcement at various levels.
- Effective information exchange between administrative authorities and law enforcement agencies is a prerequisite for a coordinated response to the criminal infiltration of any segment of the transport industry.
- A proactive and systematic approach to criminal investigation and intelligence gathering is required to mitigate the effects of the criminal exposure of various aspects of the transportation industry.



## INTRODUCTION

▲ The transportation sector is especially vulnerable to infiltration by criminal groups, particularly in ports and airports. © *Kyodo News via Getty Images*

**T**here hardly is a service or a commodity that, under the right circumstances, cannot be turned into a profitable criminal enterprise.

The transportation sector, which underpins most businesses and industries, is no exception. Because organized crime groups have often profited from the illegal movement of people, goods and services, the sector has always been vulnerable to infiltration, corruption and control by criminal groups.

It has often been very easy for organized crime groups to infiltrate, hijack or capture whole or strategic parts of the local or national transportation industry without drawing much attention from policymakers or law enforcement. The social and economic repercussions of such destabilizing organized crime schemes and ventures are very serious, and so is their impact on public safety.

The transportation sector is exceptionally vulnerable to criminal influence, as control over aspects of the industry is often necessary to facilitate the transfer of illicit goods, the smuggling of people, the illegal harvesting and sale of natural resources, the illegal wildlife trade or illicit waste trafficking. In fact, the sector is the most frequently reported legal business structure used by criminals to facilitate crime.<sup>1</sup>

EUROPOL predicts that, in the near future, organized crime will target legal businesses on an unprecedented scale – ‘both as victims of crime and as targets of infiltration to be used as vehicles for other criminal activities’.<sup>2</sup> It also predicts that fundamental changes to transportation and logistics on a global scale will alter the nature of organized crime groups exploiting these sectors.<sup>3</sup> Other changes are expected as organized crime groups find ways to capitalize on the disruptions created by the COVID-19 pandemic.<sup>4</sup>

Legal and illegal activities often coexist, as well as legitimate and criminal operators, and they are difficult to distinguish from one another. Segments of the transport business can therefore be hijacked and exploited by criminal groups for decades without effective countermeasures being deployed to protect them. It is only when such criminal infiltration degenerates into a violent competition among criminal groups that a law enforcement or a public-policy response is triggered.

This policy brief reviews how organized crime groups have infiltrated this small but vulnerable part of the transportation industry by examining the methods employed and the regulatory and enforcement failures responsible for it. It also sheds light on how violence and intimidation are used by organized crime groups to capture and maintain control over a localized share of the legal market, using case studies from Canada, Australia, the US and South Africa as examples.

## Mobility industries and their vulnerability

Organized crime groups are almost always present in one way or another at the various nerve centres of the transportation sector, in particular marine ports and airports, which they have successfully infiltrated for decades.

Organized crime on the waterfront has been a feature of the marine transport industry for hundreds of years, and the containerization of transportation has multiplied the possibilities for criminal activities.<sup>5</sup> Internal conspiracies at marine ports serve to move and steal contraband-filled containers or tip off criminal groups about impending law enforcement activities. Organized crime groups control many of these activities or directly benefit from them, supporting and enforcing these conspiracies by intimidating dockworkers, supervisors, regulators and even law enforcement personnel.<sup>6</sup>

Similarly, airport facilities are susceptible to criminal exploitation and infiltration, particularly at the major international airports that receive frequent flights from either source or transit countries for various types of contraband.<sup>7</sup> Organized crime groups exploit such susceptibilities by corrupting or intimidating existing employees or by placing criminal associates into the airport workforce.

There are many other examples of organized crime's penetration and exploitation of various aspects of the transportation sector. For example, road freight and cargo theft is a low-risk, high-reward crime, with various links to other organized crime activities and with serious economic repercussions, causing losses of billions of dollars and major disruptions of supply chains.<sup>8</sup> The waste transportation and disposal sector is another area exploited by organized crime groups at national and transnational levels.<sup>9</sup>

Transport companies are often part of the logistics of organized crime, willingly or unwillingly playing the role of facilitators, as organized crime groups find ways to exploit them as front organizations or use them in other means.<sup>10</sup> Transport companies that find themselves in a precarious financial situation, sometimes as a result of unfair competition or corruption, become particularly vulnerable to infiltration or control by an organized crime group.

*It is only when criminal infiltration degenerates into violent competition among criminal groups that a law enforcement or a public-policy response is triggered.*

The fact that mobility-related industries rely on geographic 'turf' (namely, routes or zones of influence) and tend to be territorially structured, just as so many organized crime activities are, is part of what makes them vulnerable to organized crime penetration. Organized crime groups are able to supply 'protection' to selected businesspeople and enforce cartel agreements. In weakly regulated and highly competitive sectors, organized crime groups can replace government and create a symbiosis between corporate and criminal actors. However, that relationship often develops into various forms of predatory behaviour, extortion and takeover.<sup>11</sup>

At first, the process of infiltration is slow and relatively less violent, and it does not necessarily attract attention. Seemingly unusual or troubling practices within the industry being infiltrated are normalized and eventually become tolerated or accepted by people in the industry, regulators, law enforcement and the public. However, for the businesses involved in that sector, the economic consequences of this infiltration on their profitability, performance and investments can be disastrous.<sup>12</sup> It can result in failing businesses and bankruptcies, thus creating further opportunities for infiltration by organized crime groups and their eventual localized control over whole aspects of that industry.

Governments are themselves major purchasers of transportation services. As a result, organized crime groups are sometimes able to thwart normal competition and gain control over major aspects of the industry through corruption and control over lucrative government contracts for the supply of such services. Similarly, corrupting officials responsible for enforcing regulations within that sector is another way of frustrating the competition and taking control.

Business cartel enforcement is a typical form of organized crime infiltration. With the help of organized crime groups, firms operating in a given sector conspire to secure a dominant share of the market by fixing prices, dividing up the market or rigging contract tendering procedures. In that process, an organized crime group's violent reputation and intimidation tactics ensure that firms in the business comply with the illegal agreements and effectively dissuade other firms from competing with the cartel.<sup>13</sup> Enforcement ranges from threats and intimidation to assault and homicide, using strategic violence to govern market transactions. Together with entrenched community networks, they provide extra-legal protection in a specific territory and aim to exclude all competition.<sup>14</sup>

Organized crime groups act as 'cartel enforcers', but their infiltration and control of the business sector often go much beyond that. They can acquire a major stake in the industry, control who can participate in the industry within a given territory and at what cost, and exclude some groups from a particular market.

*Infiltration, violent competition and control of the tow truck industry by criminal organizations have put drivers, clients and the public at risk.*



## CRIMINAL INFILTRATION OF THE TOW TRUCK BUSINESS

▲ The tow truck industry provides an ideal terrain for various forms of corruption.  
© Sebastian Barros/NurPhoto via Getty Images

Tow trucks are used to remove broken-down vehicles and those involved in road accidents. They are also involved in enforcing parking restrictions on public or private property. They move vehicles to facilitate road repairs when necessary and, in cold-climate countries, they remove vehicles to facilitate snow removal, normally under a government contract. They also remove and transport vehicles that are being impounded or repossessed by creditors after payment failure. The towing services business can be very lucrative for individual entrepreneurs and companies; it also tends to be very competitive and poorly regulated.

Over the last several years, infiltration, violent competition and control of the tow truck industry by criminal organizations in several parts of the world have put drivers, clients and the public at risk while providing a steady revenue stream for these organizations. Organized crime has also penetrated and sought control of the industry through corruption, bribery and the establishment of a monopoly over government contracts. The visible and violent part of this criminal infiltration is sometimes referred to as the 'tow truck wars'.

The tow truck business attracts the interest of organized crime groups for several reasons. First, the provision of tow truck services, especially when the competition is kept to a minimum, can in itself be very lucrative. Vehicle-towing services are the object of very profitable public and private service contracts. In the public sector, especially, the allocation of these contracts can be rigged by collusion, corruption and threats of violence. There are frequent opportunities for organized crime groups to establish a local monopoly over the industry and inflate the costs of publicly and privately awarded towing-service contracts. The industry provides an ideal terrain for various forms of corruption.



