

**Refugee Review Tribunal  
AUSTRALIA**

**RRT RESEARCH RESPONSE**

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**Country:** Zimbabwe  
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**Questions**

**1. Does the Zimbabwean regime pursue family members of British soldiers?**

**RESPONSE**

**1. Does the Zimbabwean regime pursue family members of British soldiers?**

Available information indicates that there are approximately 600 Zimbabwe citizens enlisted in the British Army. Reports located indicate that the Zimbabwean government and media have been critical of Zimbabwean citizens who have enlisted in the British army. A 2008 report suggests that one of the reasons an individual was detained in Harare was due to a family member's enlistment in the British Army. A 2003 report states that the parents of a Zimbabwean British soldier were questioned by "Zimbabwe's secret police over their son's role in the British Army". A 2002 report cites an "unnamed observer" who stated that individuals "who join the British forces could be inviting trouble on their families" (British Army 2008, *British Army Cultural Guidance*, British Army website, 14 October, p.11 [http://www.army.mod.uk/documents/general/cultural\\_guidancepart\\_1.pdf](http://www.army.mod.uk/documents/general/cultural_guidancepart_1.pdf) - Accessed 22 September 2009 – Attachment 1; UK army has 10% foreign personnel' 2006, *BBC News*, 13 September [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk\\_news/5342624.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/5342624.stm) – Accessed 22 September 2009 – Attachment 2; 'Campaign against Lufthansa as fears grow for deported soldier' 2008, *Association of Zimbabwe Journalists*, 13 March [http://www.zimbabwejournalists.com/story.php?art\\_id=3676&cat=1](http://www.zimbabwejournalists.com/story.php?art_id=3676&cat=1) – Accessed 22 September 2009 – Attachment 3; Raath, J. 2003, 'Soldier's family fear for safety', *Times Online*, 21 April <http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/world/iraq/article862642.ece> – Accessed 22 September 2009 – Attachment 4; 'Zimbabwe: State Bars Burial of Zimbabwean in UK Army Killed in Iraq' 2003, *South African Press Association*, 27 April, allAfrica website <http://allafrica.com/> – Accessed 22 September 2009 – Attachment 5; Zimbabwe says Britain recruiting army against it' 2002, *Reuters News*, 22 December – Attachment 6).

A report by the British Army dated 14 October 2008, states that there are approximately 600 Zimbabwean citizens in the British Army. On 13 September 2006, *BBC News* also reported that there were 565 Zimbabwean soldiers enlisted in the British Army (British Army 2008, *British Army Cultural Guidance*, British Army website, 14 October, p.11 – [http://www.army.mod.uk/documents/general/cultural\\_guidancepart\\_1.pdf](http://www.army.mod.uk/documents/general/cultural_guidancepart_1.pdf) - Accessed 22 September 2009 – Attachment 1; ‘UK army has 10% foreign personnel’ 2006, *BBC News*, 13 September [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk\\_news/5342624.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/5342624.stm) – Accessed 22 September 2009 – Attachment 2).

On 13 March 2008, *The Association of Zimbabwe Journalists* reported that a failed Zimbabwean asylum seeker, deported from Germany, was arrested upon arrival at Harare airport and is “suspected to have been tortured”. The report states that the returned asylum seeker, Mr Farai Robert Mutyambizi, deserted the Zimbabwean National Army and has a brother enlisted as a soldier in the British Army. The report states that the family of Mr Mutyambizi believe he is “being held unlawfully by the Zimbabwe authorities, long known for their contempt of Zimbabweans serving in the British army and deserting soldiers who now live abroad”. The report contains the following information:

Human rights activists and Zimbabweans living abroad have started a campaign against Lufthansa airline after it was used by the German government to deport a former Zimbabwe soldier who was arrested upon setting foot at the Harare International Airport and is suspected to have been tortured for the past three days

Farai Robert Mutyambizi, 28, deserted the Zimbabwe National Army and went to seek asylum in German. The German authorities, known for being tough on asylum seekers, put him in detention and deported him back to Zimbabwe where all his papers were handed to government officials at the airport, prompting his immediate arrest.

...Mutyambizi’s plight comes hard-on-the-heels of an announcement by the British government that it will soon be resuming enforced deportations of failed Zimbabwean asylum seekers.

...Speaking last night from his Leicester home, Julius Sai Mutyambizi-Dewa, who is Farai’s elder brother and former secretary of the Morgan Tsvangirai MDC in the United Kingdom, said the family was making frantic efforts to try and secure the services of a lawyer to represent their brother. The family says Farai is being held unlawfully by the Zimbabwe authorities, long known for their contempt of Zimbabweans serving in the British army and deserting soldiers who now live abroad.

“Our main concern is that no-one has seen him since he was handed over to the authorities three days ago. We are trying all we can to secure the services of a lawyer so that he can be released,” said Mutyambizi-Dewa. “His plight could have been made worse by the documents that were in his possession upon deportation and these include papers about the British army. This kind of thing cannot be allowed to continue.”

