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Public-Private Global Security Assemblages (London 2012)

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On July 6, 2005, London was selected as the first host city to be awarded the Olympic Games for the third time, solidifying its prominent role in modern Olympic and international sporting history. Matthew Llewellyn (2011) offers a useful analysis of this history. Great Britain held local, national and empire Games as early as the 17th century and also contributed to the founding of the modern Olympics. In spite of early indifference on the part of the government as well as the public, the British Olympic Association was founded in 1905 which made Great Britain an important participant in the pivotal 1906 Intermediate Games in Athens. This helped London to be selected to replace Rome as the host city for the 1908 Games in which Great Britain accounted for more than one-third of the participating athletes and received the greatest number of medals. As discussed by Richard Pound in Chapter 2 of this book, the four decades between London's first and second hosting of the Olympics were marked by an ambiguous relationship between Great Britain and the Olympics, as the Games were canceled once during World War I and twice during the World War II. In 1948 London held the first Olympics in 12 years at the time when the city was still recovering from the devastation of the war, people lacked housing, and food was still rationed.

The 2012 Games were an opportunity to demonstrate how far London had progressed since the devastation and recovery from World War II. To press its case London selected two-time gold medal winner Sebastian Coe to lead the effort. Its ultimate selection was received with such enthusiasm that Royal Air Force fighter jets were sent flying over London, with each jet trailing red, white, and blue smoke. The United Kingdom celebrated the award as Prime Minister Tony Blair was hosting the Group of Eight summit in Scotland from July 6–8, 2005.¹

This jubilation was shattered the next day by the news that a coordinated series of bombings, claimed by a self-described Al Qaeda affiliate, struck London commuters on three separate subway lines and a commuter bus during morning rush hour, killing 52 people and injuring hundreds. This

was reminiscent of previous Irish Republican Army bombings in the United Kingdom and Al Qaeda attacks in other parts of Europe. Prime Minister Tony Blair left the Group of Eight summit to assure worried Londoners of his leadership while the International Olympic Committee issued statements of confidence in the selection of London for 2012. The police showed confidence: "We've seen all this before in a way... We've been fighting the [Irish Republican Army] for years in London. So bombs are nothing new. But the difference is that I.R.A. provided some warning for their attacks. It seems the hallmark of these attacks is we get no warning, whatsoever. It was a matter of when, not if." So, too, a spokeswoman for the International Olympic Committee emphasized that its President Jacques Rogge expressed "full confidence in London and a secure Games in seven years time."²

A tense environment following this event led to extraordinary measures, most notably representation from all branches of the military, civilian public security, and private security. While anti-aircraft missiles had been a part of the Olympics in Athens and Beijing,³ for a time it seemed that the highly public display of these missiles would become the signature memory of the London Games. In the end, this was eclipsed by the failure of private security company Group 4 Securicor to meet its personnel quota and the highly successful last-minute effort on the part of the United Kingdom Armed Forces and police in closing that gap.

While surveillance practices and security concerns have always been a part of the Games, the preparation and reaction to perceived shortcomings led to new extreme. This was powerfully symbolically portrayed by Steve Nease in his "Slight Over reaction" cartoon (see Figure 17.1), showing an athlete approaching a pole vault only to find it covered in razor wire. The cartoon vividly captures the feel of the London Olympics, where at times it seemed that the Games were at the service of the imperatives of security, rather than the other way around!

Assessing potential threats to security

In light of these events, the London Organizing Committee for the Olympic Games commissioned Rand Europe, a subsidiary of Rand Corporation, originally founded by the United States Army Air Force as a research and development think tank,⁴ to conduct a study and propose recommendations regarding threats to security of the Olympic Games. As advertised on its website, the mission of the corporation is to "help improve policy and decision-making through research and analysis" through its offices in many cities around the world, by offering "objective analysis" and "effective solutions" to policy makers worldwide.⁵ As the website further informs, "Defense and Security Research" is one of the many topics in which the corporation offers its expertise.⁶

The corporation identified three primary risk categories: terrorism, targeted disruptions, and serious crime. We learn from the report, that

in this analysis, the corporation used its own research model with the following analytical categories: "adversary hostile intent," "adversary operational capability," and "domestic/international influences on United Kingdom security." It is worth reflecting further on these categories because they helped inform preparation for the London Games. Each one of these three categories had three variables, leading to 27 "future security environments," from "legal, non-violent" threats to "terrorist mass violence," as well as the direction of the trend, from "some improvement" to "status quo" to "significant worsening." Each of the "future security environments" was positioned within a "three dimension range of possibilities, from most benign to most insecure," with the most likely and concerning deemed to be small-scale isolated incidents, considered to be the hardest to detect and prevent. Against these estimates, the study positioned what it referred to as "security capabilities" and assessed them against each of the 27 "future security environments."⁷

