

**Title: The Role and Impact of Private Security Companies in the Caribbean**

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**Abstract:**

The worldwide and growing trend in providing security services through private companies is clearly evident in the Caribbean where private security personnel may now outnumber their counterparts in law enforcement. This joint project of Project Ploughshares in Canada and the Institute of International Relations of The University of the West Indies (UWI) in Trinidad and Tobago contributes to the limited published information on Caribbean private security companies (PSCs) by providing case studies of the private security industry in St. Lucia, Trinidad and Tobago and Jamaica. The case study research describing the development, operation and regulation of the industry in each state studied was first presented at a roundtable held at UWI, St. Augustine Campus in June 2013 attended by public officials involved in PSC regulation and PSC industry representatives. The roundtable discussions informed publication of a project report that includes the case studies and policy recommendations intended to raise PSC industry standards of performance, encourage appropriate policy and regulatory development, and improve the security situation for citizens. A summary policy brief was published for wider circulation.

Keywords: Caribbean, Private Security, Firearms, National Regulation, Case Study

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**The Research Problem:**

Globally the private security industry is big business with its highest growth occurring in the developing world. The limited research suggests mixed social and economic benefits from the industry and, despite its growing influence, the extent of its national regulation varies widely. In the Caribbean, which suffers a comparatively high violent death rate (the sub-regional rate is more than twice the global average), PSC personnel are known to outnumber police officers in several states, and are suspected to do so in the remainder. Empirical research on Caribbean PSCs has been selective and narrow and to date there has been no published sub-regional or multiple country study of PSCs in the Caribbean.

**Objectives:**

The objectives of the project were to:

1. Understand the forces that have shaped the PSC industry's development and its relationship to the broader security frameworks in the case study countries and in the Caribbean Community (CARICOM). Each case study discusses industry development and collaboration between public and private security apparatuses in the studied state. At the same time, the research does not reveal a demonstrable relationship between the size or growth of the industry and national crime rates. As the concluding chapter of the report notes "PSCs are an important part of the security landscape. However, this research uncovered no evidence of a direct impact by PSCs on violent crime rates." Further research of a different nature would be needed to determine a relationship if it exists.
2. Map out PSC operations and review the effectiveness of existing legislative and regulatory frameworks in case study countries. The project researchers compiled primary data that identifies the numbers of PSCs operating and the services they provide in each state. The analysis of national legislation and regulations was the basis for recommendations intended to strengthen industry oversight and control.
3. Inform and influence policy development by government and by the PSC industry. The case study research and the circulation of draft case study reports engaged influential government and industry officials in a policy discussion on industry performance and regulation. This discussion was enhanced during the policy roundtable at the University of the West Indies when the exchange among industry, government and other experts served to sharpen the policy recommendations of the final report. The roundtable also brought news that each of the three countries under study had imminent plans to present legislation for parliamentary debate or to modify or make additions to existing PSC regulatory regimes. There was evidence that the project research and roundtable were spurs to action in the case study countries.
4. Increase the capacity of Caribbean researchers to conduct research on security and small arms issues. The project provided the opportunity for three Caribbean-based researchers to study in depth the PSC industry in the sub-region, and to explore questions related to the use and regulation of firearms. With two of the researchers based at the Institute of International Relations at the University of the West Indies, the IIR is well-placed to consider follow-up studies of the industry.
5. Promote learning between Canadian and Caribbean organizations. The project has strengthened research and policy collaboration between Project Ploughshares in Canada and the IIR in Trinidad and Tobago. It has encouraged joint exploration of future projects on PSC, small arms and related policy issues of common sub-regional interest and importance.

**Methodology:**

The case study method was the primary research method used in the study, supplemented with surveys of PSCs and relevant government regulatory agencies. Key elements of the methodology were:

1. A contextual analysis of academic and policy literature on private security presented as Appendix 1 of the report.
2. The study of secondary material from newspaper articles, government documents, national legislation and regulations. This material was used to provide detail on the growth, operation and governance of the industry in the Caribbean and is typically footnoted in the published case studies. It also served to corroborate data and statements from questionnaires and interviews.
3. Elite interviews with key actors in the industry and government oversight agencies and with other experts. Most interviews took place as one-on-one meetings with questions adapted from the project survey questionnaire.
4. Survey questionnaires distributed to senior officials of PSCs that were reflective of the types of companies in the country under study. Examples of survey and interview questionnaires are presented as Appendix 2 of the report. The extent and range of questionnaire responses revealed a greater willingness to respond by larger, contract PSCs. Smaller PSCs and proprietary PSCs were underrepresented in the data compiled from survey responses. With suitable scheduling and resources, this deficiency could be addressed in future PSC research by extending one-on-one interviews to a greater cross-section of PSCs.

**Project Activities:**

Preliminary project activities were funded by the Anti-Crime Capacity Building Programme (ACCBP) at Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development Canada during the period 2010-2011. These included an inception workshop in Trinidad that brought together the case study researchers and other experts to identify the objectives and scope of the PSC research in the sub-region. The ACCBP-funded activities also included research design and planning, and the field research and drafting of the St. Lucia case study.

The IDRC-funded project activities included:

1. Fieldwork in Jamaica (August 2012) and Trinidad and Tobago (April 2013) by the lead researchers and research assistants with subsequent follow-up;
2. Drafting of the Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago case studies (March to May 2013);
3. Circulation of the drafts of the three case studies among the research team and key stakeholders for their comments and subsequent draft amendments (Jan to May 2013);
4. Preparation of a draft final report including drafts of the literature review, introduction, conclusion, and regional policy recommendations (April to May 2013);
5. A policy roundtable held at the IIR, the University of the West Indies, St. Augustine campus, June 17-18, 2013 that included detailed discussion of the draft final report; and
6. Preparation of a policy brief based on the report results and recommendations for wider circulation among media, government officials and other interested parties within the region and beyond. The policy brief was signed by roundtable participants (June to July 2013).
7. Preparation and publication of the final project report (June to August 2013).

