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The Presence of Off-Duty Police in the V.I.P. Protection Scene



Angelos Agrafiotis, ASIS Aegean
Chapter Chair

It wasn't until 30 years ago that executive protection in Greece became prominent. Before that, politicians, journalists, business executives, and artists used uncertain measures such as technology for the protection of their homes, and temporary hires for V.I.P. protection at galas and events.

Over the past few years, however, terrorism, anarchism, and criminality have risen sharply in Greece. The terrorist organization 17 November (17N), was an active threat from 1975 through 2002, and law enforcement was largely ineffective in combatting it.

Additionally, Greece is being plagued by anarchist groups that cooperate with criminals and perpetrate kidnapping, blackmail, and attacks even on judges. In response, organizations have increased security measures. Some V.I.P.s choose armored cars, surrounded by security teams on motorbikes or in cars, escorting them 24 hours a day.

How are bodyguards selected in a country in which problems like the above appear constantly? The profession of a bodyguard is not recognized by the Greek state, hence there are no standards or common training requirements to complete in order to become a bodyguard.

Moreover gun possession in Greece, as in the European Union, is not allowed for professionals except for law enforcement. This gap offers active policemen the chance to provide their services--because the Greek state gives them the right to carry a weapon 24 hours per day--and gain an extra, albeit illegal, income.

When a V.I.P. receives an anonymous threat, they may hire policemen to ensure the security of their establishments, personal residences, and workplaces, as well as transportation of their whole families. This results in the activation of more policemen, increasing the number of individuals equipped with gun licenses.

This practice also burdens the police service and reduces the opportunities for professional bodyguards and private security companies, which invest in training abroad. In order to overcome this problem, the Greek state should adopt best practices of the bodyguard profession and be stricter with police officers about exploiting their positions and illegally practicing the profession of bodyguard.

At this moment, there are dozens of competent bodyguards--with excellent resumes--left jobless, because police officers deprive them of jobs they are qualified to do.