A detailed analysis of the content suggests that the ramifications of the report by the Rand Corporation for the planning of the 2012 London



Figure 17.1 Olympic security by Steve Nease, 2012

Games were profound. The report led the London Organizing Committee to believe that there was a need for a “highly flexible and infinitely scalable” approach. Given that in such a tense environment the political price for simply ignoring envisioned scenarios is too high to be considered – no matter how unlikely it may be – this meant that the organizers not only had to take each of these scenarios into account but they also had to plan for them. This would ultimately lead to an “all hands on deck” approach to securing the Games.⁸ Simultaneously with all the policing agencies, the Games saw one of the largest engagements of private military and security companies, coupled with state military and security resources, ever used in concert for an event of this type. As early as 2007, *The Telegraph* made public a leaked Home Office report on preparations for securing the 2012 London Games, including plans for police package scans, increases and linking of closed-circuit television systems, and development and utilization of the DNA genetic databases. The newspaper informed the public about “a big leap in forensics, particularly with the ‘volume of information now available on the national DNA database,’ on which details of more than three million Britons are stored.” It also informed that the police would make a greater use of “a technique known as ‘familial DNA’ where a suspect whose details are not on the database can be traced through a family member whose details are already recorded.” The newspaper then quoted a memo stating that “Records could be trawled more routinely to identify familial connections to crime scenes, providing a starting point to investigations through a family member that is on the database to a suspect that is not.”⁹

While surveillance techniques and technology helped to define security measures, the location of the Games also influenced planning and preparation. East London had been chosen as the location for the Olympic Park as a way to increase both development and security in a part of the city that had been seen as a site of danger and criminality (Fussey, 2011). In a series of journalistic analysis, *The Guardian* reported that while Olympic-related development was hoped to have a long-term pacifying effect, there was an immediate concern with the possibility of “native-born extremists” from the host boroughs. A restricted “counter-terrorism local profile” authored by the police and the Home Office reported “a high-level threat of [Al Qaeda]-inspired extremism from males aged between 20 and 38. The individuals of interest to the police are predominantly British-born second generation migrants from south-east Asia. There is also interest from a number of Middle Eastern political movements and [Al Qaeda]-affiliated groups from north Africa.”¹⁰

A related threat seemed to have been the “lone wolf terrorist,” either native born or foreign. *The Guardian* cited two examples: a female who purportedly radicalized herself using information from the Internet and listening to Al Qaeda sermons, ultimately stabbing a Labour Party Member of Parliament; and a male who apparently used information from the Internet to make a

homemade nail bomb suicide vest, attempting to blow it up in a crowded restaurant. One unnamed security observer reported, “It is difficult to exaggerate the nervousness of the police and the security services over what is an unprecedented and enormous challenge ahead.”¹¹

In light of the report by the Rand Corporation, the nature of threats to security were considered ubiquitous so that virtually all types of potential threats were treated as equally probable and threatening, thereby exacerbating the level of technology and personnel assigned to the Games.¹² This threat perception was further exacerbated by the subsequent reports and analyzes noted above. As the assistant commissioner for counterterrorism of the London Metropolitan Police noted, “We have done some very detailed planning over the past few months on the counter-terrorism side...we have tried to learn from Olympic Games all around the world, and not just [the] Games, but other large-scale events, and from colleagues around the world. London is an attractive target in some respects... There is lot more work to do. I am not complacent.”¹³

This led to the incorporation of the military, civilian public security, and private security – all in an effort to be able to meet the demands. While Group 4 Securicor was playing the lead role in the Olympic venue, other private security companies were filling gaps for government, corporate and individual needs more broadly. The British Security Industry Association coordinated the overall involvement of the private security industry. In an address at the International Fire and Security Conference, held in Birmingham, England, in May 2012, their Project Director laid out the association’s understanding of challenges to security of the 2012 London Games.¹⁴ He emphasized that this was the first Olympics to take place within a city limits. Previous Olympics had occurred in outlying areas, which were often separated into “Olympic Villages.” Partly because the Olympics were being held in the city itself, security was considered to be particularly problematic. But other factors also contributed to the challenge. Two rivers, as well as a train line, ran next to the site. It was also in one of the most deprived areas of the city. The Project Director argued that the primary risk to the Olympics was expected to be the terrorism threat, although social unrest and crime were also concerns. After thousands took to the streets in London in protest over the killing of a black male by the police in August 2011, the city deployed an additional 10,000 police officers from around the country.¹⁵ Security precautions were also built directly into the Olympic venue. An example of this is a police initiative named “Secured by Design,” which promoted anti-crime solutions built directly into the Olympic Park using the so-called “holistic approach” to cover the environment, buildings, and provisions for physical security. Apparently, these preparations had lifted London 2012 to a higher standard, rendering the Olympic Park as both “world class” and “cutting edge.”¹⁶ As Coaffee (2011: 120) notes, this “holistic approach” was similar to previous attempts to “design out

