

PRIVATE SECURITY : BULLIES OR KEEN OBSERVERS? THE CASE OF CLOSE PROTECTION

In our series of articles dedicated to the accurate presentation of security, we are once again contradicting clichés that estimate that private security officers have little education, or even are stupid and – of we push this thinking forward – are ready to shoot at everything that moves.

Obviously, there are some people working in this industry that explain why such clichés exist, but there are also competent, trained and professional elements.

In the security field in general, the ideal situation is to avoid any potentially danger. This even more true in close protection. A single bullet is enough to hurt or kill, a bomb under a car will certainly be efficient enough to reach the target with no exposure.

An Egyptian general prosecutor, Hisham Barakat, known for having brought to justice and condemned to life sentences or even to death hundreds of Muslim radicals, was killed in 2015 in the deliberate explosion of his car. There are many other similar examples of assassinations.

It is vital to avoid any situation where physical strength is necessary, where danger is too important. This is when the best close protection officers use a whole panel of subtle skills. We are here prior to the danger. One word: observe.

The environment

It is important to constantly monitor the perimeter to detect any abnormality: a possible obstacle, a risk area, a suspicious movement.

Even the place of residency can become hostile. The Mexican Chief of Police, Edgar Millán Gómez – a prominent figure of the fight against drug cartels and protected by several bodyguards – was ambushed in his own home and shot dead.

An efficient monitoring helps take the safest path or to identify any suspicious element that could be dangerous.

The crowd

A good close protection officer will pay attention to the people, especially outside. Here, to be a keen observer and psychologist would help to detect beforehand any individual that could represent a threat, or to calm a potentially dangerous situation.

If intervening becomes necessary, it is only then that physical and technical aptitudes can be handy. In France, a demonstration or a social conflict can become extremely delicate to deal with.

Transportation

The means of transportation are ideal target to indirectly attack. The confined space leaves little to no ways of escape or protection. The attackers can safely stay hidden.

To study in advance the route can help minimize risk areas that could expose to danger. The vehicle has to be searched before each time it is used. It has to be guarded to avoid any moment it would be left unattended.

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These three main competences cluster already represented good basics for any close protection officer. We can now see that most of the work is done upstream. It is vital to be a keen observer and to master a series of protocols, such as the efficient search of a vehicle. Of course, even the best preparations won't always be enough.

On July 14th 2002, for the Bastille Day Parade (an event planned in advance, monitored by hundreds of soldiers and police officers in the middle of Paris), a right-wing extremist man managed to shoot at the President of the Republic of that time, Jacques Chirac. Fortunately, the man missed him and the crowd then the police managed to apprehend him.

To know how to use a weapon can be important for a security officer, depending on the degree of danger of the job. But to know how to prevent, foresee and react is far more valuable. A professional security agent, no matter his or her expertise, will know how to take the necessary measures to minimize as much as possible the risks and to calm a potentially dangerous situation. We are far from the clichés of a bully.

A security officer will be fine observer and psychologist, meticulous and have a great sense of initiative. Even if the market doesn't always reflect this profile, the recent regulations and trainings that are being created show that this sector is on the right path.

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