

Welcome to the SCEG Symposium and a particularly warm welcome to the many Defence Attaches that have joined us this morning.

I am delighted we have a truly international audience here today as we ‘**Explore the Private Security Sector’s Contribution to the Global Security Architecture**’ not least because the private sector operates globally in a multitude of jurisdictions. Many of you will have widely differing views and understanding of how private security companies operate, what they deliver and how they are regulated. This is entirely understandable. Within the sector there is broad spectrum of services on offer. At one end are unregulated companies offering ‘guns for hire’ and the other end you have state sponsored militias and companies offering military services. I want to talk to you about the companies in the middle. These Private Security Companies represented here today and within SCEG are responsible main stream businesses which are well regulated and governed. They pay their taxes, they are fully compliant and responsive to the demanding requirements of their clients including on Human Rights.

These companies offer a range of services that broadly speaking could be placed under the heading risk mitigation. Fundamentally they seek to reduce and manage risk on behalf of their clients. They are essentially defensive in posture seeking to avoid confrontation and only in extremis resorting to proportionate use of force commensurate with the exacting standards contained in the Rules for Use of Force which are explicitly for self-defence. I should add that weapons are only carried if the client is operating in an environment where the carriage of weapons is the only practical measure to mitigate the risk. In these challenging environments companies will pursue a range of risk mitigation measures including sharpening their situational awareness and operating in a culturally nuanced manner with the aim of reducing friction, avoiding conflict and managing risk.

Private Security Companies are diverse organisations with huge differences in size, scale and reach but within SCEG, big or small, the companies are committed to standards and regulation for the sector. Companies can range in size from a few individuals to tens of thousands of employees. Some companies may operate in a single jurisdiction other in multiple jurisdictions with headquarters in several states. G4S, as an example, a member of SCEG has operations in over 90 countries. Critically important many of the staff within these companies are contractors and these may be expatriate, local, third country nationals, or more commonly a combination of all of these. This is an important consideration for clients who of course through their procurement processes can dictate the qualities they expect from the security operators.

Clients

The principal client groups for these services are of course governments. International Organisations, NGOs, the extractive sector and the shipping industry and I will focus a little later on how governments procure these services.

I am sometimes asked if I understand why people might find the notion of private security morally abhorrent. As you might imagine I push back quite hard. The industry I represent is

well regulated, has embraced international standards and has placed human rights at the core of its business models. Without private security, diplomats, politicians and statesman would not be able to conduct their business in complex parts of the world. The extractive industries often operating in hostile environments would not be able to deliver the vital commodities that drive the world's economy without the support of private security companies. Unsung and unnoticed it is the private security sector, by providing armed guards on commercial shipping that allow those ships to transit through the High-Risk area of the Indian Ocean mitigating the risk of piracy.

Standards and Regulation.

Let me talk for a moment about standards and regulation for the private security sector. The sector has worked effectively with the UK Government, international bodies and stakeholders over the past decade to produce a robust regulatory framework for private security that meets the requirements of government and clients and addresses head on concerns about Human Rights. The regulatory framework for the private security sector includes both third-party audit and certification. In addition to these industry-specific standards, UK PSCs are fully compliant with the law and take very seriously legal requirements such as the UK Bribery Act, the UK Counter Terrorism and Security Act and the Modern Slavery Act.

Formation of SCEG

SCEG Members have played a key role in the development of this regulatory framework. In 2011 the UK Government appointed the SCEG as its partner for the development and adoption of standards for the UK private security industry. This created a unique construct whereby an industry body was trusted by the UK Government to be both a responsible partner in leading the adoption of standards of the sector, and a contributor to the development of policy.

Over the past 6 years SCEG has continually proved its utility to government providing a non-commercial and authoritative source of advice to government officials and Ministers - in other words a trusted partner. Much of this work has been undertaken with the FCO reflecting its interest in raising standards for the industry and security concerns about diplomats but our engagement with government goes far wider. For example, we deal with the Department of Transport over counter piracy policy, the Home Office the UK's Interior Ministry over firearms training and vetting and the Department of International Trade over licensing issues so that the export, control and disposal of weapons being used by private security companies is subject to exacting standards and scrutiny.

SCEG a collegiate player

SCEG works remarkably well and I say that because it continues to surprise me the extent to which companies put aside their commercial competitiveness to act in the common good to enhance the regulatory framework. SCEG is also a very useful one stop shop for companies because the associate members which include, insurance brokers, lawyers, and certification bodies add significant value when shaping the debate.