terrorism" through infrastructure innovation in the United Kingdom, namely during its conflicts with the Irish Republican Army.

On the eve of the Olympics, the General Director of the United Kingdom's Security Service (popularly known as MI5),¹⁷ reiterated the most persistent threats to the Games, arguing that, while previous terrorist attacks in London had come from the Irish Republican factions, particularly in the 1990s, the bigger threat was from Al Qaeda and other anti-British "jihadists," namely those from Yemen and the Al Shabaab militia in Somalia, in the 2000s. He also expressed concerns regarding Iran under international sanctions and what he considered as Iran's allies, namely the Hezbollah. Potential cyber attacks from any source were apparently also an issue.¹⁸ The scope of the challenge as outlined by the General Director not only echoed reports by the Rand Corporation and other public authorities, it also likely served to condition public receptivity to the cost and profile of security events. In addition, this public statement was a form of marketing on behalf of private security corporations. The message from the British Security Industry Association's representative was one part professional analysis, but another part very much a sales pitch.

The role of private security companies

As other contributors to this book demonstrate, particularly Tagsold in his Chapter 3 on Tokyo, Ok and Park in their Chapter 9 on Seoul, and Tsoukala in her Chapter 13 on Athens, the involvement of private security companies in the Olympic Games does not originate with the 2012 London Games. The report on the 2008 Beijing Games mentions various police forces and "guards from private security companies" as the primary security resources for their Olympics.¹⁹ So, too, Contemporary Security Canada was formed for the 2010 Winter Olympics in Vancouver where a joint venture between the Contemporary Group (based in the United States), Canada's United Protection Security Group, and Canada's Aeroguard Security Limited received a \$97 million contract from the Canadian government and provided 5000 private security guards for the event.²⁰ Most interestingly, we learn from the report of the evaluation of the finalists – London, Paris, Madrid and New York – for the 2012 Olympics that all discussed the inclusion of "private security" along with police and the military. Here, Moscow was singled out as an exception, the only city among the finalists that did not mention the availability of private security resources.²¹ This is most likely a legacy of the Russian communist past and a subsequently underdeveloped private security sector.

The increasing presence of private military and security companies is not only an Olympics phenomenon. Private security has a long history in Europe, but the expansion of this industry has been particularly substantial over the past two decades. Today it accounts for thousands of companies, millions of workers and hundreds of billions of dollars in annual revenue,

with operations on every continent and nearly all countries (Abrahamsen and Williams, 2009; McCoy, 2009). A recent French Parliament study estimated the total market for military and security services to be between \$100 billion and \$400 billion a year,²² while another study suggested that the total market would be \$2.7 trillion between 2010 and 2020,²³ up from \$55.6 billion in 1990 (Mandel, 2002). Firms such as Canada's Garda World,²⁴ Spain's Prosegur,²⁵ Sweden's Securitas,²⁶ and United Kingdom-Danish Group 4 Securicor²⁷ each employ hundreds of thousands of workers, provide a broad range of services, operate globally and earn billions of U.S. dollars in revenues annually. Growth of this industry came as deregulation and (neo)liberal globalization provided a landscape receptive to its expansion (Kobrin, 1997; Tilly, 2001). These private companies have their own advocacy organizations, such as the British Security Industry Association mentioned above,²⁸ as well as their own International Code of Conduct.²⁹

It appears that the United Kingdom has had a domestic private security industry since at least the 19th century. As we learn from the way these companies advertise their services on their websites, one early British private security company, Corps Security, was founded by returning war veterans in 1859.³⁰ In the period after World War II, the British established a global orientation for its security industry. Dunigan (2011) writes that a former British Special Air Service officer founded a number of early private military and security companies. Control Risks Group states that it was founded in 1975, which would make it a successful early firm that has today become one of the most important global companies in corporate security and risk management.³¹ Another important pioneer seems to be Defense Services Limited, founded in 1981 and later merged with other firms to create the industry giant Aegis – today an important provider of security services in conflict zones.³² This firm is led by retired a British Special Operations officer who previously founded Sandline International, another private military and security company. This particular corporate story is described by the officer in his own book (Spicer, 1999). It was estimated that by 1995 the United Kingdom-based private security firms were employing 162,000 people, compared to 142,000 public police.³³ A more recent estimate of the ratio of private to public security personnel was closer to three to one.³⁴

