

Title: A Fear of Coercion and Accountability? Security Officers and the Non-use of Force

Abstract

Based on fieldwork among operational security officers working in the Hamburg and Rotterdam ports, it became clear these frontline port policing professionals possess a critical, even fearful attitude towards coercion while performing their duties in the ports. The power of arrest and the possibility of being weaponised was especially problematic. Overall, it reveals a rather different attitude towards coercion than is generally ascribed to security officers and accounted for in (critical) criminological literature. This paper will explore the extent to which (the stereotype of) security officers being power hungry and trigger-happy cowboys is a correct reflection of port security occupational realities in Northwest Europe. Empirical evidence is provided on security officers' worry and fear of using power, accountability and weaponisation for which they can be held accountable. It will show that the security officers, responsibilised for making port communities feel safer and the port as highly important global critical infrastructure more secure, are fearful and risk-averse themselves. Meaning that, if security officers fear to coerce (with weapons) due to accountability fear, which turns them idle, it implies we are witnessing the delivery of a placebo security that deserves further scrutiny.

Key words: use of force, private policing, security, accountability, port security

Introduction

‘Under the banner, “march for justice and dignity”, thousands in Paris rallied against police brutality on Sunday [19 March 2017], with authorities using tear gas against some demonstrators’, as Al Jazeera reports (2017). Instances of lethal force being deployed by police officers on those they suspect to be involved in criminal activity have grown in numbers and have become increasingly disproportionate to the crimes of the targeted individuals (Marcus, 2016). From Trayvon Martin to Eric Garner, whose deaths ignited the Black Lives Matter movement, policing through use of (lethal) force has come under much scrutiny by the public (Brown, 2016), which has supposedly resulted in improved police accountability (Marcus, 2015). Yet following these developments, there still a number of police officers who use disproportionate force when exercising their traditional powers to stop and search, enter and search premises, seize belongings, arrest, and detain (Jason-Lloyd, 1997), that specifically targets unarmed males from ethnic minority communities, and in doing so, seem to keep on enjoying impunity for abusing those rights (Krieger, 2015).

Whereas historically the state was solely responsible for security and providing police forces that, from a critical point of view, primarily serve the interests of powerful (Neack 2007; Neocleous, 2008; Neocleous and Rigakos, 2011), today, a multi-agency of public authorities and private bodies carries out policing, especially security companies. Over the last few decades, this rise in the use of private security has resulted in there being more security officers than police officers across the world (Evans, 2011; Sarre and Prenzler, 1999). In the ever-growing security industry that is primarily market driven, security officers have been granted increasing operational powers from the state (Shearing and Stenning 1983; Van Steden and Sarre, 2007; Zedner, 2009).

The continuous rapid growth of the security industry covers a wide, diverse range of sectors, such as, although not limited to, private military security (Higate, 2015), door security staff, commonly referred to as “bouncers” (Hobbs et al. 2002), university security (Ponggen et al. 2016), hospital security (Patterson et al. 2008), and port and airport security (Brewer, 2014; Lippert and

O'Connor, 2003). Each of these domains have their own 'licensing and other regulatory regimes [...] alongside [sector specific – AUTHOR] industry forces, market forces, and civil, criminal and administrative processes', out of which a diverse (attitude toward the) (non-)use of force and its accountability (legislation) emerge (Sarre and Prenzler, 1999: 25).). As Rigakos and Papanicolaou point out, to account for such diversity security force and accountability, 'we must become far more cognizant of divergent national contexts as political philosophies, social movements and global trends in governmental thinking' (2003: 301). That cognizance matters, because the security industry generally seems to lack accountability rules and regulation (Button, 2007; White, 2016), particularly regarding the use of force by its staff, and such lack, 'threatens to undermine the state's claim to a monopoly over the power to define the legitimate use of force' (Singh, 2005: 162). The monopoly on violence is therefore under threat, because in carrying out roles similar to or in certain circumstances, such as airport security, in place of police officers, security officers regularly require people to comply with their request such as being stopped, questioned or searched. A potential consequence of this is that privatised coercion could easily slip into disproportionate use of it (ibid.). A recent example of this occurred at Suitland High School in Maryland, USA where a high school private security officer seemed to have used excessive force to break up a fight between students (Schallhorn, 2015). Cases of security officer brutality and excessive violence like this one are not out of the ordinary (Gabbidon, 2003; Huggins, 2000; Jacobs, 2004; Markwick et al. 2015). In fact, before the exponential growth of the security industry, there have been official reports on excessive violence by security officers already in the 1970s (Private Security Advisory Council, 1976: 21).

