

# Media Release - 12 September 2000

## Kruger National Park Puts Tourists Highjacking in Perspective

Media reports about the highjacking of two American tourists over the weekend have created the impression that the incident took place at the Kruger National Park. This is, however, incorrect and the Kruger National Park would like to put the incident in perspective.

On Saturday 8 September 2000, two American tourists and their tour guide from White River were hijacked by a group of eight men. The incident happened at around 12 noon in the Bushbuck Ridge area, about four kilometres from Sabi Sand's Newington gate.

Sabi Sand is a private game reserve adjacent to the Kruger National Park. It lies along the western borders and north of the Kruger gate.

According to information received, the tourists - a honeymoon couple from New York - were collected from Singita Lodge by Premier Transfers en-route to Blue Mountain Lodge between Hazyview and Sabie.

A white bakkie in which the eight men were travelling forced the Premier Transfers' microbus off the road. The tourists were forced out of the vehicle at gunpoint.

The microbus and all of the tourists' possessions were stolen and they were left alongside the road.

The three were rescued by a group of French tourists who had watched the events from a distance. They were taken to Premier Transfers' offices in White River and a case was opened at the White River Police Station. The tourists were eventually transferred to Blue Mountain Lodge after the American Embassy assisted in replacing their clothes and other necessities. They flew back to the United States last night.

"Kruger National Park strongly condemns this act. We cannot tolerate such barbaric attacks on tourist's near the Kruger National Park or anywhere else in the country," says David Mabunda, Director: Kruger National Park. "We are calling on the police and the Bushbuck Ridge community to work together to bring these perpetrators to book."

Kruger National Park and the Hazyview Police are working together in an attempt to solve the safety problem being experienced in the area. The road to Numbi gate - which has been targeted by highjackers - is being patrolled on a regular basis. Police suspect that the highjackers are, however, now targeting other areas because of the visibility of police in the Numbi gate area. Visitors are encouraged to use the Kruger gate and not to stop at curio stalls along the road.

According to media reports three youths were arrested on Friday in connection with the highjacking incidents on the Hazyview/Numbi gate road in June and July.

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