As scholars have observed, these companies recruit heavily from former service members, police, and intelligence operatives (Singer, 2003; Carmola, 2010). A good example of this overlap and linkages between public and private organizations in the United Kingdom can be seen in a recent posting on the networking site, LinkedIn:

Looking at getting into the industry, please help!! Good evening everyone. I have recently left the Royal Air Force Regiment after a period of 6 and a half years, I am now hoping to start a new career within the surveillance industry. Having been involved with the planning and management

of numerous covert and overt Observation Posts and Reconnaissance Patrols, both in the UK and on operational tours throughout the world, I felt it was natural for me to transfer my skills and experience into this sector. I have gained Level 4 BTEC qualifications in Covert Camera Construction and Concealment, Tactical Foot & Mobile Surveillance and also Tactical Surveillance Procedures, and aim to complete my Level 4 BTEC Professional Diploma in Tactical Covert Surveillance within the next 12 months. I have also gained a City and Guilds Level 3/4 PTLLS (Preparing to Teach in the Lifelong Learning Sector) qualification. Any help/advice/contacts/networks or even jobs that you could offer would be very much appreciated, as I understand that this can be a difficult in such a discreet industry. Many thanks, Ben.³⁵

This entry provides but one very good example of the relationship between public military and civilian public security and surveillance agencies on the one hand, and the private sector security firms on the other. Public military and civilian security agencies provide training and expertise to individual people who enlist to serve in these institutions. These skills are then readily transferrable into the civilian sector, where they then provide capability to corporations, individuals, nongovernmental organizations, and sometimes even to the agencies by which they were previously employed. This both feeds and reinforces public and private security and surveillance links.

Group 4 Securicor and the United Kingdom

Although there are a large number of United Kingdom-based private military and security companies, many of which stand out as global leaders, by 2012, Group 4 Securicor (known universally as G4S) was the largest organization of its kind globally. The London Stock Exchange listed the firm as reporting \$12.035 billion in revenue in 2011.³⁶ Its 657,000 employees in 125 countries³⁷ made it the third-largest commercial employer in the world after United States retail giant WalMart and Taiwanese electronics manufacturer Foxconn.³⁸

According to its website, Group 4 Securicor was formed through mergers and acquisitions of some of the oldest and most prestigious private firms. Its origins are traced to the Denmark-based Falck, founded in 1906. Other predecessor companies mentioned are British Night Watch Services (later Securicor), founded in 1935; United States-based Wackenhut, founded in 1960; and Sweden-based Group 4, itself formed from predecessor companies in 1968. Each of these companies seem to have been busy acquiring and merging other companies across Europe and North America before merging together themselves. Group 4 and Falck merged in 2001 to become Group 4 Falck, which then acquired Wackenhut, the second-largest United States-based security firm, the following year. In 2003, Group 4 Falck and Securicor merged, becoming Group 4 Securicor, which became publicly listed in 2004 and has since acquired additional diverse global companies,

including battlefield security provider Armor Group and humanitarian services specialist RONCO in 2008.³⁹ By 2011, the company continued to pursue other mergers and acquisitions in Brazil, China, India, and the United Kingdom, as well picking up the London 2012 security contract, worth \$454.4 million.⁴⁰

According to the news reports, the company is also noteworthy for the scope of its operations. Its Armor Group North America provided security for the United States Embassy in Afghanistan, in addition to numerous other diplomatic missions globally.⁴¹ Its corrections division managed prisons and immigration detention centers in Australia, the United States, the United Kingdom and Israel.⁴² In the United Kingdom alone it managed six prisons, an asylum center for detention seekers and security operations in hospitals.⁴³ It provided a variety of other services to governments and private firms. It guarded air and sea ports and specialized in energy and public and private utility guarding. It also focused on transport and tourism, including a number of United Kingdom airports, as well as financial and retail guarding.⁴⁴ More recently it ventured into anti-piracy operations.⁴⁵

The scope of this operation made history in early 2012 when the company became the first private security firm to win a government contract to build and run a police station. The ten-year, \$320 million deal included an optional five-year extension and put Group 4 Securicor in charge of running administration for the Lincolnshire Police Authority.⁴⁶ It also bid on \$2.4 billion in contracts to run West Midlands and Surrey administrative, crime scene investigation and intelligence services.⁴⁷ This was only one of many United Kingdom public service contracts being tendered.⁴⁸ In fact, at least ten more police forces, including Cambridgeshire, Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire, announced privatization plans. Its government business grew from 15% of global revenues in 2006 to 27% in 2011, with 50% of its United Kingdom business being government services by 2012. In preparation for further police work, the corporation compiled a database of 17,000 former officer Policing Solutions.⁴⁹

Even before proving its ability to successfully complete such work, the head of its United Kingdom branch outlined the company's plans for further business expansion.