Another brother, Tendai, who is a British soldier was besides himself yesterday thinking it was him who had landed his brother into problems in Harare.

“It is me they want. I will blame anything that happens to him on the German government. They will now probably charge him with high treason, I do not know but I think the right thing is for me to get my uniform and go there so they can arrest me because they are torturing the wrong person. If they kill me that will be my destiny,” said Tendai (‘Campaign against Lufthansa as fears grow for deported soldier’ 2008, *Association of Zimbabwe*

*Journalists*, 13 March [http://www.zimbabwejournalists.com/story.php?art\\_id=3676&cat=1](http://www.zimbabwejournalists.com/story.php?art_id=3676&cat=1) – Accessed 22 September 2009 – Attachment 3).

On 21 April 2003, *Times Online* reported that the parents of a Zimbabwean British soldier, who died whilst serving in Iraq, were “questioned by Zimbabwe’s secret police over their son’s role in the British Army”. The report states that the soldier, Christopher Muzvuru, had been “vilified in Zimbabwe’s pro-government press” for fighting in the British Army. According to the report the soldiers parents “fear retribution by the Government or by ruling party vigilantes”. The report states that:

The parents of Private Christopher Muzvuru, the Irish Guardsman who died in action on April 6 in the assault on Basra, have been questioned by Zimbabwe’s secret police over their son’s role in the British Army, a relative said yesterday.

He said that the family had been visited by agents of the Central Intelligence Organisation, President Mugabe’s secret police, and by plainclothes CID officers. “Their mother is now terrified,” he said. “They are getting calls from all over all the time.”

Provisional arrangements had been made to return the body this week for burial. However, the family, fearful of the hostility that their son’s participation in the war has provoked in Zimbabwe, said that Private Muzvuru, who was 21, may be buried in Britain, where he has some family. “It’s no longer clear whether he will be buried here or in Britain,” his relative said.

Private Muzvuru has been vilified in Zimbabwe’s pro- government press. The Zimbabwe *Daily Mirror* denounced him as “a mercenary” for fighting for a country that was “virtually at war” with Zimbabwe. It said that he should be buried “in the country he preferred to die for”.

The state-controlled daily *The Herald* portrayed Private Muzvuru in a cartoon as a “Buffalo Soldier”, a black unit in the United States cavalry described by the reggae singer Bob Marley as a group of ex-slaves exploited by whites.

His parents in the city of Gweru have refused to speak to the press and relatives say that they fear retribution by the Government or by ruling party vigilantes (Raath, J. 2003, ‘Soldier’s family fear for safety’, *Times Online*, 21 April <http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/world/iraq/article862642.ece> – Accessed 22 September 2009 – Attachment 4).

On 27 April 2003, the *South African Press Association* reported that Zimbabwean authorities refused to bury the Zimbabwean British soldier Christopher Muzvuru as his family was unable to provide his passport. The report states that a relative who spoke to the press “insisted on anonymity for fear of victimisation by President Robert Mugabe’s government”. The report contains the following relevant information:

Zimbabwean authorities have barred the burial of a young Zimbabwean soldier who died in action while fighting for the British army in the war in Iraq, members of the family confirmed on Sunday.

A relative who insisted on anonymity for fear of victimisation by President Robert Mugabe’s government, confirmed a report in the independent weekly *Standard* newspaper on Sunday which said that the office of the registrar of births and deaths had refused to issue a burial order for Irish Guards private Christopher Muzvuru, 21, because the family was unable to provide his passport.

Zimbabwean law requires proof that a deceased person was a citizen of the country before it will allow the burial of repatriated body.

...Keith Martin, a senior undertaker, said that the registry's position was "not unusual". "This has been the law for many years. Only citizens can be repatriated and issued with burial orders, and to bury someone you have to have a burial order," he said.

... "In this case, it probably just means that the family will have to delay the burial while his regiment looks for the passport and it will be resolved when they find it," he said.

Pro-government media portrayed Muzvuru as a "mercenary" and "sell-out" who was fighting for an enemy government ('Zimbabwe: State Bars Burial of Zimbabwean in UK Army Killed in Iraq' 2003, *South African Press Association*, 27 April, allAfrica website <http://allafrica.com/> – Accessed 22 September 2009 – Attachment 5).

On 22 December 2002, *Reuters News* reported that Zimbabwe had accused the Britain Army of conducting a recruitment drive for Zimbabweans. The report cites the Zimbabwean Information Minister who is reported to have stated that "Zimbabweans who joined a "hostile foreign army" risked losing their citizenship". The report also cites an "unnamed observer" who stated that individuals "who join the British forces could be "inviting unnecessary trouble" on their families". The report states that Britain has dismissed the accusation of holding a recruitment drive for Zimbabwean soldiers. The report contains the following information:

Zimbabwe has accused its former colonial ruler of enlisting Zimbabweans into the British army for possible use in a military campaign to overthrow President Robert Mugabe.

"Britain is recruiting Zimbabweans into its army, a move seen by the Zimbabwe government as part of a plan to oust President Mugabe from power violently," the state-owned Sunday Mail quoted security sources as saying.