The 2007 case of Blackwater military security officers killing 17 innocent Iraqi civilians and the 2013 case of security officer George Zimmerman who shot Trayvon Martin led to public outrage over security officers using disproportionate force. In comparison to the academic scrutiny on police brutality, there is a scarcity of similar work examining security officer brutality, especially in the fields of criminology and policing and security studies. Although privatised, security officers

are often in need of the execution of coercion and force to secure (the premises of) their clients (Button, 2007). Whereas a significant amount of empirical and academic study exists relating to police accountability in relation to the use of force (cf. Alpert and Dunham, 2004; Bittner, 1970; Friedrich, 1980; Geller and Toch, 1996; Klahm and Tillyer, 2010; Skolnick and Fyfe, 1993; Worden, 1995), explorations of the use of force by security officers and their accountability specifically are significantly rarer (Button, 2007; Waddington et al., 2006).

The use of force by private security officers emanates from citizen powers of arrest, detention and search where some authorities can be considered more powerful than those of police officers (Shearing and Stenning, 1983). The extensive ‘toolkit’ security officers have ‘to secure compliance to their requests [is] based upon ‘physical tools’, such as uniforms, badges and weapons; ‘personal tools’, such as verbal skills; and ‘legal tools’” (Button, 2003: 230). Security officers have no special powers, yet some countries’ security laws do tend to enable security officers ‘to act with significant coercive might—from forced entry to search and seizure, arrest, physical force and even lethal force’ (Singh, 2005: 161). Moreover, security officers can coerce as well by having access to policing powers that are not originally theirs and exceed their authority: ‘they can involve the police or initiate a civil suit [...] support[ing] their legal rights to control access to property’ (Shearing and Stenning, 1983: 502). Having access to such a wide range of coercive sanctions, seemingly more than police officers have (Jason-Lloyd, 1997), frontline security officers have slid into a status where they execute policing powers, applying physical restraints and physical contact with persons when they are being searched, while their accountability remains largely unregulated. In specific sectors, like retail establishments, this may lead to security officers racially profiling by subjecting some individuals to:

‘extra scrutiny while shopping, the requiring of additional identification for credit or check purchases, *an undue use of force*, and the enactment of blanket policies of how to handle minorities’ (Gabbidon, 2003: 361 – my emphasis).

Or in maritime security operations, guards armed with small arms sail on board ships to protect ships from Somali pirates avoid accountability by, ‘reportedly dump[ing] weapons offshore before

reaching countries' territorial waters in order to evade arms transfers regulations' (Florquin, 2011: 121).

These and other coercion transgressions by security officers seem to go unchecked due to the state's loss of its monopoly on violence, effecting a blurred, if not non-existent accountability of security officers (White, 2016). Due to limited accessibility to the security industry, it remains difficult though for researchers to:

‘...observe security guard interactions or interview security guards’, requiring ‘[f]urther research [...] to understand the experiences of security guards and inform effective solutions to security guard brutality’ (Markwick et al, 2015: 1127).

For this case-study, access was gained to conduct primary research with frontline security officers to gather data regarding their experience in (not) using force. Based on the research's fieldwork completed with security officers operational in two global ports in Northwest Europe, it became clear that security officers have a critical, even fearful, attitude toward the use of force and being held accountable. This fear was certainly present in relation to the suggestion of carrying a gun in order to coerce compliance which was not welcomed by the participants. The analysis emanating from the research will explore those attitudes of the security officers in-depth and will argue the stereotype of security officers being power hungry and wanting to be armed should be contrasted with their worry, if not fear, of the use of force and its accountability. That fear of accountability (hypengyophobia), as will be argued, indicates that highly precautionary security officers who turn idle in risky situations they ought to secure, make their customers enjoy not actual, but placebo security instead. The next section will provide an overview of the field characteristics and methodology used to conduct fieldwork. Following on from this, the findings will be presented, followed by a discussion and conclusion.

The field and methodology

The findings follow from an ethnographic case-study of port police and security officers in their familiar work environments of the Port of Rotterdam and the Port of Hamburg. Both European

ports are part of a global network of waterways and transportation hubs that make up the maritime sector that moves 80% of everything we consume (UNCTAD, 2015). From March 2011 until August 2012, fieldwork was done. This was during a time when Europe played a vital role in specifically the global container transport of which 20% passed through the Rotterdam, Hamburg and Antwerp ports (UNCTAD, 2013: 98). Having been the world's busiest port until 2004, as a multi-modal transport hub, the Port of Rotterdam is still the biggest maritime gateway to Europe. It consists of 10,500 hectares of industrial sites, being 42 kilometres long and having 65 kilometres of quayside. The port facilities include petrochemical sites, passenger cruise ships and ferries, cargo handling sites, and (dry and wet) bulk storage that are all 24/7 accessible for embarking ships; ships that often have their first and/or last port of call in Rotterdam (Port of Rotterdam Authority, 2014). The Port of Hamburg is slightly smaller than Rotterdam, covering 7,216 hectares of industrial sites, with 49 kilometres of quay walls of which 12% is used by port facilities that handle containers. It is an international, multi-modal transport hub as well and in particular crucial to the Baltic region (Hafen Hamburg, 2014).