The structure and sequence of project activities contributed to project success. The inception workshop allowed case study researchers to develop a shared research framework and analysis reflected in the survey questionnaires. The field work connected researchers with key stakeholders in government and industry who were willing participants in the policy roundtable and in reviewing report drafts. These stakeholders provided an important “reality check” of the case study research. The policy roundtable also constituted a political moment that stimulated national and regional attention to PSC regulation in the Caribbean.

### **Project Outputs:**

These are:

1. The completion of three case studies (Jamaica, St. Lucia and Trinidad and Tobago) of the Private Security Company industry in the Caribbean. The studies include discussion and analysis of the development, operation and regulation of PSCs, as well as recommendations to improve industry standards and regulation in each state;
2. The publication of a final research report on PSCs in the Caribbean which includes the three case studies, introductory and concluding analysis, policy recommendations from a regional perspective, and a literature review;
3. The publication of a policy brief for circulation to media, government and industry officials, and other interested parties in the Caribbean and beyond. The brief summarizes the key results and recommendations of the final report;
4. A policy roundtable attended by 25 government and industry stakeholders, case study researchers, academics, and other experts;
5. As a result of roundtable participation, the development of an informal network of government, industry, academic and civil society experts on PSCs in the Caribbean that may be drawn upon to advance PSC research and policy analysis in the region; and
6. A successful model of NGO (Project Ploughshares) – Academic (IIR,UWI) cooperation in research and policy analysis that could be repeated in further regional study of PSCs and related topics.

### **Project Outcomes:**

These are:

1. A contribution to the PSC research literature of research and analysis of an understudied region. The case study research made a significant advance on prior research on PSCs in the Caribbean;
2. Policy recommendations to improve Caribbean PSC operation and regulation that have been informed by expert interviews and open expert discussion and debate. The recommendations are directed not only to government regulation but also to industry standards, including employment standards related to gender;
3. Strengthened Caribbean research capacity to undertake PSC and small arms research. The project established IIR researchers on the Caribbean PSC industry and mapped out an agenda for further research;
4. Increased cross-sectorial awareness and understanding of the benefits and challenges of PSCs in the Caribbean. The project directly involved experts from government, industry, academia and civil society in the case study research and policy discussion;

5. Advancement of the dialogue between industry and government stakeholders on better performance and regulation of Caribbean PSCs. The project roundtable established a network to continue dialogue on regional standards and regulations; and
6. Strengthened North-South research cooperation and mutual learning. Project Ploughshares and the Institute of International Relations will continue to explore joint projects in areas of mutual research interest.

The case study research and analysis benefitted from the active engagement of government and industry experts during the policy roundtable when there was occasion for a detailed review of each case study. The industry expertise was concentrated in officials from larger Caribbean companies that employ a significant majority of private security guards in the region. However, because smaller companies, and especially proprietary companies (companies providing security services for internal use), were not proportionately represented in the research and during the roundtable discussions, the report analysis and recommendations primarily address larger, contracting PSCs. Although the project design included surveys of small and proprietary companies, these companies proved reluctant to participate and provide research data.

In general, the structure and sequence of project activities contributed to the successful project outcomes.

#### **Overall Assessment and Recommendations:**

As noted above, some preliminary project activities, including an inception workshop and the fieldwork and initial drafting of the St. Lucia case study, were funded by the Anti-Crime Capacity Building Programme of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development Canada. This support provided a necessary base to the activities of the project. The participation in the policy roundtable of Mr. Geoff Burt, Vice-President of the Security Governance Group in Waterloo, Ontario, also was welcome. Mr. Burt recently completed a study of private security operations in Haiti (<http://www.cigionline.org/publications/2012/6/private-security-public-good-regulating-private-security-industry-haiti-0> ). His comments on the case study research and analysis were helpful and pertinent additions to the roundtable.

The private security industry has become a significant source of security and employment in the Caribbean and is likely to remain for some time an influential player in the development of the region. The project research has served to highlight the opportunities and challenges both the industry and government regulation authorities face to ensure that PSCs play a positive developmental role in the region. The project report recommendations are intended not only to improve government regulation to advance community security (and as a consequence development) but also to promote the standards that a responsible industry should adopt to contribute to human and economic development.

In retrospect the project could have devoted more attention to two topics that roundtable discussions revealed as underexplored. The first topic, as indicated above, was the limited case study research on small and proprietary PSCs. These appear to operate on the fringes of government regulation and although their employment levels may be far below those of the large companies, their numbers suggest the need for closer scrutiny of their operation and regulation.

The project report discusses the second topic that deserves deeper research. The case studies revealed a general correlation between rising crime levels and the growth of the PSC industry but the research did not explore any causal relationship. Moreover, the case study data could not link a recent decline in major crimes (in Jamaica for example) with the influence of PSCs. Given the global growth in the PSC industry, research on any linkages between crime levels and PSC numbers or activity would be of wide interest.

The universal view of the research team and the roundtable participants was that the project provided an important, welcome and unique opportunity to debate and advance policy on PSC regulation in the Caribbean. Research team members expressed personal satisfaction in undertaking project research and analysis in an emerging area of study. At the same time, the researchers noted that project resources did not match the time and effort put into their project work. This shortfall will need to be addressed in any similar program in the future.