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27 February 2006

GUY101029.E

Guyana: Information on the current existence of Community Policing Groups; their powers, whether they carry weapons and who they are controlled by; whether they are involved in unlawful activities and their treatment of criminal deportees to Guyana (2004 - 2006)

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In June 2005, the president of Guyana announced a five-year national strategy to address violence and crime that included the creation of a Community Policing Ministerial Unit at the Ministry of Home Affairs (Guyana 31 Oct. 2005). The Minister of Home Affairs, Gail Teixeira, was reported as saying that "the Ministry is moving ahead with its programmes to bolster and enhance the capacities of community policing groups and said that a ministerial community policing unit would work to ensure that there is no vigilantism" (*Stabroek News* 2 Feb. 2006). While the *World Police Encyclopedia* states that there are 403 Community Policing Groups (CGP) functioning in Guyana and assisting the Criminal Investigation Department of the Guyana Police Force (2006, 353), however, no information indicating whether the Community Policing Ministerial Unit had been established could be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate.

Referring to an announcement made during the Community Policing Groups' annual general meeting by Winston Felix, Commissioner of Police, one news source reported the following:

[Felix] gave a "working definition" of Community Policing as "Law enforcement that seeks to integrate officers into the local community to reduce crime and gain good community relations". According to Mr. Felix, Community Policing, if implemented properly, propels the police to respond to the citizens' definitions of their problems. It demands that the police help residents of communities to help themselves by serving as a catalyst for peace, law and order.... [Felix] concluded that suppression of criminal behaviour in communities must perpetually be the shared goal of the police and the public at large, as the community is the source of crime, the victim of crime, and the reservoir of support to law enforcement agencies as they seek to control crime (*Kaieteur News* 18 May 2005).

The following information was provided by a representative of the Guyana Human Rights Association (GHRA) during a 22 February 2006 telephone interview. According to the source, members of the CPG have access to weapons, however, those weapons are "lodged with the police" and they have to be returned to the police station when off duty. There have been complaints,

however, that those rules are not always enforced (GHRA 22 Feb. 2006). In addition, there have also been complaints that some CPGs have used excessive force when apprehending someone they suspect to be involved in criminal activity (ibid.). The GHRA representative also reported isolated incidences where the CPGs tend to be more "vigilante" in their approach to crime instead of using community-based policing principles (ibid.).

No further information on Community Policing Groups or their treatment of criminal deportees to Guyana could be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate.

This Response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Research Directorate within time constraints. This Response is not, and does not purport to be, conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim for refugee protection. Please find below the list of additional sources consulted in researching this Information Request.

References

Guyana. 31 October 2005. Government Information Agency. "Combatting Crime and Violence." <<http://www.gina.gov.gy/crimeindex.html>> [Accessed 21 Feb. 2006]

Guyana Human Rights Association (GHRA). 22 February 2006. Telephone interview with a representative.

Kaieteur News [Georgetown]. 18 May 2005. "Gobin Re-elected Head of National Community Policing Body." <<http://kaieteurnewsgy.com/Archive/MAY/18/>> [Accessed 22 Feb. 2006]

Stabroek News [Georgetown]. 2 February 2006. "Minibus Music to Be Banned - Teixeira - Agencies Have to Work Together in Fight Against Dirty Money." <<http://www.stabroeknews.com/index.pl/article?id=43311952>> [Accessed 22 Feb. 2006]

World Police Encyclopedia. 2006. Vol. 1. "Guyana." Edited by Dilip K. Das. New York, NY: Routledge.

Additional Sources Consulted

Oral sources: Attempts to contact the Guyana Police Force were unsuccessful.

Internet sources, including: Amnesty International, British Broadcasting Corporation, Factiva, Freedom House, Human Rights Watch, Interpol, United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, United States Department of State.

Publications: *Latin American Caribbean and Central America Report*.

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