Like any other major global port, the Rotterdam and Hamburg ports are vital transport hubs and at the same time fragile, because the global trade is immediately affected as soon as something goes wrong at a single port (facility). After the Twin Tower attacks on September 11th 2001, stringent global maritime security measures for ships and ports were introduced by the International Maritime Organisation (IMO), resulting in the International Ship and Port Facility (ISPS) Code, demanding of contracting countries to become fully ISPS Code compliant from 1 July 2004 onward (IMO, 2003). The Code's main purpose is that all relevant parties perceive and manage security threats correspondingly through newly introduced roles and regulations (Bichou, 2004).¹ Port police forces, security services, customs agencies, harbour masters, environmental

¹ Contracting governments are instructed to obtain and maintain ISPS compliance of port facilities by setting three security levels¹. Port Facility Security Officers (PFSOs) do security inspections; organise ISPS Code exercises and security drills; stay in touch with authorities regarding security threats; appoint security services; produce and update Port Facility Security Plans (PFSPs); interact with Ship Security Officers (SSOs); and write a Declaration of Security (DoS) (IMO, 2003).

inspectories, and local government in both the ports of Hamburg and Rotterdam, like in any other port, been brought together in a policing multi-agency to safeguard the port securityscape, working together on (inter)national and local levels (AUTHOR, 20XX). This port policing multi-agency approach can be intrusive, consisting of, for example, identity checks that violate civil liberties (Cowen, 2014). Simultaneously, it can satisfy community members of the (port) securityscape, *because* so many security measures are taken that may provide a (false) sense of security. Meaning, the securityscape is not ‘only “what we see” but also “how we see it”’. Securityscapes, like landscapes, represent a point of view’ (Azaryahu, 2000: 113).

From March 2011 until August 2012, the researcher walked, drove, and sailed along with the participants in the port securityscapes of Hamburg and Rotterdam. Office work was also performed in order to see and understand their experiences, interpretations, and practices at various sites. Applying such shadowing techniques or go-along-methods generally proves to be insightful for fieldwork in security occupational environments (Löfstrand, 2015). Fieldwork days consisted of participant observations, and at other times, of in-depth interviews. It was difficult to enter the Rotterdam and Hamburg port securityscapes though, due to port facilities being fenced and surrounded by CCTV systems everywhere. It led to putting much effort into contacting possible participants and arranging (probing) interviews, without having the absolute guarantee of eventual commitment of the participant population. Eventually, management at both the police organisations as well as the security companies gave permission to talk with their operational staff, however, their frontline staff were selected and pre-instructed to not talk about confidential information (that was not looked for).

After completion of fieldwork, 61 (out of 85) participants were interviewed who specifically fulfilled operational policing and security tasks (and some had lower level management tasks). Out of those 61, 30 were frontline port police officers at four police stations in Rotterdam and two in Hamburg. The group that is focused on specifically in this paper though are the 31

security officers who secured the perimeters of 9 different port facilities that were visited regularly in Rotterdam and Hamburg.

The facilities where these security officers worked handled containers, ferries, mass dry and liquid bulk storage and throughput, and some were petrochemical sites. Registration of employees and visitors, instructing security and safety regulations, and dealing with occupational hazards and emergencies were part of their tasks. Almost all security officers had CCTV monitoring duties. Some of the security officers possessed Port Facility Security Officer (PFSO) certificates, which allowed them to check whether ships complied with the ISPS Code for which they negotiated with the SSOs if a DoS had to be drawn up. In a few cases, sanitary tasks (e.g. cleaning toilets) were performed by the security officers. Moreover, they had to drive around in vans to pick up ship crewmembers from their ships and dropping them off at the facility's exit and back. Some of the security officers did day and night patrols by car on facility territory and/or were tasked to do alarm response throughout the entire port and preventative car surveillances of non-24/7 port facilities that needed to be locked up.