**Tow truck operators are vulnerable to pressure by criminal groups, and often become exploited by them.** © Fairfax Media via Getty Images

Secondly, tow truck operators can perform a number of functions for organized crime groups, such as gaining access to various controlled or secure areas; patrolling an area day or night, for surveillance or other purposes, without attracting unwanted attention; inconspicuously moving and delivering illegal drugs or weapons concealed in a towed vehicle (all with a certain degree of deniability, as the operators can claim ignorance about the contents of the vehicles being towed);<sup>15</sup> spotting targets for car thieves and moving stolen vehicles; and playing a role in staging various forms of vehicle insurance fraud related to accidents.<sup>16</sup> Thirdly, like many other businesses, the tow truck industry can be used for money laundering purposes.

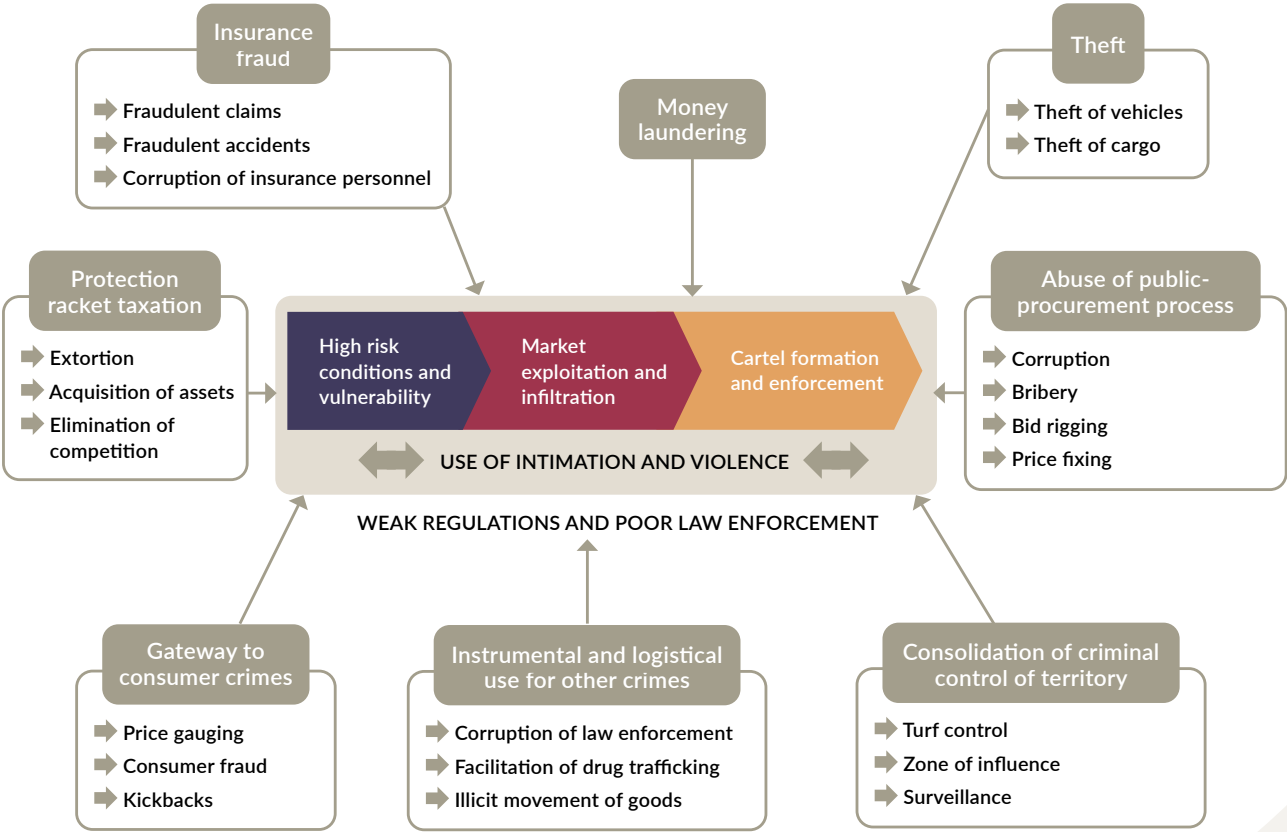
Tow truck operators are often very vulnerable to pressure by organized crime groups, as they are self-employed or own a relatively small local business. They establish relationships with police organizations (for example, for referrals to accident sites) and sometimes with individual police officers to get preferential treatment (in exchange for kickbacks or other favours). In addition, there are opportunities for operators to add undeclared incomes to their revenues by securing substantial kickbacks from car repair shops to which damaged cars are brought (between 5 and 15 per cent of the cost of the repairs).<sup>17</sup> Depending on the size of their business, operators also may rely on stable and lucrative government contracts.

A common first entry point for organized crime in that sector tends to be either through lending, hidden partnerships or debt collection.<sup>18</sup> Many tow truck operators have borrowed money to acquire expensive equipment or to get out of a financial tight spot, sometimes from informal lenders and loan sharks. Once a business has been infiltrated by organized crime, many operators find themselves at a great competing disadvantage or face intimidation or extortion tactics. The lack of fair competition among towing-services providers means some end up bankrupt or are forced to sell their business.



Operators often see an advantage in associating themselves with an organized crime group, either for physical or territorial protection, or for obtaining referrals for services and service contracts that they would not otherwise have access to because of a criminal group's growing business monopoly. Information sharing is also a crucial factor, as operators need to know what is happening in the market in which they are competing in order to access opportunities or avoid unnecessary confrontations.

When small operators are unable to meet their financial obligations, they become especially vulnerable to loansharking, unwanted business partnerships or even a takeover by criminals. This explains why some tow truck companies are owned or partly owned by members of criminal organizations or affiliates. Some towing-services operators are indeed fronts for companies owned or partly controlled by an organized crime group. With the increased penetration of that industry by criminal groups, new criminal opportunities are created and new players are recruited into organized crime networks. Individuals who had built a conventional life, including a stable job and bonds to society, become engaged in crime, often at a later stage in their life.<sup>19</sup>



**FIGURE 1** Criminal opportunities and infiltration of the tow truck industry.



## THE TOW TRUCK WARS

▲ The towing industry in Canada has been plagued by intimidation and violent threats, arson, destruction of equipment, vandalism and assaults. © York Regional Police

### In Canada

Criminal infiltration of the tow truck industry has attracted attention in at least two Canadian provinces. However, the problem may be present in other provinces as well.

In Quebec, what caught the media's attention was the violence that characterized the tow truck industry in Montreal, and the perversion by organized crime of the city's procurement process for towing services. However, there is no reason to assume that similar distortions of the contracting process do not occur in other parts of the province where the competition among tow truck operators is not as violent. In fact, a commission of inquiry into the granting of municipal construction contracts in Quebec showed how organized crime infiltration and corruption played a role in the awarding of such contracts in many municipalities.<sup>20</sup>

In Ontario, several cities are known to be affected by the criminal infiltration of the tow truck industry, but public attention tends to focus only on those where violence erupts. The situation reached a point, in mid-2020, where the premier of the province had to create a task force to work with local police departments, the industry and municipal partners to develop a regulatory and oversight mechanism to 'increase safety and enforcement, clarify protections for consumers, improve industry standards and consider tougher penalties for violators'.<sup>21</sup>

## Montreal's captured industry

In Montreal, towards the end of the 1990s and the beginning of the 2000s, the industry got embroiled in a so-called tow truck war, with violent tactics used by some operators to gain control over the industry. During these violent confrontations, some operators were approached by motorcycle gang members selling protection. The violence subdued around 2005, presumably because operators came to a territory-sharing agreement when the city started to grant exclusive towing-services contracts for various sectors of the city.

