



PRIVATE SECURITY IN TRANSPORT: CHALLENGES AND PROSPECTS

Stanimira Chubatarova-Nikolova

chubatarova@yahoo.de

*Todor Kableshkov University of Transport,
Sofia, Geo Milev Str. 158,
BULGARIA*

Abstract: *The report examines the importance of private security in the transport sector as a key factor in ensuring the security of passengers, cargo and infrastructure. The main challenges facing the sector are identified: regulatory shortcomings, staff shortages and the need for specialized training. Attention is drawn to the increased risks arising from urbanization, terrorist threats and hybrid attacks against transport facilities.*

Every day, thousands of passengers and tons of cargo pass through the transport system - roads, railways, airports, ports. In this dynamic and sometimes risky context, the need for reliable security is more than obvious. Private security, as an essential part of transport security, is of strategic importance for the functioning of the economy and society. While state structures provide the basic framework of public safety, it is private security that is a key complementary element, especially in the private sector. The role of security companies in preventing crime, maintaining public order and supporting state authorities in cases of incidents and crises is analyzed. The challenges and prospects for private security in transport are examined with a focus on the realities in Bulgaria, but also with a view to good practices in Europe.

In conclusion, the prospects for the development of private security in transport are outlined, including the need for a comprehensive strategy for integrated security in the transport system.

Key words: *private security, services, security*

Transport is a strategic sector for every country. It ensures the movement of people and goods, maintains economic connectivity, supports trade and plays an important role in defense and national security. In addition, the transport infrastructure – roads, railways, airports, ports, metro stations – is particularly vulnerable to incidents, crimes and even terrorist attacks. Every day, thousands of passengers and tons of cargo pass through the transport system - roads, railways, airports, ports. In this dynamic and sometimes risky context, the need for reliable security is more than obvious. A particularly vulnerable sector in this regard is transport - the backbone of any economy and public connectivity. Security in transport is of strategic importance for the functioning of the economy and society. In the face of growing threats, including terrorist acts, vandalism, theft and sabotage, the role of private security in this sector is becoming increasingly important. Whether it is public urban transport, intercity transport, logistics services or international freight transport, the need for effective security is undeniable. In this context, private security is emerging as a key element in ensuring security.

Private security includes a complex of services aimed at protecting property, people and public order. While state bodies, such as the police and gendarmerie, perform their regulated functions of maintaining public order and combating crime, it is private security companies that take on a significant part of the responsibility for protecting private interests and specific objects and activities [1] – including those related to the transport system.

Private security activities in Bulgaria are strictly regulated in order to guarantee security, respect the fundamental rights of citizens and prevent abuse. The main regulatory act that regulates this activity is the Private Security Activities Act [2], which determines the conditions for performing

security activities, the requirements for companies and personnel, the powers of security guards, the types of services and control by the Ministry of Interior. The procedures are regulated in Regulations of the Minister of Interior. [3]

According to the legal definition given by the legislator in Article 2 of the Private Security Act, “private security is a commercial activity aimed at protecting the life and health of individuals, protecting the property of individuals and legal entities, ensuring the maximum level of security in the transportation of valuable shipments and cargo, ensuring the unhindered conduct of various types of events.” The Ministry of Internal Affairs is the responsible state body for licensing, control and sanctioning non-compliance with the requirements. [4]

In the context of transport, the most commonly used forms are site security, cargo and passenger security, as well as mobile security. The law provides for strict requirements for the selection and training of security personnel, including mandatory completion of courses and obtaining a certificate of competence.

Some of the main threats related to transport security include:

- Vandalism, theft and assault on vehicles;
- Robberies and violence in public transport;
- Theft of fuel, parts and cargo;
- Smuggling and illegal trafficking through transport channels;
- Terrorist threats (e.g. placing explosive devices in transport vehicles or stations).

Against this background, private security is not only a means of protecting specific assets, but also an important partner of the state for preventing and responding to incidents. Thanks to the possibility of rapid hiring and specialization, security companies provide flexible solutions tailored to the needs of the specific transport operator or logistics center.

For example, stationary security is aimed at protecting real estate objects related to the transport system - railway stations, bus stations, metro stations, warehouses, logistics hubs, etc. A combination of physical presence of guards, access control, video surveillance and alarm systems is usually used.

Stationary security can include:

- Checking documents and luggage;
- Controlling entry and exit points;
- Patrolling the perimeter of the facility;
- Responding to suspicious situations.