Findings

Powerless necessary evil

[On the one hand] you'll get people who actually cannot handle their [given] powers, who suddenly become a security officer, and on the other hand you got security officers who [are authorised to] do more and more. There's talk of security officers with handcuffs. There's talk of security officers with tear gas. [...] It's shifting, sort of, but combine those two trends, and you'll get someone who cannot do anything, cannot handle the authority, who becomes a security officer and then also gets authorised to use violence (SO6).

Security officer 6 (SO6) shares his concern about security officers in the ports who may want to use force, and receive more authority and being weaponised for it. This concern was generally shared among the participants in both ports, indicating a transnationally shared concern among frontline security officers, in Northwest European ports at least. It became clear that a number of structural (legal) deficits, fears and insecure praxes influence the security officers' worries about and fear of coercing, often leading to a state of idleness on the job. Such idleness eventually affects the overall policing and securing of a port, whereas they actually feel responsible to take action, often leaving them behind feeling frustrated while fulfilling their duties.

When discussing the (non-)use of force, security officers explained they are not supposed to coerce, as felt they are solely “put away” at port facilities’ gates to merely function as part of fulfilling an obligatory insurance policy for the port company; they are not there to actually take action. It makes them feel redundant and merely present(ed) for prevention, reflecting the wider ‘relatively low level of commitment to the job, with limited time in the industry and a desire to be working in another occupation’ (Button and Park, 2009: 253). Otherwise insurance companies would not cover any costs a port company had to make due to, for example, a burglary or fire that broke out while having no security presence:

We’re not there to catch crooks. That’s the case, of course. Security is, basically, as has been told to me, merely for insurance. Just so because you’re preventative. The police exists to catch crooks (SO1).

During fieldwork, austerity governance hit the ports hard, including port security services, as SO3 reveals:

You know, you're always in the wrong. You can notice it the last couple of years in security. You've become a necessary evil, because an insurance company demands you're there, which costs the client money. They'd rather not spend that money in these times [of financial crisis] (SO3).

A necessary evil that cannot do much and remains powerless, as the security officers communicated. Powerless, because one of the main structural deficits they were frustrated about was the issue of lacking authorities to (feel that they can) effectively establish port security and safety, staying in control, and keeping “the unwanted” off port company premises:

You contribute to a safer environment, of course. That's just the way it is. I mean, as a security officer, you deliver a service. That's what I learnt in school. I'm a provider of a service. [...] You wear a uniform, so things are expected from you. Sometimes though I think too much is expected from you [...] but hey, well... Security has very, very limited authorities of course (SO1).

The feeling of lacking authority and being powerless has been observed before in literature on operational security (Button, 2007; Gabbidon, 2003; Higate, 2015), and was often mentioned by the security officer in tandem with the fear of being harmed, as Löfstrand et al. also observed in their studies on British and Swedish security officers (2016: 307). In the ports of Hamburg and Rotterdam, security officers too felt unable to take necessary measures, making them the weaker party in a (lethally) harmful confrontation with a (group of) perpetrator(s). Security officers often found themselves in a yawning gap between not having enough authority, as well as being confronted with the public knowing about their lack of authority, which reflects Button and Park's (2009: 258–259) findings indicating that South Korean security officers feel looked down upon by the public. Lacking authority and the public's knowledge and degenerating views on them increase the chances of getting hurt, they explained:

The thing is with security, people know you're not allowed to do anything, [you] cannot do anything. The only thing... Well, this is just my opinion, but you [need] the respect of a criminal that he's not trigger-happy toward you. [...] Even now [without a weapon], I'm powerless. [The offender with a gun] can then go, I let him go. He can take along anything he's carrying. I let him take it all. I'm not going to risk my life. I got a family back home (SO3).

In fact, "own safety first" was a credo security officers would often use when justifying why they would fear using force, because they lack authority:

Nine out of ten times I'm happy I didn't run into them [metal thieves]. It's my life, right? Safety above anything else (SO2).

Although the security officers generally did acknowledge more power is needed to enforce, they also argued it would be rather pointless to receive more authority to, for example, make an arrest or use a weapon (e.g. baton, dog, or firearm) *in the port*, because, as SO6 mentions, 'I think that authority for security officers in the port are well-organised, because you operate more in the arena of *safety*, instead of *security*.' SO11 who worked in public transport security before his port security job too expressed that in the port, it is relatively safe when compared with his previous security work in the subway, where 'you'd be addressed with words like: "Ah, you're a Nazi. You want to check my public transport card?"' (SO11), a type of verbal abuse common in doing security work (Button, 2007: 149), but not necessarily in the port. Due to the safety focus, codified in the international ISPS Code, coercion is unnecessary, making security officer's activities in the port less visible and vulnerable to inquiry and redress, and thus less accountable, whereas Sarre and Prenzler have argued 'that private security activities are more visible and vulnerable to inquiry and redress, and thus more accountable, than a first glance might reveal' (1999: 24–25). Still, although they think that extra authority to enforce would be redundant, according to some participants, one specific power would help: the power of arrest.