A decade later, after a period of relative calm, violence resumed as operators and their criminal backers fought for territorial dominance or expansion. The territorial agreements that had prevailed for close to 10 years were broken. Independent operators (referred to in the industry as 'sharks') acquired digital communication equipment to spy on police frequencies and identify the locations of vehicle accidents to which they would rush to respond. Some of these operators were reputed to work with organized crime groups to break territorial agreements, intimidate other operators and disrupt their business.

For years, the towing industry was plagued by intimidation and violent threats, arsons, destruction of equipment, vandalism and assaults.<sup>22</sup> The competition for business and territory among towing companies, many of which were controlled by organized crime groups, was consistently violent, with occasional outbursts of more extreme violence.<sup>23</sup>

In 2015, based on signs of collusion in the city's allocation of municipal contracts for different types of towing services, the city's inspector general undertook a review of the contracts that had been awarded to tow truck companies.<sup>24</sup> The inquiry revealed that organized crime had completely captured the industry. It also revealed collusion and territorial-sharing agreements among the tow truck companies and, as a result, very limited real competition for government contracts. Certain areas of the city were considered to be 'owned' by a specific criminal organization (for example, Hells Angels or the Italian mafia), and territorial boundaries were enforced through violence and intimidation. The industry had been deserted by entrepreneurs, and most of those who were left were being taxed by criminal organizations.

The inspector general's report documented organized crime's ability to curtail normal competition in seeking government contracts for the rental and operation of tow trucks.<sup>25</sup> Some companies were intimidated into not submitting bids for public contracts. Non-competing agreements, price fixing and illegal subcontracting types of collusion hindered the city's procurement process for this type of service. The costs of the services provided soared. In some cases, where collusion was established, the city cancelled the contracts that had been awarded to certain operators. Some operators were banned for a period of five years from seeking contracts with the city. However, these measures were not enough to weaken organized-crime control over the local tow truck industry.

In Montreal, certain areas of the city are 'owned' by specific groups, such as Hells Angels. © Christopher Furlong via Getty Images



## A full-scale turf war

In Ontario, where there is minimal regulation and oversight of the tow truck industry and operators are generally not licensed, there are frequent reports of public disorder related to the fierce and sometimes violent competition among operators. Although existing regulation prevents operators from soliciting clients after an accident, there have been numerous incidents related to accident-chasing practices. In many cases, sometimes before other first-responders make it to the scene of an accident, five or more tow trucks show up to solicit the business of victims, sometimes using deception and often charging exorbitant prices.

In 2018, a full-scale turf war erupted in the province, with more than 50 trucks set on fire, at least four men with ties to the industry killed<sup>26</sup> and the shutdown of a law firm.<sup>27</sup> In some instances, innocent bystanders were caught in the crossfire and were wounded or killed.<sup>28</sup>

The violence went well beyond the immediate confrontations between operators and their criminal backers. Police investigators confirmed links between the tow truck industry and vast and lucrative fraud networks, involving staged collisions, collusion with car- and truck-rental companies, auto repair shops, insurance companies, physiotherapy clinics and inflated insurance claims. A law firm in Vaughan, specializing in representing insurance companies in court litigations against tow truck operators, was forced to close down after having its office set on fire twice, having shots fired on the firm's parking lot and a lawyer being assaulted and threatened.<sup>29</sup>

In June 2019, as a result of a police investigation, more than 70 people, including seven tow truck drivers, were charged with offences including attempted murder, drug trafficking and robbery.<sup>30</sup> In May 2020, another police operation led to 20 arrests and the seizure of a tow truck, a number of weapons, drugs and more than 500 000 Canadian dollars in cash. 191 charges were brought forth, including one count of first-degree murder, three counts of attempted murder and multiple counts of fraud, arson and property damage.<sup>31</sup> Members of at least four organized crime groups directly engaged in the towing industry were involved.

Police corruption also enables infiltration by criminal groups. Police officers have been found to provide information, search confidential police databases or obstruct justice. According to some truck drivers, relationships are sometimes established with corrupt police officers when one of them is found in a compromising situation, such as being involved in an impaired driving collision.<sup>32</sup>

In 2020, 11 people were arrested in an anti-corruption and organized crime probe, including a police constable and seven tow truck drivers. The police officer was part of a criminal organization that used stolen encrypted police radios to compete for business, allowing criminals to decrypt communications between officers so that they would be the first to learn of traffic collisions and arrive at the scene to solicit towing services. The police officer allegedly profited from kickbacks for the sharing of police equipment and information, as well as referrals to his own car-rental business. The constable apparently also owned two of the tow trucks operated by members of the criminal group.<sup>33</sup> Soon after, five more police officers were charged in connection with the same conspiracy.<sup>34</sup> Some truck drivers have alleged that they were driven out of business because of the corrupt way police officers exercised their discretionary authority.



Corrupt police officers often enable infiltration of criminal groups in the industry. © Colin McConnell/Toronto Star via Getty Images

## In Australia

The tow truck industry in Australia has also been affected by violence and organized crime infiltration. Violence has occasionally flared up as competition has got fiercer, and it has erupted in gang-style confrontations. In 2004, in Sydney, the industry was engulfed in a violent turf war, with racketeer operators firebombing or torching a total of 22 tow trucks over a period of 18 months, as operators were competing for territory and trying to drive each other out of business.<sup>35</sup> In 2012, a similar turf war raged once more in the city with similar violence and disorder.<sup>36</sup> And in 2019, the city's tow truck operators were still facing intimidation by organized crime groups, violence, vehicle firebombing and other confrontation tactics.<sup>37</sup>

Other Australian cities have also faced regular outbursts of violent competition in the industry without necessarily being able to link it to organized crime infiltration. In Brisbane, violent turf wars flared up in 2010<sup>38</sup> and 2017,<sup>39</sup> with confrontations happening quite regularly during and after that period.<sup>40</sup> In Melbourne, the violence could be traced back to the activities of motorcycle gang members who owned towing and haulage companies.<sup>41</sup> Some of them were charged and convicted, but the violence continued.<sup>42</sup> In Perth, where violent clashes between operators have also been observed with some regularity,<sup>43</sup> there was evidence of corruption in at least one instance, when a police call centre's employee pleaded guilty to receiving drugs and money in return for providing a towing company access to the police's computer system.<sup>44</sup>

## In the US

In the US, the tow truck industry is also a cut-throat, violence-ridden business. There are multiple signs of organized crime infiltration or involvement in the industry, with recurring media reports of violent confrontations, arsons, intimidation and murders. In 2010, there were reports of an ongoing turf war in Philadelphia between tow truck companies, which escalated to deadly violence.<sup>45</sup> In July of that year, a tow truck driver was shot, allegedly by a rival, at an accident scene. Two days later, properties linked to both companies were torched or riddled by gunfire.<sup>46</sup>

*The tow truck industry can be a cut-throat, violence-ridden business.*



In South Africa, the tow truck business is linked to the violent minibus-taxi industry.

© Mike Hutchings/Gallo Images

## In South Africa

South Africa offers a particularly revealing window on organized crime groups' infiltration and control over various aspects of the transport industry, including the tow truck business, which is linked in many instances to the violence-ridden minibus-taxi industry. In Cape Town, deadly violence, intimidation, attacks, stabbing and damaged vehicles have been features of the tow truck industry for years.<sup>47</sup> Organized crime involvement is blatant, resulting at times in assassination attempts and murders.<sup>48</sup>

In Pretoria, the towing industry has been characterized by violent competition for decades. Territorial wars between towing companies, intimidation, violence and targeted killings have signalled the infiltration – if not the total control of the industry – by criminal groups.<sup>49</sup> In 2019, the media reported drive-by shootings and the ordered killings of three of the city's towing-company bosses.<sup>50</sup>

In Durban, the industry has been penetrated by criminal groups and plagued by violent competition. In 2017, the police raided a sophisticated 'control room' that used illegal radios to intercept police and emergency services frequencies and supply accident information to tow truck operators.<sup>51</sup> In 2018, the turf war over taxi routes and accident scenes in Phoenix, north of the city, claimed the life of a taxi and tow truck boss, as a gang attempted to gain control over the towing areas of Phoenix.<sup>52</sup> Several months later, the main witness in a related murder trial was gunned down outside his home in Sunford, Phoenix.<sup>53</sup>

