

VIP SECURITY

Bringing You Closer to Close Protection

The term VIP Security, or Close Protection (Executive Protection in the US) can evoke many different images. But what does it really involve?

People engage this kind of service for many reasons. Businesses sending their employees to hostile environments will often use PPO's (Personal Protection Officers) to accompany these employees as a "duty-of-care". Celebrities and professional sports stars will use PPO's to protect them and their family's privacy. After all, no-one wants a "less than flattering" photo appearing in the media.

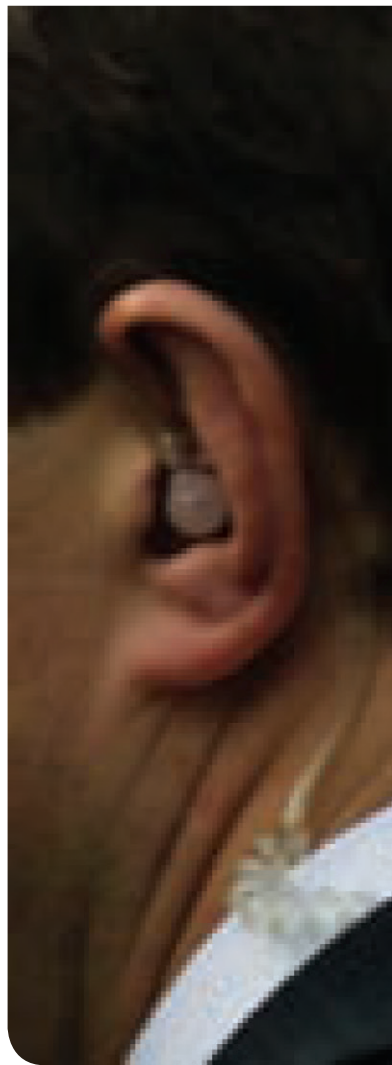
Businessmen and women involved in anything controversial or high profile, whether it's potential fracking sites, or the hostile takeover

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of a football club, may also hire personal security. As will wealthy parents sending their children overseas for education. These will all be seen as worthwhile reasons, but there are those who will hire personal security merely for their image. These people are often criticised, with outsiders claiming that it's done for the individuals' ego, and not for any need. Of course this can occasionally be the case, but it's sometimes vitally significant to maintain this "image". I've escorted business executives to countries where, if they turned up without security, they

wouldn't be taken seriously and no business would be done. In those instances, maintaining or creating the "image" is essential.

For businesses, there should also be the consideration of hostile intelligence gathering (Industrial Espionage) by





competitors. The true security professional will be aware of its potential and the damage this can do. So not only are we on the look-out for the threat, but will have professional contacts that specialise in de-bugging, or “sanitising” any area where sensitive discussions may take place.

Correct control (and disposal) of information is crucial.

Misconceptions

Unfortunately, when the term personal security or bodyguard is mentioned, people imagine some 7ft tall, man-mountain, squeezed into a tuxedo. That is a very outdated stereotype.

Today’s modern bodyguard will offer a non-intrusive service. Be an interactive facilitator, not an “in-your-face” minder. Being “out of the way, but within range”, remaining discreet and professional at all times.

The modern PPO should look and feel equally at ease



in the boardroom, or a war zone, attending a black tie event, or dressed in tee shirt and denims collecting a VIP's children from school, or escorting a client throughout an overseas vacation or business trip. All the while being "very capable", should they need to perform "physically".

My company has been providing this service to many VIP's and HNWI's for over 20 years and in more than 40 countries, and our Operatives understand the importance of client image, corporate identity, and cultural do's and don'ts of the region we're operating in.

What else can a PPO offer?

It's important that the PPO gains the trust of the client and those around him. This will lead to the Operative being better informed. The more informed - the more involved. The more involved - the more effective.

Operatives should involve themselves in the logistics, for example travel details.

Without stepping on the toes of the PA or others who have traditionally taken care of such things, they should work collectively get the Principal to his engagement on time (remember image - mentioned above).



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Moreover, taking this point to the extreme, one of the most vulnerable situations for anyone under potential threat is entering and exiting from their cars. So a VIP shouldn't be stood outside a building, exposed, waiting for his driver to arrive. It's important on many levels, and should be

coordinated.

Furthermore, an experienced security professional will have "security" driving skills, and can "brief" the driver who drives the family. Not how to do J-turns and high speed reversing, but basic security considerations - speed and distance - vitally important when you're entrusted with driving the clients kids to school.

In the same vein, driving standards in other countries are often very "different" to our own. On an overseas trip, the PPO will do all he can to forcefully ensure that best



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the services of security professionals to "protect" their assets – the young football stars. This role would not just be about preventing physical attack, but more the role of mentor to these young lads.

When a player goes off the rails it affects his form, thus, his market value. Everyone loses. Many top players have been involved in controversy of varying nature. These young men need protecting from the press, their own "friends" (often the source of the problem), and themselves. A PPO would be there, not to judge them, but as a confidante – someone to turn to – a mentor.

It saddens me to see people like Paul Gascoigne – one of my footballing heroes, suffer, during and after his footballing days, because no-one took real care of him.

Who's going to be next? Joey Barton, Wayne Rooney. Just two examples of supremely gifted players, whose sheer enthusiasm can make them vulnerable.

As stated above, I have personally written to clubs, agents and representatives. To date, not one of them has

responded positively. I'm sure many chairmen, or managers like the great Sir Alex would have listened, and maybe taken proactive measures, but it's almost impossible to gain access to those extremely busy people. I'm shocked that more agents don't see it as their duty. Sadly, it seems that most don't feel the need to advise on anything beyond the best financial deal.

I realise that Security is a very hard sell. No-one seems interested until something goes wrong. Then a knee jerk reaction often results in claspings desperately for the nearest provider, often resulting in sub-standard service.

It's a shame, because at the top end, it's a highly specialist role, with some highly professional operators who, in the right organisation, often become operational assets.

Russell Grey is considered a close protection specialist. He has personally provided service for a whole range of clients in more than 40 countries, and is currently active making preparations for clients attending this year's World Cup in Brazil.

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practices are adhered to.

Value Added

In the context of this magazine, it would be wrong to not put a football related aspect forward.

For many years I've been approaching clubs and agents, suggesting that they strongly consider engaging

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