Private Security: A Canadian Perspective

by Robert J. Gerden

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Reviewed by Glen Kitteringham

A key challenge in the private security industry is a lack of understanding of the latter's comprehensiveness and scope. As a result, many enter the field only to leave a short time later because of a perceived lack of career opportunities. In addition, many promising employees remain at junior-level positions because of self-imposed career restraint. Overall, industry personnel—especially those at the entry level—possess a limited grasp of educational and career opportunities existing in the field. Therefore, the industry suffers a stigma from those outside the field who see security as a dead-end job with little opportunity for career and professional advancement. Sadly, this negative assessment is frequently seconded by entry- and mid-level personnel in the security industry itself.

A dearth of scholarship on the career opportunities available in security no doubt contributes to the industry's image problem. This is especially true for Canadians. Indeed, there has been scant effort to document Canada's private security sector, with Smith and Prouse's work in 1989, *Canadian Private Security Manual*, providing one notable exception. This recent work by Gerden, however, offers a look at Canada's private security sector that is at once concise and comprehensive in its introduction to the Canadian security industry.

The book comprises six chapters. The first offers an operational definition of the field; the chapter is organized to reflect a history of security in Canada, while outlining types of security services, licensing issues and industry growth. This first chapter concludes with a list of definitions specifying the various categories of private security.

Chapter 2, 'Issues and Challenges', opens with a discussion of regulation from government and industry perspectives before moving onto specific issues of training, relations with public policing operatives, wage scales and private justice. Chapter 3, 'Legal Authority', provides the legal framework for private security in Canada by outlining common and civil law, the Canadian Constitution and the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. This chapter also examines the rights and responsibilities of private security operatives in areas of arrest and detention, regulatory offences, searches and an accused's civil rights; it closes with issues of tort and contract law. Chapter 4, 'Risk Management/Asset Protection', opens with the processes used in risk management, and then addresses the issues of criticality and probability of risk events. The chapter closes with a series of strategies for risk control.

Chapter 5 addresses the issues of security careers mentioned as problematic above. This chapter 'Opportunities', has considerable information on the various services security personnel provide. In providing this, the author details specific locations, across Canada, where educational opportunities are available. Here, Gerden does not limit his exposition to security, but includes law enforcement, corrections, fire protection, law, justice and criminology, and at English- as well as French-speaking institutions. Also outlined are job-search techniques and information

sources providing phone numbers, addresses and websites. Chapter 6, 'Further Research', is a continuation of the previous chapter , with additional information on academic research and literature in Canada. This serves as a resource for practitioners and researchers in the field by listing numerous police and security websites and links. In reviewing this chapter the reader will become well acquainted with the state of the Canadian security industry.

In closing, Gerden offers a well-written and informative work. I wholeheartedly recommend this book for security officers and for junior and senior management—as well as those comparative researchers trying to grasp the state of the security field in Canada.

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