For most members of the public what they will see is the same or better policing and they really don't care who is running the fleet, the payroll or the firearms licensing – they don't really care ... I have always found it somewhere between patronizing and insulting the notion that the public sector has an exclusive franchise on some ethos, spirit, morality – it is just nonsense. The thought that everyone in the private sector is primarily motivated for profit and that is why they come to work is just simply not accurate... we employ 675,000 people and they are primarily motivated pretty much the same as would motivate someone in the public sector.⁵⁰

This statement reflects public statements made by other executives of such companies. Its claim is that private security and surveillance companies could provide the best of both worlds. These executives have always argued that private businesses were more efficient and effective than their corresponding public bureaucrats, providing flexibility, adaptability, and cost savings where needed. Now they were further arguing that these organizations were just as professional and committed to public service as their government counterparts. From their perspective, the profit motive would provide all of the advantages noted above, but none of the disadvantages of opportunism sometimes feared. The Olympics would be a test of whether that argument holds true in practice.

Planning for the Games: “bridging the gap” venture

Given the significant and growing role of private security in the United Kingdom, it is not entirely surprising that Group 4 Securicor was given responsibility for security at the Olympic Park in 2008.⁵¹ As the media reported, in 2009, the British Security Industry Association, Skills for Security, Bucks New University, North Hertfordshire Further Education College, the Home Office, the Department of Business, Innovation and Skills, and the London Organizing Committee initiated a public-private joint venture. The venture was labeled “Bridging the Gap.” Its goal was to increase the number of trained “recruits for the security and crowd management sectors.” It was piloted with 14 “Further Education Colleges” before being expanded to 50 of these institutions, with the intent of training 12,000 students, including 9000 unemployed persons, in three years and “delivering” 6000 of them to support London 2012 with qualifications of supervisor and stewardship training. This was considered to be a “lasting legacy of the Games,” increasing the pool of skilled security personnel, as well as providing work opportunities not previously available to these individuals. It was launched in November 2009 at Tower Hamlets Further Education College in East London. To this end, the Security Industry Association London 2012 Project Director stated the following:

There has long been a need to encourage young adults to pursue a career in the security industry. Bridging The Gap will provide the security sector with a new supply chain of trained and qualified personnel direct from their local college. Coupled with this, a new stream of personnel will help meet the security challenge of London 2012, providing valuable support to the comprehensive security measures that will be in place.⁵²

In late December 2010, the company was awarded a further contract to provide 2000 security staff for the Olympic venues and manage 8000 additional personnel made up of volunteers and other staff recruited from colleges of higher education. This contract commenced in March 2011. By

August 2011, in the wake of the street demonstrations in London mentioned above, conversations commenced regarding a substantial enhancement of resources for security. A United States Federal Bureau of Investigations and Central Intelligence Agency team assigned to monitor London 2012 security preparations warned of continued terrorist vulnerability, leading the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom to approve a five-fold increase in private, police and military personnel committed to the Games.⁵³ By December 2011, the total number of guards to be provided by Group 4 Securicor was increased to 10,400. In addition, the company was to take responsibility for managing the following additional guards: 735 existing Olympic Park guards; 3700 "Bridging the Gap" program graduates; 1000 William James guards in the Olympic Village; 5000 armed forces personnel; and 3000 London Organizing Committee "Games Makers," bringing the total number of security personnel under its management to 23,700.⁵⁴ At that time, the London 2012 security effort also included 12,500 London Metropolitan Police and 8500 services members in addition to those under direct company supervision.⁵⁵ By that point, the company's contract, originally worth \$137.6 million, had grown to \$454.4 million.⁵⁶