The patterns of organized crime involvement in the South African tow truck industry are almost identical to those of the organized crime groups enforcing and benefiting from collusive agreements in the country's taxi cartels. This is likely because many of the same criminal groups are involved in both of these two subsectors of the transportation industry. In the taxi industry, widespread violence has had a crucial role in determining how markets are shared and in erecting barriers to entry for new companies.<sup>54</sup> Violence has been raging for decades, frequently spiralling out of control,<sup>55</sup> and taxi associations act as informal agents of regulation, protection and extortion.<sup>56</sup>

Some of the most recent violent flare-ups relate to what is now referred to as the 'Uber wars', including the killing and intimidation of Uber drivers in South Africa's urban centres.<sup>57</sup> Assassinations are very frequent and have claimed hundreds of lives. In one instance, 11 drivers for a Johannesburg minibus-taxi association were killed as they returned from attending a colleague's funeral.<sup>58</sup> Of all the assassinations in South Africa between 2000 and 2017, 43 per cent were related to the taxi industry. Since 2011, more than half of them were taxi related.<sup>59</sup>

Politicians who attempt to curb the cartel's power are threatened, attacked and even killed.<sup>60</sup> This extraordinary level of violence and the related culture of contract killings have increased the social and political significance of these organized crime cartels. The taxi industry has been a driver of the South African economy and an attractive target for mafia-like control.<sup>61</sup> The scale of the industry and its importance, as well as its usefulness for money laundering, have constantly made it vulnerable to criminal infiltration. Under such control, the industry has turned into an infrastructure and a source of funding for other political and criminal activities.<sup>62</sup> A commission of inquiry into taxi violence in Gauteng, chaired by Justice Jeremiah Shongwe, was established in 2019 and recently released its findings and recommendations.<sup>63</sup> The commission expressed its concern about ineffective investigations by law enforcement and revealed how some law enforcement officials have business interests in the taxi industry.

*The taxi industry has been a driver of the South African economy and an attractive target for mafia-like control.*



## THE ROLE OF VIOLENCE

▲  
Driven out of business.  
A burnt taxi in Polokwane,  
South Africa, after violent cartel  
confrontations broke out in the  
city, 9 November 2016.

© Joshua Sebola/Daily Sun via  
Gallo Images

The use of targeted violence is how criminal organizations exert control over a number of aspects of the transportation sector. Until a group establishes effective control over a legal industry, the business tends to be dominated by violence, extortion, intimidation, arson, damage to equipment and even murder. Because a criminal group's control over the business can be challenged by other groups, the violence appears cyclical, but it actually reflects the power dynamics among organized crime groups and within the business sector itself. Violence does not occur in a vacuum – political instability, corruption in the public and private sectors, weak law enforcement or the failure to regulate the industry are all factors that may lead to such violence.

Competition in the transport industry tends to be territorial, as access to a share of the market is usually associated with a group's predominance within a given territory. In the case of the tow truck industry, the territory is significant for three reasons: firstly, the service must be offered by someone who can respond quickly to calls for services within a given territory; secondly, lucrative government contracts are often awarded on the basis of a defined territory within which the service must be delivered – and some of these contracts grant exclusivity to a particular service provider within a designated territory; and, thirdly, organized crime groups and gangs are often themselves territorial, asserting their power and influence within a discrete geographical area.

Once the industry has been infiltrated in a given area, operators who did not respect the informal territorial arrangements brokered or imposed by criminal groups expose themselves to threats, retaliatory measures and violence. Paying for organized crime protection often becomes necessary. Operators are 'taxed' by a criminal organization in exchange for permission to operate or to expand their territory based on the amount of revenue they generate for the organization.



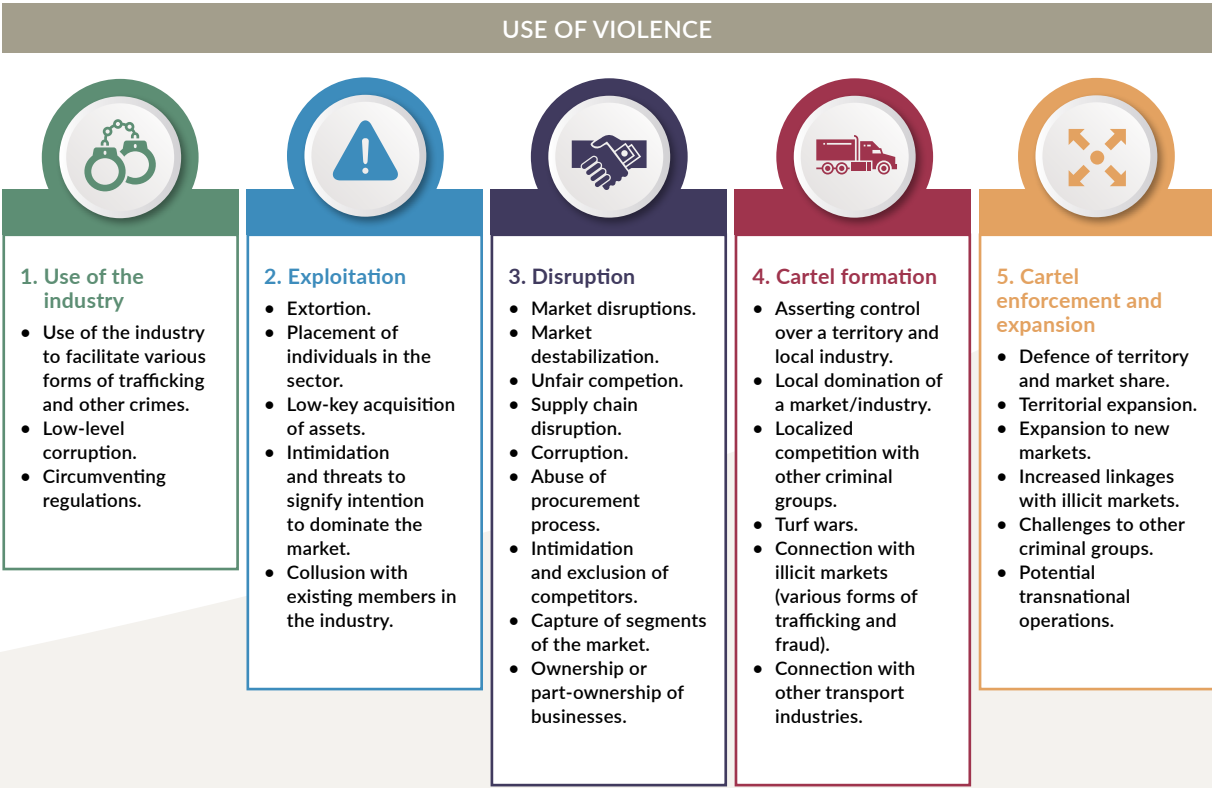
Eventually, the market is dominated by a few companies operating within their own fiefdom under the protection or the direct control of an organized crime group, while other competitors are terrorized, driven to bankruptcy, assimilated or otherwise slowly eliminated. A monopoly or partial monopoly is eventually created, which can be leveraged in bidding for public services and private contracts.

Criminal groups use violence to signal their dominance and to prevent any market disruption. They sometimes manage to create temporary calm and stability within a given sector in order to protect their own activities.<sup>64</sup> Violence can also be bad for business, it increases risks and tends to attract the attention of law enforcement.<sup>65</sup> A well-controlled market or an effective monopoly over a business is one where violence becomes much less necessary.

In criminal markets and in legal markets infiltrated by organized crime, violence does not happen by

accident and it is seldom the first resort – specific factors are necessary to generate violence.<sup>66</sup> It becomes more visible and frequent when groups compete; a criminal group attempting to infiltrate and control a legitimate market uses violence or the threat of violence to signal its resolve or to try to eliminate the competition. Violence is also used within or between groups for punishment or to solve disputes. When a certain level of collusion exists between a criminal group and law enforcement, the use of violence is mitigated by a desire to not upset existing arrangements with law enforcement officials by obligating them to respond to the public pressure to counter such violence.<sup>67</sup>

Whether in licit or illicit markets, the use of violence is typically selective and instrumental, if not strategic.<sup>68</sup> It is more likely to occur where there is greater competition and where the regulatory and law enforcement agencies are either weak or fragmented.