"Security sources say the locals could be used in a military offensive against Zimbabwe should Britain execute its plan," it added in an article entitled "UK's military plot exposed".

Britain dismissed the report.

"Zimbabweans do join the British army. They are entitled to as members of the Commonwealth," said a spokeswoman for the Ministry of Defence. The rest of the story was "rubbish, pure and simple", she said.

Zimbabwe's post-independence relations with London are at an all-time low as Mugabe accuses Britain of spearheading a campaign to demonise him for his controversial land seizure programme aimed at redistributing white-owned farms to blacks.

Mugabe, presiding over the country's worst economic crisis in decades which his critics blame on 22 years of government mismanagement, says Britain has become the enemy under Prime Minister Tony Blair and is working to overthrow him.

Harare's Information Minister Jonathan Moyo said Britain's recruitment drive -- which the Sunday Mail said was also targeting Zimbabwean soldiers -- was a sign of desperation.

**Zimbabweans who joined a “hostile foreign army” risked losing their citizenship, he told the paper, while one unnamed observer was quoted saying those who joined the British forces could be “inviting unnecessary trouble” on their families** (‘Zimbabwe says Britain recruiting army against it’ 2002, *Reuters News*, 22 December – Attachment 6).

A report dated, 17 January 2006, published by *The Mercury* and located on the Zimbabwe Situation website reports on the large number of desertions and applications for resignation from the Zimbabwean Police Force and Army. The report provides information on a junior officer who deserted the army after unsuccessfully attempting to resign. According to the report the officer was questioned following his letter of resignation and accused of wanting to “work with enemies of Zimbabwe”. The officer is cited as stating that “they even insinuated I was going to join the British army, which was all nonsense” (Peta, B. 2006 ‘Desertions hit Zim army, police’, *The Mercury*, 17 January, The Zimbabwe Situation website [http://www.zimbabwesituation.com/jan17a\\_2006.html](http://www.zimbabwesituation.com/jan17a_2006.html) – Accessed 22 September 2009- Attachment 7).

## **List of Sources Consulted**

### Internet Sources:

#### **Government Information & Reports**

Immigration & Refugee Board of Canada <http://www.irb.gc.ca/>

UK Home Office <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk>

US Department of State <http://www.state.gov/>

US Department of State website <http://www.state.gov>

#### **United Nations (UN)**

UNHCR <http://www.unhcr.ch/>

#### **Non-Government Organisations**

Amnesty International website <http://www.amnesty.org/>

Freedom House <http://www.freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page=1>

Human Rights Watch <http://www.hrw.org/>

#### **International News & Politics**

*BBC News* website <http://news.bbc.co.uk/>

*Times Online* <http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/>

#### **Region Specific Links**

*Association of Zimbabwe Journalists* <http://www.zimbabwejournalists.com/index.php>

British Army website <http://www.army.mod.uk/home.aspx>

The Zimbabwe Situation website <http://www.zimbabwesituation.com/index.html>

#### **Search Engines**

Google search engine <http://www.google.com.au/>

#### **Online Subscription Services**

All Africa website <http://allafrica.com/>

### Databases:

FACTIVA (news database)

BACIS (DIAC Country Information database)

REFINFO (IRBDC (Canada) Country Information database)

ISYS (RRT Research & Information database, including Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, US Department of State Reports)

RRT Library Catalogue

## List of Attachments

1. British Army 2008, *British Army Cultural Guidance*, British Army website, 14 October [http://www.army.mod.uk/documents/general/cultural\\_guidancepart\\_1.pdf](http://www.army.mod.uk/documents/general/cultural_guidancepart_1.pdf) - Accessed 22 September 2009.
2. 'UK army has 10% foreign personnel' 2006, *BBC News*, 13 September [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk\\_news/5342624.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/5342624.stm) – Accessed 22 September 2009.
3. 'Campaign against Lufthansa as fears grow for deported soldier', 2008, *Association of Zimbabwe Journalists*, 13 March [http://www.zimbabwejournalists.com/story.php?art\\_id=3676&cat=1](http://www.zimbabwejournalists.com/story.php?art_id=3676&cat=1) – Accessed 22 September 2009.
4. Raath, J. 2003, 'Soldier's family fear for safety', *Times Online*, 21 April <http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/world/iraq/article862642.ece> – Accessed 22 September 2009.
5. 'Zimbabwe: State Bars Burial of Zimbabwean in UK Army Killed in Iraq' 2003, *South African Press Association*, 27 April, All Africa website <http://allafrica.com/> – Accessed 22 September 2009.
6. Zimbabwe says Britain recruiting army against it' 2002, *Reuters News*, 22 December.
7. Peta, B. 2006 'Desertions hit Zim army, police', *The Mercury*, 17 January, source: The Zimbabwe Situation website [http://www.zimbabwesituation.com/jan17a\\_2006.html](http://www.zimbabwesituation.com/jan17a_2006.html) – Accessed 22 September 2009.