Private opportunity, public show of force

By March 2012, the projected security costs had increased to over \$1.6 billion, with venue-specific security alone more than doubling from an initial estimate.⁵⁷ Military service member commitment had grown to 13,500, or more than the number committed to the war in Afghanistan, as well as surface to air missiles, jet fighters, helicopters, and the Royal Navy.⁵⁸ The largest ship in the fleet, the 22,500 ton helicopter carrier Her Majesty's Ship Ocean was stationed in Greenwich. The 21,500 ton assault vessel Her Majesty's Ship Bulwark, the Royal Navy flagship, was moored in Weymouth to oversee the sailing events. Typhoon fighters, the most modern in the Royal Air Force, were assigned to the Royal Air Force Base Northolt and supplemented by helicopters operating from the Her Majesty's Ship Ocean, as well as surface to air missiles. While this arsenal was impressive, it was reported in the *New York Times* that "Organizers of the last two Summer Olympics, in Beijing and Athens, adopted similar air defense plans, deploying military aircraft and, as in London, batteries of ground-to-air missiles in a ring around the main Olympics sites. In London's case, that includes two missile detachments."⁵⁹

In addition to the growing costs within the Olympic venues noted above, there was also a substantial increase to the original budgeted police expenses outside the Olympic venues.⁶⁰ This was related to the ambition that London 2012 be an opportunity to leave the installed surveillance infrastructure in place. There was an East London "Safer Neighborhoods" initiative, a DNA data collection initiative, another linking all closed-circuit televisions into a network of 500,000 cameras to be put at the disposal of the Metropolitan

Police, as well as a new command center built for the London Metropolitan Police.⁶¹

Expecting 25,000 athletes and 700,000 tourists, European Union passports were equipped with special chips that could be utilized in 11 airports in combination with special facial recognition software. Airspace within 30 miles of London was monitored by the Royal Air Force, and police and military paired up to detect chemical, biological, radiological, nuclear or explosive threats. This included Royal Air Force personnel in 14 observation posts equipped with thermal-imaging bomb detection equipment. Teams of military snipers patrolled the skies in helicopters while speedboats patrolled the Thames. An 11-mile 5000-volt fence, estimated to cost \$150 million was installed around the Olympic Village and London's East End. The roughly 500,000 interconnected closed-circuit televisions photographed license plates on cars and cross-checked them automatically against any suspected criminal or terrorist activity. No outside food or water was allowed in the Olympic Park. Inside the park, roughly 2700 X-ray machines, metal detectors, vehicle scanners, and trace-explosive detectors provided additional surveillance.⁶²

Group 4 Securicor was responsible for all activities within the Olympic venues, including training and assignment of all private and public security personnel.⁶³ In order to fill its positions, the company launched a massive recruiting effort. By April 2012, it had screened 50,000 applicants,⁶⁴ and by May, they had reviewed 100,000 applicants, with 67,000 interviewed and 21,000 selected to continue in the process. Hires were targeted for specific training. Newly hired security employees ranged in age from 18 to 65, with half being from the five host boroughs of the Olympics. Security roles for these new hires included searches, patrolling, X-ray, closed-circuit television and alarm monitoring, incidence response, asset protection, visitor assistance, and "command and control."⁶⁵

The British Security Industry Association stated that the Olympics were an opportunity to showcase products and services.⁶⁶ One of the ways to promote the business was the International Fire and Security Conference mentioned above. It was the largest private security show of its kind with over 25,000 security professionals preregistered.⁶⁷ As we learn from the association's website, the Project Director for London 2012 was responsible for focusing on global events like the Olympics, seeking to portray the association's members as leading resources for private security services, and helping to broker opportunities for them.⁶⁸ The legacy hoped for by the Association was an increase in global market share for British firms. Its Project Director estimated that they had a 17% share of event security and they "only" had 5% of the global security market. A successful, private-led venture in London 2012, the Project Director argued, could give them a global marketing advantage.⁶⁹ This was further emphasized by the International Fire and Security event director for the 2012 conference who

emphasized that this was the most crucial year for the industry in a decade. While the London Olympics and the Queen's Diamond Jubilee increased urgency, other major global events and scandals had already put a spotlight on the United Kingdom: data and privacy breaches in the news, the 2011 London demonstrations, and the threat of terror attacks.⁷⁰

The Managing Director of Securitas in the United Kingdom and Ireland, who was also Chairman of the British Security Industry Association at the time, praised the Association's efforts in advocating for the industry in the United Kingdom and recognized the role of the Project Director for London 2012 in preparation for the Games. While noting that regulatory changes and austerity were proving opportunities for private companies, he emphasized the importance of getting London 2012 right:

It's impossible to talk about forthcoming challenges without making mention of the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games. While these events represent a significant long-term opportunity for our industry, they also bring with them a reputational challenge. Our industry is already firmly in the spotlight following the Diamond Jubilee celebrations which took place across the country – with a particular focus on London – earlier this month.