**FIGURE 2** How violence is used in the transport industry by organized crime groups.



▲ Preventing infiltration of the industry by organized crime groups calls for coordinated law and regulatory enforcement at various levels. © Vladimir Gerdo/TASS via Getty Images

## CONCLUSION AND RESPONSES

Organized crime groups' infiltration and localized control of the towing services industry rarely, if ever, draw the attention of law enforcement agencies until violent confrontations between operators awaken public concern. Unless there are violent outbursts in that milieu, the population does not usually realize the extent to which organized crime has infiltrated or gained control over the local tow truck industry. However, the attention the problem then receives is often short-lived.

When national or local authorities react to the infiltration of the tow truck industry by criminal groups, two main types of response are privileged: regulation of the industry (or regulatory enforcement) and criminal-law enforcement.

### The regulatory approach

Situational crime prevention is based on the notion that certain types of crime are largely opportunistic and can be prevented by modifying and planning contextual factors in a way that limits the opportunities for offenders to commit certain types of crime. A key aspect of this approach is the use of regulatory schemes to govern and sometimes interdict various activities. It involves designing new regulations and licensing schemes, crime-proofing existing legislation and regulations, administering the regulatory schemes, and monitoring and enforcing compliance with them.<sup>69</sup>

It is frequently assumed that regulating legal markets can help prevent their infiltration by criminal elements. It is also assumed that the capture of a particular industry or business sector by organized crime groups generally results from lack of effective public regulation and monitoring of that industry or sector. The evidence in support of these assumptions is still fairly slim. In fact, the promises and potential pitfalls of regulatory and administrative approaches to preventing the infiltration of an industry by organized crime are context specific and not very well understood. A regulatory scheme may indeed be necessary to underpin efforts to prevent criminal organizations from infiltrating the tow truck industry, but in the past some regulatory initiatives seemed to have had the opposite of their intended effect, for example by allowing a cartel to consolidate its control over an area.<sup>70</sup>

The problem is sometimes approached by regulators as a consumer-protection issue, given that tow truck operators have engaged in price fixing, overcharging and various other deceitful practices. In truth, these practices often amount to a form of extortion, where thousands of dollars are billed to car owners, and cars are held until payment is made. For example, regulations recently introduced in Western Australia were designed to prevent expensive vehicle release charges being forced on motorists after their vehicle had been towed to a holding yard.<sup>71</sup>

Some regulatory schemes are essentially licensing arrangements through which operators, drivers or equipment must meet certain requirements before they are licensed to operate in the towing-services sector. Some of these licensing regulations are local, applying to a particular municipality or a particular highway, whereas others apply to a broader region, province or state. Regulations that do not apply to a sector or to a geographical area as a whole tend to simply displace the problem. The local regulatory schemes rarely seem to achieve the goal of completely excluding certain individuals or groups from entering and potentially controlling the market.

Other regulatory schemes are focused on protecting or strengthening the public-procurement process for towing services. In Montreal, for example, the

Inspector General recommended that the city proceed with 'exclusivity contracts' to counter territorial wars among operators.<sup>72</sup> Following the recommendation, the City of Montreal decided to proceed with exclusive contracts for towing services (excluding those related to snow removal) in each of its 13 sectors. Furthermore, the contracts were to be managed by the police instead of the Bureau of Taxis, a semi-independent agency that had been responsible for the oversight and management of the tow truck industry in the city since 2003.<sup>73</sup>

Since tow trucks operate on roads and major highways, authorities also rely on traffic enforcement services to counter the immediate effects and disorder created by the fierce competition between operators, including imposing fines for speeding, racing, crash chasing or dangerous driving, ensuring the roadworthiness of the towing vehicles and verifying operators' licences and permits. In Ontario, for example, tow truck operators were prevented from parking within 100 feet of an accident in an effort to enforce a 'first come first hire' rule.

Regulatory schemes often rely on various administrative measures to prevent organized crime participation in a legal market. This may include the preventive screening and monitoring of applicants for permits, tenders and subsidies in order to prevent individuals with a criminal background from entering a specific type of business. It may also include the closing or expropriation of premises where public nuisance occurs or a physical danger exists, or the seizing and confiscation of criminal assets.<sup>74</sup>

Unfortunately, aspects of existing regulatory schemes can sometimes create opportunities for organized crime. The complexity of rules, the presence of overlapping or gaps in the regulations or limitations in the scope of their application, as well as specific regulatory provisions, can unintentionally become vulnerability factors.<sup>75</sup> It is important to ensure that existing legislation and regulations do not inadvertently create opportunities for crime and organized crime infiltration, perhaps by conducting a crime-proofing assessment of existing or proposed new regulatory schemes.<sup>76</sup>

Administrative or regulatory approaches to crime reduction are meant to complement law enforcement, and depend on information from law enforcement and judicial authorities to be effective. Therefore, effective information exchange between administrative authorities and law enforcement agencies is a prerequisite for any coordinated response to the criminal infiltration of an industry. However, cooperation is often limited, and information exchange sometimes encounters structural and systemic difficulties.<sup>77</sup> It is important to ensure effective partnerships, in particular between local government organizations, civil society and the private business sector.<sup>78</sup>

When it comes to enforcing regulatory schemes, there probably is much to learn from antitrust systems and the enforcement of antitrust laws. Organized crime groups that have gained control over a sector of activity understandably resist attempts to regulate that sector and are not necessarily impaired by them. They are also remarkably resilient and adaptive, and they find ways to circumvent the regulation, fake compliance and avoid law enforcement.<sup>79</sup> They can also be geographically mobile and relocate elsewhere to exploit new opportunities.

The crime displacement that often results from various administrative or regulatory measures is a pervasive issue. Crime displacement is the relocation of crime or criminals from one place to another as a result of a regulatory or law enforcement intervention. The displacement may occur within the targeted area, displacing the problem from one part of a community to another, and sometimes from a fairly resilient part of a community to a more vulnerable one that is less able to protect itself from crime or promote its own safety. Displacement is also responsible for instances in which one municipality or region inherits crime problems displaced as a result of a regulatory or administrative scheme implemented in a neighbouring city or region.

Because of displacement, questions are sometimes raised about the relative effectiveness of local versus national regulation and enforcement.

Local regulatory control, it is argued, may increase the risk of corruption and prevent adequate oversight. However, any geographical or political boundary limiting the scope of application of a regulatory scheme is potentially significant from the point of view of preventing organized crime infiltration of a legal market.

## The law enforcement angle

The policing of licit markets differs from that of illicit markets. Licit markets are regulated, as opposed to prohibited, and that engages various, often intersecting, regulatory agencies and their enforcement arms. Because the transport industry often occupies a space between licit and illicit enterprise, preventing its infiltration by organized crime groups calls for coordinated law and regulatory enforcement at various levels.

At the local level, organized crime rarely seems to score high on the law enforcement priority scale, unless it is associated with violence or another immediate and visible criminal threat. Law enforcement priorities, when defined at the local level, tend to be relatively parochial. Communities are not necessarily averse to law enforcement strategies that simply eliminate an immediate threat or result in displacing crime to another community.<sup>80</sup> When guided by the wishes of the community they serve, police tend to prioritize enforcement activities that target public disorder, violent crime or the visible manifestations of illicit markets rather than the more pernicious attempts of criminal groups to infiltrate or control a legal market.

The role of the police in investigating and disrupting attempts by organized criminal groups to infiltrate or control legitimate markets through legal and illegal means has been poorly articulated in both law enforcement strategies and priorities. The capacity of most police services to conduct such investigations tends to be very limited, as is their capacity to monitor markets, analyze market transactions or identify cases of fraud and illegal activities. Acquiring and retaining the necessary expertise to conduct complex investigations in a multitude of economic sectors is a complicated process. Working closely with regulators and compliance enforcement agencies, not to mention the proliferation of specialized enforcement agencies, requires competencies and expertise that are not readily available in most police forces. Given such capacity gaps, law enforcement agencies are predictably focusing their attention on controlling illicit markets rather than on organized crime exploitation of legal markets.

