



## **"Quis Custodiet Ipsos Custodes"?**

*"Who will guard the guards"? Juvenal 160 A.D.*

By J.R. Roberts 

There are more than 3 times as many private security guards (an estimated 1.25 million) as police officers in the United States.<sup>1</sup> Projected earnings for the industry are expected to exceed 7 Billion dollars in the next year.

The presence of private, uniformed security guards has become a ubiquitous feature of the American landscape, seen at shopping malls, hospitals, parking lots, office complexes, college campuses and more.

Currently there are no established Federal guidelines governing Private Security. Each individual state determines licensing requirements, background checks, and training for security companies and their guards. These standards vary widely and wildly.

*The average "turnover" rate of employees for a private security company is 300% per annum.*

With high turnover rates and intense competition, many guard operations seek to maximize profit margins by doing the bare minimum required by states when it comes to pre-employment screening, background checks, and training. Some companies even choose to avoid these requirements altogether, gambling that an overburdened and under funded state regulatory agency may never catch the offender.

Even when companies are caught in violations, the fines levied are often less than the cost of compliance.

The Department of State recently awarded the contract to provide private uniformed security to their offices in 10 states, to a well-known national firm that had been fined over a million dollars in one year for repeated offenses.

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<sup>1</sup> The Hallcrest Report

Private security firms are not permitted to access N.C.I.C. (the National Criminal Information Center). The result is that firms usually conduct an "in-state" criminal background check on a prospective employee. These can take days or weeks to complete, and of course, fail to reveal if the candidate has a history in another state.

Only a small percentage of guard companies go to the expense of administering pre-employment screening tests to identify suitability for the job, often employing people who may have behavioral issues, which place clients at risk.

Training is another area that historically suffers.

The average training requirement for an unarmed security guard is 8 hours or less. Many states require no training for unarmed security at all. Compare this figure with the average P.O.S.T. (Police Officer Training and Standards) certification of 500 hours.

The overwhelming majority of private security firms do little "pre-assignment" training (usually in the form of a generic video), instead opting to do "on the job" training. This generally consists of having a supervisor (or in many instances, another guard) "walk" the new recruit through the facility. The result is that many major properties across the United States are protected by people who have little familiarity with the property, post orders and procedures specific to the property, or even a nodding acquaintance with emergency procedures for the facility. The potential for loss and injury under the current system is obvious, and the criminal and civil repercussions are already manifesting themselves across the United States.

Consider the following:

- > Returning to her automobile in broad daylight (parked less than 30 yards from the entrance to a major Super regional Mall) a schoolteacher is robbed and beaten so badly she is in a coma for 6 weeks. At the time of the assault the Mall had four security vehicles that were supposed to be patrolling the property. All four vehicles were parked and the security guards were in a "meeting" at the food court.
- > Two armed security guards at an urban city library get into an argument and engage in a running gun battle, exchanging over 14 shots. Fortunately, they were such bad marksmen that neither they nor any innocent bystanders were injured.
- > A security guard working the night shift at an industrial plant smokes crack cocaine and starts a fire, which burns the plant to the ground.

- > The F.B.I completes a major sting operation involving a notorious Nigerian theft ring. Company charge cards were sold over the Internet. The culprit was the night shift supervisor at the building, who had worked for the private security company "protecting" the building for two years and who had had at least two promotions. "Mr. Bankola" was in the country illegally and with false identification.
- > Headlines for The Atlanta Business Chronicle proclaim "Cops nab burglar - a mall guard"
- > A guard at an apartment complex witnesses a 5-year-old child wandering the complex in his underwear and by himself at 4 am. The guard says and does nothing. Questioned later by the police when the child has drowned in a nearby lagoon, a translator is required as it is discovered that the guard speaks no English.
- > An armed guard at a mall is informed of an elderly patron who is stumbling and incoherent. The guard confronts the man who is wearing a visible ID bracelet identifying him as a diabetic. The guard assumes the man is drunk and orders him off the property. The man subsequently collapses in the parking lot and an extensive lapse in time occurs before he is discovered and an ambulance is called. EMT's at the scene criticize (and later give depositions) regarding the negligence of the security guards. A review of records shows the company was not even licensed to operate in the State in question.

The cases previously outlined are only a very small sampling representing errors of omission and commission.

Crime cost America in excess of 425 billion dollars a year.<sup>2</sup>

In the post 9-11 world, properly screened, trained, deployed, and supervised private security guards can make a positive difference and impact on the safety, security, and well being of millions of America.

Under the current system, however, citizens are well advised to wonder whether the sight of a security guard should trigger relief or concern.

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<sup>2</sup> Report to the Nation on Crime, Bureau of Justice Statistics, Department of Justice.

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## About the author

**With 25 years of experience, J.R. Roberts offers specialized security consultation and services in three specific arenas:**



**Expert Testimony:** plaintiff and defendant in a wide variety of civil suits have retained Mr. Roberts to provide consultation, analysis, and testimony across the United States (for a partial list of representative cases and attorney endorsements, [click here](#)).

In matters concerning premise liability, crime foreseeability, private security guard training, and industry standards of care, J. R. Roberts can make a significant difference in your case. To schedule an initial free confidential discussion of the fact pattern of your case, or to obtain additional information, including rates and a current Curriculum Vitae, call our LAN Line at: (912) 927-4669.



**Seminars and Training:** As the former Director of Risk Management for Valor Security Services, Inc. J. R. wrote, developed, and implemented the training program for that company. He has lectured Nationwide for trade associations, property management firms, and fortune 1,000 corporations.

To discover how J. R. Roberts Security Strategies, can assist you in providing the very latest training For your employees on such critical topics as employee theft/shoplifting prevention, Liability, or Comprehensive Security Guard Training visit our seminars and training page, or contact our Savannah, Ga. office.

## Contact information

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