

SASMA Portal 2010

“Professional” Bodyguard training - Global Protection Group

- ***GLOBAL PROTECTION GROUP***, a member of IAPPA international organization

What is IAPPA & few words about GLOBAL PROTECTION GROUP

Personal Protection is both a privilege and a curse of the high and mighty of this world. Well-built men in suits and Oakley sunglasses, following their principals around like a shadow is nothing unusual in the biggest Polish cities. The dynamic economic development has led to the formation of a social group which is threatened due to their financial status. This is where private guards make their entry. Every year new training facilities spring up like mushrooms, where the elite of protection is prepared for work.

“VIP protection in war zone”, “Israeli VIP protection course in Poland”, “VIP course aimed at both protection agents and inexperienced candidates “One-day VIP protection training” – such and similar slogans attract candidates for private “guardian angels”. What is very important in terms of “professionalism” of a given training is the amount of ammunition to shoot, since everybody knows that we recognize a true bodyguard by his shooting skills. Training facilities get into a bragging match about how many bullets you should shoot to become a “true professional”. A whole armory of various arms – from handguns, sub-machine guns to carbines and rifles is placed at participants' disposal.

What happens if you run short of ammunition while carrying out protective measures? A real professional will handle the situation without any problem. He has undergone, during the course, an intensive perpetrator elimination training which focuses on bare hands fighting skills or various tools to be found just around. The more savage and deadly techniques he knows, the better. VIP protection agents-to-be are trained in eye scratching, biting off ears, ripping out guts with a credit card, or even better with a commando knife or entrenching tool.

Popular courses prepare security workers not only within the scope of threat neutralization, but also for life-saving situations. The syllabus includes paramedic training, in accordance with the newest methods worked out during combat operations in Iraq and Afghanistan. Every such course is organized under supervision of specialists, who have gained their experience in the Army, Police Force and have a wide VIP protection experience.

Wait a moment, there are a few doubts, while analyzing those educational programs. First of all, it seems that every well trained agent performs his tasks in high-risk regions, while in-country jobs are left for untrained personnel. It's hard to explain this phenomena in other way – there are no courses aimed at country-level risk, prepared with country law regulations existing in Poland. Organized classes look like boy scout camps more than a course preparing for a very responsible job. Every man will enjoy a real adventure, where he shoots a little bit, swims in mud and learns the deadliest bare hand killing techniques. So, the paintball games will simulate the real hostile environment of combat area for us. There will be much to tell in a pub, and you can even be proud of an interesting certificate. But, why should such “camps” be called “educational classes” if they don't have anything in common with them?

Protective agents worldwide state that the priority is not to let a force solution happen. When it happens, this means that a protection group did something wrong. Nevertheless, almost 80% of a course program is spent on developing shooting skills or hand to hand combat. Are they VIP protection courses or just fighting tactics classes? We should think who such courses are aimed at. Is there any point in preparing people with no experience in organizing or carrying out protective measures in that area? Or, when students are only people with certain experience, what is the reason for training them in the fundamentals of weapon maintaining? This resembles a bit the condition of Polish higher schools, where mass produced “Master's degree holders” can't find themselves in the labour market.

It is very hard to find a training center, which prepares their students for non-force solutions, which teaches the fundamentals of psychology and negotiation. There is also a shortage of supplementary operations, like support, risk assessment, force calculating for task realization, motorcades preparations. Participants of popular courses will deal without any problem with a shot wound, but they will have no idea what to do in case of a car crash, heart attack or they just won't recognize an allergic reaction.

The most popular tactics taught come from law enforcement agencies' training programs from the 90s. These procedures have no practical use in modern protective operations. Today, close protection is one of business security fundamentals. It secures both from physical attack and public embarrassment. In the time of digital technology, a good photographer is as dangerous as a sniper, and a well-placed bug can cause lot more damage than explosive

charge. Nevertheless, a small number of protection teams use counter-invigilation equipment, not to mention learning how to maintain this kind of gear during common trainings. Commercial security doesn't have such a big budget as secret service and is organized in a different way. When a typical protective formation is a two-person team, there is no reason to train agents in multi-person formation tactics, so typical of governmental agencies.

Where in such a case can we gain experience or seek professional bodyguards? The question is not an easy one, since wrong practices described above are common worldwide. For sure, training supervision of LEO veterans does not guarantee a well-prepared training. One has to choose a training program which prepares for realistic tasks. It's worthwhile using the experience of foreign organizations of the protective agents' community. Those oldest and biggest ones such as **The International Association of Personal Protection Agents**, The International Association of Security Professionals, *The British Bodyguard Association* prepare their own classes or promote the best training centers. By joining those structures their members show us their value.

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