Mobile security refers to the protection of vehicles in motion – for example, buses, trains, trucks carrying high-value cargo or passing through risky routes. In this case, security guards can travel in the vehicle or accompany it in a separate car.

One of the most sensitive and strictly regulated activities in the sector is the protection of valuable shipments and cargo. This includes:

- Transport of money;
- Transport of valuable shipments;
- Works of art, etc.

Escorting such cargo requires specially trained personnel, often armed, as well as specialized vehicles.

In urban transport, private security should be involved in:

- Presence of security guards in vehicles;
- Intervention in conflicts between passengers;
- Checking for irregular passengers (in cooperation with controllers);
- Prevention of petty crimes (theft, vandalism).

In the logistics and freight sector, the need for private security is particularly acute. Common problems are theft from trucks, fraud in deliveries and assaults on drivers, with security companies providing:

- GPS tracking services and intervention in case of deviation from the route;
- Escorting freight trucks with security teams;
- Security of logistics bases and warehouses.

Some of the largest logistics operators in the country, such as Speedy, Econt, DHL and others, use private security services on a contractual basis.

The training of employees and the challenges they face include requirements such as quick reaction skills, working with people in stressful situations, and strict adherence to regulatory requirements.

In some cases, coordination between private security guards and Ministry of Interior employees is weak, leading to ineffective actions in the event of incidents. There are insufficient mechanisms for information exchange, common training, and joint actions.

There are also legal restrictions, as private security guards do not have the powers of police officers. They cannot detain a person except in specific circumstances, which sometimes limits their effectiveness. In addition, regulations regarding armed security and the use of technical means remain controversial.

With the advent of digitalization and modern information technologies, private security in transport is also undergoing a transformation. Technological means of prevention and response are increasingly being used, which increase efficiency and reduce the need for physical presence. Access control systems are used in warehouses, logistics hubs, and stations. The use of access cards, biometric data and electronic barriers is standard practice in large operators. Some private security companies offer mobile applications through which drivers can report an attack or deviation from the route. These mobile applications and alarm buttons create the possibility of a quick response by patrol teams. Examples of good practices could be the use of drones and sensors for perimeter security of transport hubs, the introduction of biometric access control, certification of security companies according to international standards, public-private partnerships for the security of strategic transport facilities.

Modern transport systems have high-resolution video cameras installed in vehicles and at key points in the infrastructure. Some of them are integrated with software for facial recognition, license plate recognition and anomaly detection. An example of this is the Sofia metro, which uses real-time video surveillance with the ability to automatically alert when a person falls on the tracks or suspiciously left luggage is detected.

Private security in transport is critically important for the security of people, goods and infrastructure. It does not replace the state, but complements it – with speed, flexibility and specific solutions. In Bulgaria, the sector needs professionalization, better regulation and modernization through technology. Only in this way will it be able to meet the growing demands of modern society and transport. The modern transport system is inextricably linked to security – both physical and logistical. Private security companies are increasingly engaged in tasks that were traditionally assigned to state institutions. This requires a systematic approach to the regulation, training and control of private security activities in transport.

The challenges facing security activities in transport are related to:

- Integrated security systems – linking video surveillance, sensors, alarm systems and analysis;
- Training of security personnel;
- Use of early warning technologies for incidents;
- Development of public-private partnerships to enhance security at national level;
- Coordination with state institutions;
- Legal ambiguities regarding the powers of security guards.

Creating a safe transport environment is essential for European citizens and in this sense is also in the focus of the European Commission. The Commission strives to ensure “the highest safety standards worldwide. The safety agencies for the various modes of transport - EASA, ERA and EMSA, which are responsible for the aviation, rail and maritime transport sectors respectively, contribute to progress in the field of safety.” [5]

Conclusion: Private security in transport is an important and increasingly necessary tool for ensuring security in conditions of dynamically changing social and technological challenges. While in the past security was considered a peripheral function, today it is an integral part of any sustainable transport system – be it public, logistics or private. Its effective implementation depends on the regulatory framework, professional training of personnel and the application of modern technologies. Closer coordination between the private and public sectors is needed, as well as regular control and risk assessment.

The analysis of Bulgarian practice shows that there is significant progress in some areas, especially in urban transport and the security of logistics centers. At the same time, a number of challenges

remain related to the quality of personnel, synchronization with state authorities, technological lag and regulatory framework.

The good news is that there are successful models in other countries that can be adapted to Bulgarian realities. Through systematic training, use of new technologies and development of partnerships between the private and public sectors, private security in transport can become an even more effective pillar of national security.

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