A proactive and systematic approach to investigation and intelligence gathering is an effective way to mitigate the effect of the criminal exposure of a particular legitimate market or industry. Furthermore, it seems that early interventions that interrupt the criminal infiltration process at an early stage are those that are most successful. In that vein, some of the law enforcement strategies that have been deployed with some success include: the implementation of multichannel detection methods and mechanisms; rapid interventions when early signs of a market infiltration by an organized crime group are detected (including signs of persistent non-compliance with existing regulations); intelligence sharing and inter-agency cooperation; the identification of at-risk businesses; working collaboratively with the exposed industry and key stakeholders; or the vetting and licensing of employees and industry participants, including security and criminal record checks.

Although violence occurs more commonly in connection with illicit economic activities, a careful examination reveals considerable variation in organized violence across and within sectors of the economy. There is nothing inevitable about the violence widely observed in the tow truck business or, for that matter, in any other facets of the transport industry. Recognizing the specific vulnerabilities of that sector and the social and economic risks associated with its criminal infiltration is a necessary starting point. However, a radical rethinking of our approach to protecting this and other legal markets against the assaults of organized crime groups is long overdue.

*Interventions that interrupt the criminal infiltration process at an early stage are those that are most successful.*

## NOTES

- 1 EUROPOL, Cargo theft report: Applying the brakes to road cargo crime in Europe, 2009, [http://www.transportschaden.biz/html/documents/Cargo\\_Theft\\_Report.pdf](http://www.transportschaden.biz/html/documents/Cargo_Theft_Report.pdf).
- 2 EUROPOL, Exploring tomorrow's organised crime, 2015, <https://www.europol.europa.eu/publications-documents/exploring-tomorrow%E2%80%99s-organised-crime>.
- 3 Ibid.
- 4 Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime, Crime and contagion: The impact of a pandemic on organized crime, March 2020, <https://globalinitiative.net/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/CovidPB1rev.04.04.v1.pdf>.
- 5 Russel Brewer, *Policing the Waterfront*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014.
- 6 Presidia Security Consulting, Economic sectors vulnerable to organized crime: Marine port operations, Public Safety Canada, 2011, [http://www.publications.gc.ca/collections/collection\\_2012/sp-ps/PS4-122-2012-eng.pdf](http://www.publications.gc.ca/collections/collection_2012/sp-ps/PS4-122-2012-eng.pdf).
- 7 Royal Canadian Mounted Police, Project SPAWN: A strategic assessment of criminal activity and organized crime infiltration at Canada's Class 1 airports, RCMP Criminal Intelligence, 2017.
- 8 European Conference of Ministers of Transport, Crime in road freight transport, OECD, 2002, <https://www.itf-oecd.org/sites/default/files/docs/02crime.pdf>; EUROPOL, Cargo theft report: Applying the brakes to road cargo crime in Europe, 2009, [http://www.transportschaden.biz/html/documents/Cargo\\_Theft\\_Report.pdf](http://www.transportschaden.biz/html/documents/Cargo_Theft_Report.pdf); Garry Gray and Katie Lindsay, Workplace violence: Examining interpersonal and impersonal violence among truck drivers, *Law & Policy*, 41, 3, 271–285.
- 9 Daniela Andreatta and Serena Favarin, Features of transnational illicit waste trafficking and crime prevention strategies to tackle it, *Global Crime*, 21, 2, 130–153; Lieselot Bisschop, Is it all going to waste? Illegal transports of e-waste in a European trade hub, *Crime, Law and Social Change*, 58, 3, 221–249.
- 10 Noël Klima, The goods transport network's vulnerability to crime: Opportunities and control weaknesses, *European Journal of Criminal Policy and Research*, 17, 3, 203–219.
- 11 Federico Varese, Protection and extortion, in Letizia Paoli, (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Organized Crime*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014.
- 12 Francesca Calamunci and Francesca Drago, The economic impact of organized crime infiltration in the legal economy: Evidence from the judicial administration of organized crime firms, *Italian Economic Journal*, 6, 275–29.
- 13 J.D. Jaspers, Business cartels and organised crime: Exclusive and inclusive systems of collusion, *Trends in Organized Crime*, 22, 414–432.
- 14 Rahman et al, Who are the enforcers? The motives and methods of muscle for hire in West Scotland and the West Midlands, *Trends in Organized Crime*, May 2020.
- 15 Wes Wolfe, Tow truck driver accused of transporting heroin, nearly \$333K, *The Brunswick News*, 21 May 2019, [https://thebrunswicknews.com/news/local\\_news/tow-truck-driver-accused-of-transporting-heroin-nearly-333k/article\\_f6ceeb7-e8b4-5094-99bf-5088e26b85e1.html](https://thebrunswicknews.com/news/local_news/tow-truck-driver-accused-of-transporting-heroin-nearly-333k/article_f6ceeb7-e8b4-5094-99bf-5088e26b85e1.html).
- 16 Peter Edwards, 'Everybody's afraid': How biker gangs and organized crime muscled in on the GTA tow truck industry, *The Star*, 22 June 2020, <https://www.thestar.com/news/gta/2020/06/20/everybodys-afraid-how-biker-gangs-and-organized-crime-muscled-in-on-the-gta-tow-truck-industry.html>.
- 17 Sam Cooper and Craig Ford, Tow truck corruption, kickback scheme bigger than just a few Ottawa cops, alleges whistleblower, *Global News*, 5 June 2020, <https://globalnews.ca/news/7012964/corruption-kickback-scheme-bigger-than-just-a-few-ottawa-cops-alleges-whistleblower/>.
- 18 Ko-Lin Chin, *Heijin: Organized Crime, Business, and Politics in Taiwan*. London: Routledge, 2016.
- 19 M. Vere Van Koppen and Christianne J. De Poot, The truck driver who bought a café: Offenders on their involvement mechanisms for organized crime, *European Journal of Criminology*, 10, 1, 74–88.
- 20 France Charbonneau and Renaud Lachance, *Rapport final de la Commission d'enquête sur l'octroi et la gestion des contrats publics dans l'industrie de la construction*, Quebec, November 2015, [https://www.ceic.gouv.qc.ca/fileadmin/Fichiers\\_client/fichiers/Rapport\\_final/Rapport\\_final\\_CEIC\\_Integral\\_c.pdf](https://www.ceic.gouv.qc.ca/fileadmin/Fichiers_client/fichiers/Rapport_final/Rapport_final_CEIC_Integral_c.pdf).
- 21 Gabby Rodrigues, Premier Doug Ford announces new task force to oversee, reform tow truck industry, *Global News*, June 29, 2020, <https://globalnews.ca/news/7120753/ontario-new-task-force-oversee-tow-truck-industry/>.
- 22 Marc-Antoine Ménard, *Le far west du remorquage à Montréal*, *Huffpost*, 24 April 2017, [https://quebec.huffingtonpost.ca/2017/04/24/remorquage-montreal-crime-organise\\_n\\_16213034.html](https://quebec.huffingtonpost.ca/2017/04/24/remorquage-montreal-crime-organise_n_16213034.html).