As a precursor to the Olympics, the Diamond Jubilee was a very real test of our industry's capability, and one that received significant scrutiny by media and critics alike. In the months to come, the whole world's attention will be focused on Olympic security, and we must all work hard to ensure that the reputation of our industry is upheld while taking full advantage of the opportunities this brings to showcase our wide range of talent and innovation.⁷¹

The executive probably did not imagine how prescient those words would be. The Olympics would, in fact, be a monumental test of the ability of private security corporations to deliver on their commitments. Unfortunately for both security corporations and their public clients, the shortcomings of the prime contractor Group 4 Securicor would raise far more questions than would be addressed through their accomplishments.

Crisis as the Games begin

There are a number of arguments made in favor of private companies. One is that they offer flexible quantitative resources when there is a demand spike. London 2012 seems to be a clear example of a need for incremental resources. Another argument for private companies, made particularly by industry insiders, is that they bring a high degree of efficiency and effectiveness. This argument suggests that unlike their bloated and inflexible public counterparts, private companies are nimble and responsive, able to more

quickly and effectively meet the changing needs. In response to this latter argument, organizational economists have a very different view. According to Williamson (1985, 1975) and Brauer and Van Tuyl (2008), services are best outsourced when the transaction in question is fairly routine and certain. When, however, the situation is unpredictable and uncertain, services are best delivered through internal hierarchies. The 2012 London Summer Olympics seem to be a clear example of the latter.

On the eve of the Olympics, after nearly \$1.6 billion had been committed to securing them, and the hopes of the organizers had been placed in the efficiency and experience of private enterprise, the public was exposed to an unexpected surprise. The much-touted behemoth, Group 4 Securicor, announced that it could not fulfill its contractual commitment. In spite of weekly reviews involving its progress, the London Organizing Committee was informed "on the morning of July 11, 2012 that despite ongoing and recent assurances orally and in writing to the contrary, G4S would not be able to meet their labor pool target."⁷² With Group 4 Securicor only having 4000 personnel ready, and another 9000 still in process, the Ministry of Defense agreed to step in with an additional 3500 service members.⁷³

The failings were made especially egregious when compared to the London Organizing Committee's successful recruitment of 70,000 volunteer "Games Makers." The London Organizing Committee worked under the exact same time frame and environmental conditions and yet, unlike the corporation, it was able to recruit, train, uniform, and schedule all of these volunteers.⁷⁴ The London Organizing Committee Chairman recognized these volunteers in the Closing Ceremony, giving them more credit for the Olympics' success than any other group. As the International Olympic Committee President stated, "We will never forget the smiles, the kindness and the support of the wonderful volunteers, the much-needed heroes of these Games."⁷⁵

Various factors were cited in the failings of Group 4 Securicor, including uncompetitive low wages, "totally chaotic" recruiting, and disorganized training.⁷⁶ In spite of this last-minute crisis, the additional military service members and subsequent recruitment and training of additional personnel closed the gap. The Olympics and the Paralympics were completed without a security incident. The company was nevertheless praised by the standing joint military commander for the Olympics who stated: "The day to day working with G4S has been exceptional and I would like to pay tribute to the G4S staff and volunteers. Working side by side I believe they are doing a very professional job providing Olympic security."⁷⁷ Regulatory compliance by private guards was found to be high by the Security Industry Authority, and crime was reduced during the Games.⁷⁸

The security arrangements for London 2012, left many questions unanswered. Whereas private companies had expected to demonstrate their superiority over the public sector, it was the police and military that demonstrated their flexibility, reliability and efficiency. In its first-half report, the

company acknowledged the shortcomings of its operations, was required to reimburse the government for police and military service member hourly costs, contributed \$4 million to a service members relief fund, and took an \$80 million charge against its first-half 2012 earnings for expenses and penalties incurred.⁷⁹ The parliamentary investigation into contract compliance continued through the end of September 2012. Needless to say, this was not what the government of the United Kingdom, the Security Industry Authority, or Group 4 Securicor had hoped for.

