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## Almost R100m taken in 47 cash-in-transit hits this year



**Expert says attackers are well-organised and plan their hits perfectly.**

Holiday season may only be four months away but a hefty spike in armed cash-in-transit (CIT) robberies is already here, with nearly R100 million taken since January.

“We’ve seen a big increase already this year in incidents,” said specialist risk manager in cash-in-transit and bank robberies Jacques Meyer.

The R96 million taken so far this year is broken into two parts, CIT robberies and Cross Pavement Carrier (CPC) robberies. CIT robberies for 2017 between January and August have already hit 47, compared with 31 over the same period last year.

Compared with last year when robbers made off with R35 million, this year over the same time robbers have netted nearly R60 million. Meyer pointed out one huge vulnerability in transporting cash was the soft spot when cash was carried from inside the shop to the vehicle waiting outside, aka CPC robberies.

Robbers were very aware of this and were exploiting the vulnerability. During 2016, robbers stole R11.8 million (January to August) while in 2017, 118 robberies have seen robbers make off with R36 million so far this year. Meyer noted the criminals who conducted these robberies were not opportunistic.

“These guys plan. They go and sit there before the time, they watch, see what security measures are on site, their planning is absolutely perfect,” Meyer said.

Having interviewed CIT/CPC robbers, Meyer said their planning was so good they made note of collection times, which company was collecting, regular staff members and knew where the system was the most vulnerable.

“You’re going to get robbed when your safe is open or when it is being transported to the vehicle. Also, there are certain risks when conducting an armed robbery, and robbers look at the risks as well,” said Meyer.

Risks for robbers included post-robbery identification, should they wear gloves, how easy is it to access the safe, and escape routes.

“Any business which skimmed on camera surveillance and decent safes was looking for trouble,” said Meyer.

A modern-day professional safe was a far cry from the bolt ‘em and lock ‘em types being sold over the counter by many retailers.

Meyer showed The Citizen a safe with three-inch walls, which counted the money being deposited into the safe and then reflected the deposit in the client’s bank balance.

This then removed the risk to the client and moved it to the service provider. Giving insight into the CIT industry, Meyer explained the service was facing another threat, this time from itself, as competitors tried to cut costs.

While armed robberies are the largest criminal activity targeting retail businesses – accounting for over 50% of all attacks on businesses – the greatest threat to the CIT industry has been the persistent assault on service pricing over 15 years.

“In 1999 service rates varied between R115 to R170 per service. Today, rates ranging from anywhere between R90 and R107 per service are the order of the day,” said Meyer.

“This translates to an overall loss of anywhere between 22% and 37% in primary operating revenue driven by unrelenting market pressure. And this against an inflationary growth in cost of 87% over the past 10 years.” – amandaw@citizen.co.za