- 23 Louis-Samuel Perron, *Des dépanneuses incendiées par vengeance?*, *La Presse*, 14 October 2015, <https://www.lapresse.ca/actualites/justice-et-affaires-criminelles/affaires-criminelles/201510/13/01-4909552-des-depanneuses-incendiees-par-vengeance.php>.
- 24 Office of the Inspector General of Montréal, *Report on the towing industry in Montréal*, 24 April 2017. [https://www.bigmtl.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/recommandation-report\\_towing-industry\\_en.pdf](https://www.bigmtl.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/recommandation-report_towing-industry_en.pdf)
- 25 Ibid.
- 26 Molly Hayes, Tow truck driver killed in Toronto is region's fourth towing-related homicide in a year and a half, *The Globe and Mail*, May 15, 2020, <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/canada/toronto/article-tow-truck-driver-killed-in-toronto-is-regions-fourth-towing-homicide/>.
- 27 Molly Hayes, Doug Ford unveils task force for towing industry, *Globe and Mail*, 29 June 29 2020, <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/canada/article-doug-ford-unveils-task-force-for-towing-industry/?symbol=print-msg>; Adrian Humphreys, Raging tow truck war in Ontario leads to sweeping arrests for murder, arson, fraud and organized crime, *National Post*, 27 May 2020, <https://nationalpost.com/news/raging-tow-truck-war-in-ontario-leads-to-sweeping-arrests-for-murder-arson-fraud-and-organized-crime>.
- 28 Joe Warmington, Innocent doctor wounded in GTA tow truck war, *Toronto Sun*, 13 August 2020, <https://torontosun.com/news/local-news/warmington-highway-shooting-part-of-tow-truck-war>.
- 29 Gabby Rodrigues, 20 people charged in connection with tow truck turf wars across GTA, *Global News*, 26 May 2020, <https://globalnews.ca/news/6986289/tow-truck-turf-war-charges-greater-toronto-area/>.
- 30 Ilya Bañares, 'Significant blow' dealt to 'dangerous street gang,' Toronto police chief says, after massive raids, *The Star*, 27 June 2019, <https://www.thestar.com/news/crime/2019/06/27/significant-blow-dealt-to-dangerous-street-gang-toronto-police-chief-says-after-massive-raids.html>.
- 31 Jacob Lorinc and Peter Edwards, 20 arrested in GTA tow truck raids as police describe drug dealing, deliberate collisions and murder, *The Star*, 26 May 2020, <https://www.thestar.com/news/gta/2020/05/26/major-announcement-expected-in-tow-truck-turf-war-investigation-police-say.html>; Gabby Rodrigues, 20 people charged in connection with tow truck turf wars across GTA, *Global News*, 26 May 2020, <https://globalnews.ca/news/6986289/tow-truck-turf-war-charges-greater-toronto-area/>.
- 32 Sam Cooper and Craig Lord, Tow truck corruption, kickback scheme bigger than just a few Ottawa cops, alleges whistleblower, *Global News*, 5 June 2020, <https://globalnews.ca/news/7012964/corruption-kickback-scheme-bigger-than-just-a-few-ottawa-cops-alleges-whistleblower/>.
- 33 Adrian Humphreys, Toronto cop part of organized crime group involved in vicious tow truck wars, chief says, *Saltwire*, 22 June 2020, <https://www.saltwire.com/news/toronto-cop-part-of-organized-crime-group-involved-in-vicious-tow-truck-wars-chief-says-465082/>; Bryan Passifiume, Toronto cop named in tow truck police radio theft probe, *Toronto Sun*, June 23, 2020, <https://torontosun.com/news/crime/toronto-cop-named-in-tow-truck-police-radio-theft-probe>; Paola Loriggio, Toronto officer now allegedly linked to illegal tow truck scheme, *National Post*, 22 June 2020, <https://nationalpost.com/pmn/news-pmn/canada-news-pmn/toronto-officer-now-allegedly-linked-to-illegal-tow-truck-scheme>; Molly Hayes, Toronto constable one of 11 people facing charges connected to criminal tow truck ring, *The Globe and Mail*, 23 June 2020, <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/canada/article-doug-ford-unveils-task-force-for-towing-industry/?symbol=print-msg>.
- 34 John Lancaster, 5 Toronto police officers suspended as tow truck corruption probe widens, *CBC News*, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/toronto/toronto-police-suspensions-in-tow-truck-probe-1.5649083>.
- 35 *The Sydney Morning Herald*, Tow trucks in flames as war heats up, 12 June 2005, <https://www.smh.com.au/national/tow-trucks-in-flames-as-war-heats-up-20050612-gdli0o.html>.
- 36 Mark Morri, Terror tactics as trucks firebombed, *The Daily Telegraph*, 23 June 2012, <https://www.news.com.au/tablet/towies-at-war/news-story/f4426e184bf33dc199a8f0f7b77466c5?sv=607fdafa91983c9f801ea6977f3c57ec>.
- 37 7NEWS Sydney, Erskine Park firebombing attack targets tow truck company, 28 November 2019, <https://www.facebook.com/7NEWSsydney/videos/593702551399998>.
- 38 *Brisbane Times*, Brisbane tow truck drivers in violent turf war, 2 June 2010, <https://www.brisbanetimes.com.au/national/queensland/brisbane-tow-truck-drivers-in-violent-turf-war-20100602-wxp0.html>; Jorja Orreal and Jason Tin, Queensland tow truck drivers demand action on turf war, *Courier Mail*, 11 June 2010.
- 39 Brittney Kleyn, Brisbane tow truck drivers fight back against turf war abuse, *9 News*, 18 January 2017, <https://www.9news.com.au/national/brisbane-tow-truck-drivers-fight-back-against-turf-war-abuse/4cb09f7b-43bb-4acf-bac9-0d39323055c8>.
- 40 Francis Tapim, Drivers bashed at gunpoint in tow truck turf war, *ABC News*, 1 June 2020, <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2010-06-01/drivers-bashed-at-gunpoint-in-tow-truck-turf-war/849702>.
- 41 James Campbell and Anthony Dowsley, Rough tactics used by rogue tow truck drivers to be stamped out under proposed new laws, *Herald Sun*, 11 June 2013, <https://www.heraldsun.com.au/news/victoria/rough-tactics-used-by-rogue-two-truck-drivers-to-be-stamped-out-under-proposed-new-laws/news-story/cce420772fe92c72133595cd78b4934b>; Anthony Dowsley and Mark Buttler, Arrested bikie veterans have long been in sights of police, *Herald Sun*, 10 October, 2013. <https://www.heraldsun.com.au/news/law-order/arrested-bikie-veterans-have-long-been-in-sights-of-police/news-story/ed7edc1949bb2657ea60a48859cfc62>.

