

**THE SIA
THE NEXT STAGE**

October 2010



DAVID RUBENS
ASSOCIATES

David Rubens Associates

David Rubens Associates is a specialist corporate security consultancy offering strategic security services to individuals and organisations across the world.

DRA has worked with government agencies, NGO's, international conglomerates and major global events, and brings a mixture of strategic vision, operational experience and academic research to all of its projects, however large or small.

David Rubens, DRA's founding director, holds an MSc in Security and Risk Management from Scarman Centre, Leicester University, is a Visiting Lecturer on their Global Security and Policing MSc programme, and is currently a Visiting Fellow at the Security and Resilience Department, Cranfield University at the UK Defence Academy, specialising in Terrorism & Public Policy and Strategic Management & Leadership.

David is widely experienced at developing, delivering and managing large-scale strategic security development programmes, and has worked with government agencies and academic institutions in Asia, Africa, Middle East, Caribbean and Eastern Europe.

For further reports, or to discuss the contents, please contact
David Rubens
david@davidrubens-associates.com

David Rubens Associates
The Arches,
Maygrove Road
London NW6 2EE
post@davidrubens-associates.com

The SIA – The Next Stage

The announcement that the Security Industry Authority (SIA) would be one of the quangos to be axed by the government under its cost-cutting programme has been the topic of conversation on pretty well everyone's lips since the announcement was made as part of the 'Bonfire of the Quangos'. To say that the news was unexpected would be an understatement - I was at a Security Institute meeting exactly a week before the announcement was made, and we were assured that there was nothing to worry about - the SIA was self-funding, and provided a regulatory framework, so there was no way that it could be on the list of scrapped organisations. And yet, one week later the announcement had been made, and everyone involved in the security sector was suddenly emerging blinking into the new world, one in which the SIA would no longer be the monolithic organisation that we have gradually come to accept (if not yet love).

Before anyone opens the champagne bottles too early, this does not mean that we will return to an unregulated security sector. Bill Butler, SIA Chief Executive, made it clear that the current regulatory system would remain in place for the foreseeable future, and that there would be little if any change before the 2012 Olympics, after which there would be a managed transition before the Commonwealth Games in Glasgow in 2014.

It is ironic that the announcement comes just as the SIA was beginning to look like it might (finally!) have found its feet, and developed a working methodology that would allow it to play a full and supportive part in the UK (and in some cases, wider) security sector. There is no question that the SIA in its formative years was characterised by an over-whelming ambition that was rarely if ever matched by either the organisational capability or the strategic leadership to deliver its vision. Instead, it quickly became an authoritative, prescriptive, non-listening regulatory body that often seemed to have little understanding of the sector that it was regulating, and even less interest in engaging with industry stakeholders who were subject to its arbitrary decisions.

With over 400,000 door supervisors qualifications held and almost 200,000 licenses being issued, ten thousand qualifications and over six thousand licenses in the CP sector, 50,000 and 30,000 CCTV qualifications and licenses, 7,000 and 2,000 vehicle immobiliser qualifications and licences and 50,000 and 30,000 CCTV qualifications and licenses, the size of the SIA is undoubtedly impressive, even though anyone who has been through the

SIA licensing system will have horror stories of rogue training providers, scammed exams, non-English speaking fellow students, lack of quality or professionalism, and finally, the long and often interminable wait to receive the license once personal papers had disappeared into the black hole of the SIA registration process. How many of those 6,647 people holding a CP license are actually working is another matter, but as the SIA would undoubtedly say, that is a different issue.

However, despite all of the above problems (many of which were entirely predictable and self-inflicted, given the scale and complexity of the licensing programme, and the clear inability of SIA leadership to manage such a process effectively or competently), the truth is that in the last eighteen months many of those problems have been ironed out, and the SIA had become an organisation that, more or less, was fulfilling its function in that those who wished to enter the security sector had a clearly defined and signposted method of doing so. (And then they brought in the farce of the Physical Intervention qualification, which just goes to show that perhaps lessons weren't learned after all - but that is a subject for another article....).

The clear fear for those observers who can remember back to the bad-old days of pre-SIA security, is that the lack of a regulatory body will lead to a return of the 'thug gangs' running security teams for their own benefit, with brutality on the door, intimidation in the clubs and the possibility that venues will once again become natural locations for crime and drug dealing.

However, the message coming from all quarters so far is that the demise of the SIA will not mean an end to regulation of the security sector, and might well offer the opportunity for a more streamlined, user-friendly regulatory system to be introduced. One move that has already been taken is the formation of a new Security Alliance, composed of leading security-sector organisations such as the Security Institute, BSIA, IPSA, ASIS and Worshipful Company of Security Professionals.

Mike Bluestone, Chairman of the Security Institute, and a leading member of the Security Alliance, made the point very clearly. 'It is absolutely vital that everyone involved in the security industry understands that this does not mean an end to regulation. Everyone working in the industry will continue to need to complete training and to be licensed, and it will continue to be an offence either to work as an unlicensed operator or to employ someone who is unlicensed. However, what this will do is allow us to hold an industry review (at the request of the government) into how we can create a more effective and 'light-touch' regulatory system. This might well involve the licensing of companies rather

than individuals, meaning that companies will be responsible for ensuring compliance and maintaining professional standards rather than the burden falling on the individual'.

Mike O'Neill, MD of Greymans and a leading member in a number of the sector's organisations made the same point. 'To be honest, if they had abolished the SIA eighteen months ago, I think that we would have all cheered. It is a pity that they are only doing it when the organisation has actually turned the corner and is beginning to get the industry's support. But I am hopeful that this will be an opportunity to put together something that will continue to create opportunities for professional development within the security industry, and will certainly not lead to a return to the bad old days that many of us remember'.

Given the lack of clarity associated with many of the governments cutback announcements it is no surprise that even the leading lights in the UK security industry are unclear as to exactly what effect these changes will have, but in the run up to the Olympic Games (only twenty months away!), and in the face of what will undoubtedly be worsening economic conditions, one more level of disorder and confusion is not the most confidence-boosting of measures that the government could have introduced, and is certainly not going to make things easier for those security operators who have managed to stay in business through the challenging business environment of the last two years.

Sources:

SIA www.sia.homeoffice.gov.uk

Security Institute www.security-institute.org



DAVID RUBENS
ASSOCIATES

David Rubens Associates

The Arches,
Maygrove Road
London NW6 2EE

post@davidrubens-associates.com

www.davidrubens-associates.com