When the report was released, it not only identified the widely publicized shortcomings of the company's performance but juxtaposed it with the success of the public military and civilian security services, as well as the London Organizing Committee's own very successful recruitment and deployment of 70,000 "Games Maker" volunteers. The report recommended that the company, in addition to losses and payments already incurred, forfeit the \$91.2 million management fee for the Olympics as a goodwill gesture to their biggest single global client, the United Kingdom taxpayer. The report also recommended a thorough review of all of the company's policies and procedures before renewing or adding any additional government business.⁸⁰ The corporation did not accept the management fee forfeiture but responded to the report by releasing its Chief Operating Officer and Chief Executive Officer for the United Kingdom and Africa, as well as its head of Global Events. The company also conducted its own internal review and submitted the corporation to organizational restructuring.⁸¹

London 2012 and the expansion of public-private and global-local security assemblages

Some scholars suggest that the increasing involvement of private military and security companies is a usurpation of what sociologist Max Weber famously characterized as the state's monopoly on the legitimate use of force (Avant, 2005; Mandel, 2002; Singer, 2003; Carmola, 2010). By analyzing shifting patterns in global governance, however, other scholars conclude that participation of private companies in this realm is actually complementary to public authority (Abrahamsen and Williams, 2007, 2009; Leander, 2005). The latter also argue that the state no longer acts alone or even necessarily with the greatest knowledge or authority and that these activities are no longer bounded by national borders. Rather, the emerging security networks are public-private and global-local, arising from a number of developments: first, the globalized demand for private security; second, processes that have allowed private firms to be accepted as legitimate authorities in the realm of security; and third, the resulting incorporation of these entities into hybrid networks.

The demand for private security can be observed in multiple realms. Multinational firms increasingly rely on private companies to protect property and activities wherever their production is located and their services

offered (Avant, 2005). Individuals as well as the so-called gated communities hire private security companies rather than depend on local police (O'Reilly, 2011). States increasingly use these companies to support their military activities around the world (Singer, 2003), while nongovernmental organizations seek their support for international development operations (Joachim and Schneiker, 2012).

This involvement by the private security and military companies in various social and political spheres provides them with experience that, in turn, enhances their competence in the eyes of those who hire them. Through this legitimization as indispensable experts, they are able to enhance their own role in the shaping of the security agenda. By leveraging this experience and access, they are able to shape the perspective of key actors in terms of where priorities for security should lie, what the nature of threats to security may be, and how security should be achieved (Leander, 2005; Abrahamsen and Williams, 2007). This power to shape security discourse also provides them with structural power as these companies are able to position themselves into newly hybridized public-private and global-local security networks. Some have argued that these networks constitute a new form of governance in which nation-states neither fully cede their authority in the realm of security nor maintain their monopoly (Abrahamson and Williams, 2009).

The role of the Olympic Games and other such global events in legitimizing and accelerating this shift is being noted by industry advocates and opponents alike. Yet, it should be emphasized that, at least in the case of global events, the ultimate arbiter and backstop on the use of private corporations for security purposes is the state. As seen in the case of London 2012, the state is the only force as of yet capable of deploying warships, jet fighters, surface to air missiles, and thousands of trained and reliable personnel at the very last moment and under dynamic and ambiguous circumstances. However, states cannot replicate such experiences at the next Olympics as, next time around, these will be staged in a different country. For this reason, it is likely that, despite the fiasco of London 2012, interest in contracting global security firms for global events of this type may continue to grow. London 2012 is a case study of both the opportunity and shortcoming of this emerging hybridized form. Indeed, these companies were publicly recognized by the United Kingdom's military for their contribution in the London 2012 Olympics.

It will be interesting to see how this practice of combining private security corporations with state security agencies in the staging of the Olympics will continue to develop. Before the 2014 Sochi Winter Olympics, it was reported that the Russian Deputy Prime Minister was considering whether Russia should take a more active role in supporting such corporations, both domestically and internationally: "We are thinking about whether our money should go toward financing foreign private security [and] military

companies, or whether we should consider the feasibility of such companies in Russia itself.”⁸² Nonetheless, the 2014 Sochi Olympics were guarded by the state institutions of the Russian Federation, including a large detachment of Cossack Militia.⁸³ It was not until after the Sochi Games that relevant legislation to potentially go in this direction was even introduced into the State Duma.⁸⁴ It appears that the only report of private security related to the 2014 Sochi Olympics was the engagement of the paramilitary evacuation company Global Rescue by the United States Ski and Snowboard Association, which accompanied the American team, as was also the case in the previous two winter Olympics.⁸⁵ We have yet to see how this march toward privatization of security in global sports events will play itself out in the future. It may be that the 2016 Rio de Janeiro Summer Olympics in Brazil will choose to follow the model of state-based security, which was so influentially demonstrated by the Russian Federation at the 2014 Sochi Olympics⁸⁶ as highly successful. In this case, we may see the emergence of different models, some based on Western privatization and outsourcing of security services, American style, and others continuing to follow the historic practice of state monopolies over the legitimate means of force.

Notes

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