- 42 Tammy Mills, Tow truck owned by Peter 'Skitzo' Hewat's company impounded before Preston police impound lot shooting, *The Age*, 30 June 2016, <https://www.theage.com.au/national/victoria/tow-truck-owned-by-peter-skitzo-hewats-company-impounded-before-preston-police-impound-lot-shooting-20160630-gpvhfi.html>.
- 43 Sophie Tanno, Tow truck driver is 'knocked unconscious and stomped on' after two employees from rival companies show up to the same job, *Daily Mail*, 4 February 2019, <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-6664297/Tow-truck-driver-knocked-unconscious-stomped-two-employees-job.html>.
- 44 9 News Perth, Perth tow truck company has been caught up in a bribery scandal after a police worker admitted to taking cash and drugs to leak information about crashes, 23 July 2019, <https://www.facebook.com/9NewsPerth/videos/a-perth-tow-truck-company-has-been-caught-up-in-a-bribery-scandal-after-a-police/2178213225802711/>.
- 45 Troy Graham, Towing war in Philadelphia?, *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, 21 July 2010, [https://www.inquirer.com/philly/news/breaking/20100721\\_Police\\_eye\\_towing\\_war\\_in\\_fire\\_shooting.html](https://www.inquirer.com/philly/news/breaking/20100721_Police_eye_towing_war_in_fire_shooting.html).
- 46 Maryclaire Dale, Towing turf war in Philly leads to shootings, fire, *Seattle Times*, 23 July 2010. <https://www.seattletimes.com/business/towing-turf-war-in-philly-leads-to-shootings-fire/>.
- 47 Tammy Petersen, Tow truck driver killed in Cape Town shooting, *News 24*, 16 February 2019, <https://www.news24.com/news24/southafrica/news/tow-truck-driver-killed-in-cape-town-shooting-20190216; IOL, Cape tow truck wars turn deadly, 15 January 2015, https://www.iol.co.za/news/cape-tow-truck-wars-turn-deadly-1805267>.
- 48 Lester Kietwit, Cape on tenterhooks after murder of gang boss Rashied Staggie, *Mail & Guardian*, 13 December 2019, <https://mg.co.za/article/2019-12-13-cape-on-tenterhooks-after-murder-of-gang-boss-rashied-staggie/>; Kimon de Greef, In South Africa's 'mafia-like' taxi industry, 11 Die in Latest Attack, *The New York Times*, 22 July 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/07/22/world/africa/south-africa-taxi-attack.html>; Kim Thomas et al., *The rule of the gun: Hits and assassinations in South Africa*, Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime, March 2018, <https://globalinitiative.net/analysis/the-rule-of-the-gun-hits-and-assassinations-in-south-africa-2000-2017/>.
- 49 Lorna Charles, Calls for regulation following tow truck turf killing, *Berea Mail*, 4 March 2015, <https://bereamail.co.za/52137/towing-body-calls-for-regulations-after-tow-truck-owner-gunned-downtow-truck-turf-war-claims-owners-life/>.
- 50 Jeff Wicks, Bullets fly as tow truckers' deadly turf war hits KZN, *Sunday Times*, 13 January 2019. <https://www.timeslive.co.za/sunday-times/news/2019-01-13-bullets-fly-as-tow-truckers-deadly-turf-war-hits-kzn/>.
- 51 Jeff Wicks, Tow truck illegal radio den swoop, *Sunday Times*, 15 November 2017, <https://www.timeslive.co.za/news/south-africa/2017-11-15-tow-truck-illegal-radio-den-swoop/>.
- 52 Zainul Dawood, Durban tow truck boss killed in turf war, *Daily News*, 18 April 2018, <https://www.iol.co.za/dailynews/durban-tow-truck-boss-killed-in-turf-war-14505002>.
- 53 Nadia Khan, Tow truck killing was like history repeating itself, *The Post*, 29 October 2020, <https://www.iol.co.za/the-post/news/tow-truck-killing-was-like-history-repeating-itself-35899941>.
- 54 Makubetse Sekhonyane and Jackie Dugard, A violent legacy: The taxi industry and government at loggerheads, *South African Crime Quarterly*, 10, 13-18; Andreas Stephan, Cartel laws undermined: Corruption, social norms, and collectivist business cultures, *Journal of Law and Society*, 37, 2, 345-367.
- 55 Bheki C. Simelane, Taxi wars spiraling out of control despite efforts for peace, inquiry told, *Daily Maverick*, 6 December 2019, <https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2019-12-06-taxi-wars-spiralling-out-of-control-despite-efforts-for-peace-inquiry-told/>.
- 56 Jackie Dugard, *From low intensity war to mafia war: taxi violence in South Africa (1987-2000)*, The Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation, Violence and Transition Series, 4, 2001.
- 57 Markus Bell and Rosita Armytage, What's Fueling South Africa's Violence Uber wars, *Fast Company*, 15 September 2017, <https://www.fastcompany.com/40467817/south-africas-violent-uber-wars-are-driven-by-a-deep-economic-anxiety>.
- 58 Jane Flanagan, South African taxi war ambush leaves 11 dead on return from funeral, *The Times*, 23 July 2018, <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/taxi-war-ambush-leaves-11-dead-on-return-from-funeral-28w65m9k2>.
- 59 Kim Thomas et al., *The rule of the gun: Hits and assassinations in South Africa*, Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime, March 2018, [https://globalinitiative.net/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/The-rule-of-the-gun\\_Assassination-Witness\\_-1.pdf](https://globalinitiative.net/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/The-rule-of-the-gun_Assassination-Witness_-1.pdf).
- 60 Justin Steyn, *Violence in democracy: The political killing and intimidation of local representatives and administrators*, South African Local Government Association, 2017, <https://assassinationwitness.org.za/violence-democracy-political-killing-intimidation-local-representatives-administrators/>.
- 61 Mark Shaw, *Hitmen for Hire: Exposing South Africa's Underworld*. Cape Town: Jonathan Ball Publishers, 2017.
- 62 Ibid.
- 63 Commission of Inquiry into Taxi Violence, *Report of the Commission of Inquiry into the Minibus Taxi-Type Service violence, fatalities and instability in the Gauteng Province*, 2021. <http://taxiviolencecommission.gauteng.gov.za/Pages/Reports.aspx>
- 64 Alberto Aziani et al, A security paradox: The influence of governance-type organized crime over the surrounding criminal environment, *The British Journal of Criminology*, 60, 4, 970-993.
- 65 Walter Kemp, Making a killing: What assassinations reveal about the Montenegrin drug war, Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime, July 2020, <https://globalinitiative.net/analysis/montenegro-assassinations-drug-war/>.



- 66 Peter Reuter, Systemic violence in drug markets, *Crime, Law and Social Change*, 52, 3, 283.
- 67 Angelica Duran-Martinez, To kill and tell? State power, criminal competition, and drug violence, *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 59, 8, 1382.
- 68 Peter Andreas and Joel Wallman, Illicit markets and violence: What is the relationship?, *Crime, Law and Social Change*, 52, 225-229, 227.
- 69 Yvon Dandurand, Trevor Johnson and Gurvir Brar (2016), Administrative and regulatory approaches, in L. Garis and P. Maxim (eds), *Designing Out Crime*, Abbotsford: University of the Fraser Valley, 13-32.
- 70 Office of the Inspector General of Montréal, *Report on the towing industry in Montréal*, 24 April 2017, [https://www.bigmtl.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/recommandation-report\\_towing-industry\\_en.pdf](https://www.bigmtl.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/recommandation-report_towing-industry_en.pdf).
- 71 Gary Adshead, New WA laws force tow truck drivers to reveal fees at scene, *WAtoday*, 9 December 2019, <https://www.watoday.com.au/national/western-australia/new-wa-laws-force-tow-truck-drivers-to-reveal-fees-at-scene-20191209-p53ie2.html>.
- 72 Bureau de l'inspecteur général, *Rapport sur l'industrie du remorquage à Montréal*, 24 April 2017.
- 73 Matthieu Payen, *Bientôt la fin de la guerre des dépanneuses*, *Le Journal de Montréal*, 16 November 2018, <https://www.journaldemontreal.com/2018/11/16/bientot-la-fin-de-la-guerre-des-depanneuses>.
- 74 Spapens et al. *Administrative approaches to crime*. Leuven: Leuven Institute of Criminology, 2015; Francesca Calamunci and Francesco Drago, The economic impact of organized crime infiltration in the legal economy: Evidence from the judicial administration of organized crime firms, *Italian Economic Journal*, 6, 275-297.
- 75 Russell Morgan and Ronald V. Clarke, Legislation and unintended consequences for crime, *European Journal on Criminal Policy and Research*, 12, 3, 189-211.
- 76 Ernesto U. Savona, Initial methodology for the crime proofing of new or amended legislation at the EU level, *European Journal on Criminal Policy and Research*, 12, 3-4, 221-228.
- 77 Spapens et al. *Administrative approaches to crime*. Leuven: Leuven Institute of Criminology, 2015.
- 78 Peter Homel and G. Fuller, Understanding the local government role in crime prevention, *Trends & Issues in Crime and Criminal Justice*, 505, 1-13.
- 79 William E. Kovacic, Tackling cartels: lessons for making and entrenching reform, in Lindquist et al (eds.), *Delivering Policy Reform: Anchoring significant reforms in turbulent times*. Canberra: ANU Press, 2011.
- 80 Yvon Dandurand, Organized crime, illegal markets, and police governance. International Centre for Criminal Law Reform, May 2020, <https://icclr.org/publications/organized-crime-illegal-markets-and-police-governance/>.



# **GLOBAL INITIATIVE**

AGAINST TRANSNATIONAL  
ORGANIZED CRIME

## **ABOUT THE GLOBAL INITIATIVE**

The Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime is a global network with 500 Network Experts around the world. The Global Initiative provides a platform to promote greater debate and innovative approaches as the building blocks to an inclusive global strategy against organized crime.

**[www.globalinitiative.net](http://www.globalinitiative.net)**