So, if you are considering letting a contact with a private Security Company check to see if they have accredited certification for appropriate international standards and check to see if they are members of SCEG. Membership of SCEG means far more than an annual subscription fee. It is a Kite mark of excellence indicating that the company is compliant, has embraced international standards and operates transparently in the full glare of its peers.

Government Procurement

Let me now turn to government procurement. The UK government has for many years procured the services of private security companies to provide security to its diplomatic missions operating in challenging environments. The FCO operate a commercial security platform and potential providers are subjected to a standard Pre-Qualification Questionnaire and if successful this is followed by the issue of an Invitation to Tender. Tenders are assessed in an independent and rigorous manner and larger contracts are subjected to further scrutiny via the Office of Government Commerce review processes. It is rigorous process designed to provide assurance to government and the tax payer.

In addition, the UK government has established policy and processes to enable Private Maritime Security Companies to deploy armed guards on UK registered ships transiting the Indian Ocean,

At the core of this procurement process is an understanding of the standards and regulation that underpins the security offer from responsible private security companies. Of course, it is not just government that takes standards seriously. Imagine, if you will, that you are sitting on the board of Rio Tinto or BP and considering procuring the services of a private security company I guarantee as part of your due diligence you would examine standards and regulations are at the core of the providers business model.

Opportunities for MOD

Over the last 2 years SCEG has begun exploratory talks with the UK's Ministry of Defence to see how private security companies might further assist with defence engagement tasks. The global reach and capabilities of PSCs has surprised some of our colleagues in MOD Main Building. Serving Officers were familiar with the traditional roles of man guarding of infrastructure and close protection for people but less familiar with the wider range of services being offered by companies including risk mitigation risk consultancy, intelligence assessments, EOD clearance, capacity building, training and equipping missions.

In the context of declining defence budgets, the private sector has, I would suggest, a role to play by providing skills and capacity that complements the military capabilities, but that does not replicate nor replace them. Over the years governments have increasingly outsourced to the private sector activities that do not need to be undertaken by the military. There is scope to do more and allow the military to focus on operational activities that are the prerogative of states, not PSCs. SCEG companies are already involved in some capacity building and a wide range of risk consultancy activity.

In this regard the US government has already demonstrated its willingness to contract with Private Security Companies and I would like to offer you a few examples.

In 2016 in Afghanistan there was a requirement to provide armed security for a contractor workforce at Mazar-e-Sharif airbase. A PSC was contracted to deliver access control, interior patrols, and over-watch of host country nationals performing work on the site, and mobile security for the protected movement of US civilians.

In Iraq, the US contingent contracted for mobile, static and canine security teams in order to release trained military manpower from mundane duties to their core task of mentoring and capacity building. The canine capability contained both explosive and drug dogs, who were kennelled, refresher trained and looked after by the PSC's own canine trainers and vets. There were 183 PSC members on this task and all their kit and equipment was provided by the PSC.

In the Republic of Korea, a PSC was contracted to deliver all aspects of access control and perimeter security for US Forces based in locations on the Korean Peninsula. The tasks included pedestrian access, vehicle screening, camp interior patrols and responsibility for the camp's perimeter integrity.

In Somalia and Mozambique, a PSC was tasked to deliver mentoring and capacity building for teams from the Mozambique Marines and static guards in Somalia who controlled access to the Mogadishu International Airport. These tasks had a sustained capacity building effect.

My intention with these examples is to give you a feel for what might be in the art of the possible when considering task that PSCs might undertake to relieve the pressure on the hard-pressed military.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the global private security industry provides critical support for diplomatic, economic and humanitarian activity in some of the most troubled parts of the world, and I believe there is scope for governments to further promote the services of responsible private security companies. The bespoke international standards with accredited certification have in my view been a game changer. I believe these standards and multi-stakeholder initiatives have produced a firm foundation from which governments can develop complementary national regulatory frameworks.

When contracting for services from a private security company I would encourage you to look for the SCEG logo and if you require impartial non-commercial advice on the capabilities of the Private Sector we would be well placed and delighted to give that advice

That concludes my scene setter and I am very much looking forward to your observations and comments during the panel discussions. Let me now turn to the first of our 5 speakers.

Glynne Evans.