Avoiding arrests

Although having (awareness of) the power of citizen's arrest, they, like security officers in general want (cf. Button, 2007; Lippert and O'Connor 2003; Hobbs et al. 2002), would rather have a police officer's right to arrest, because they felt they were pushed to break the law in case you apprehend and arrest an individual without being authorised to do so.

You do something against that other person's own will. As in, you're taking him in, whereas he doesn't want that. It's a game, 'cause you're not allowed to do anything. Police can! YOU cannot do anything, but you have to pretend as if you are allowed, so that [the offenders] won't find out you cannot do anything! You got those smarty pants, who stand up to you [saying] 'Come at me then! You can stand in front of me, but you can't stop me. How do you wanna stop me? F*** off man'. They know it. And he's right! As long as he doesn't touch me, I cannot touch him. [...] Look, if someone is caught red-handed, [who] stole something then I can apprehend him. Then I can say: 'I'm apprehending you, and I'm taking you in', but that doesn't mean that he has to [comply and] come along, right? He doesn't have to come along! If he resists, I cannot do anything. If he just walks, I cannot... [neutralise him]. You do it, of course... but if... Some just know how the game is played. [...] Basically, [as a citizen] you can just say 'Here [and you show your middle finger], you cannot inspect anything' (SO7).

Once, SO7 was shot in the face by a person who carried a gas pistol. He and his colleagues caught the offender, took him into a room, and 'beat the living hell out of that guy'. He claimed that despite being shot in the face, he did not like the beating up, because the offender looked as if he fell down from three stocks high. SO7, and many more participants, thought that other security officers they knew in security could not deal with having a right to arrest. He feared that most security officers will not be able to understand that you still have to treat the apprehended person as someone who is at that point not found guilty. The power of arrest would then lead to security officers using their authorised violence in the smallest situations.

Most interviewed security officers did feel frustrated about not being able to arrest and use necessary violence to apprehend a suspect, whereas they sometimes (felt they) are pressured into it. Their fear is that they will not receive any understanding in court like police officers receive:

If you choose this profession, you choose willingly to be caught in a situation where you stand with one foot in the hospital and the other in the police office. [...] Whatever [the cop] says to the judge, is usually truth. It'd be good if something like that would be introduced in security as well. The judge would presume that a security officer wouldn't be [at a site] to use violence, but to prevent it. [...] How am I supposed to clarify to the judge that I've done everything in my power to not use violence? That's tough (SO6).

SO8 too expressed his worries about having to go to trial:

Meaning, I must do anything to satisfy my customer, and when I got some random people that don't want to play along with the rules of the client, then I must try to push them into it, of course WITHOUT breaking the law! But, when I don't have any other option splitting one person from the other person, I have to intervene. I'm obligated to serve my customer, and the customer would be the last person who'd say in court 'No, I didn't tell [SO8] at all to use the cuffs' (SO8).

The problematic and defining characteristic of the security industry being (solely) there to serve profitability of the industry and not necessarily public security (Zedner, 2009), means on a micro-level, for SO8 at least, that he might cross the line, otherwise he does not deliver the service to their client who has paid for it (cf. Löfstrand et al. 2016). Notice though he does expect that his client would back him up in court. He continued talking about a random man who wanted to come onto the port facility premises, who was very drunk and did not understand why he could not enter. The intoxicated individual was warned by SO8 five times, after which he was sent from the security lodge to the main reception of the port facility where the man assaulted two women at the

reception desk. SO8 then called the police and brought him outside the building, where the person got aggressive. Subsequently, SO8 and his colleagues took the individual onto the port facility, which they were not allowed to do:

The police are allowed to. I wouldn't have been allowed to, but [what] should I do otherwise? When someone is throwing punches... What can I do? I could then, granted by the law, protect my own safety. [...] When we want to stop someone, I put cuffs on him before he hurts me. That's of course something no one's allowed to. You cuff him to [bring him] somewhere, and after 2 hours you could call the police (SO8).

SO8 explained that restraining people can be done in different ways; the cuffs can be pulled tighter, for example, but that depends on how you want to treat the person who is handcuffed.

A police officer that was interviewed shared his concern about security officers who put themselves in danger by apprehending and detaining someone using handcuffs, without having the guarantee a judge will be on their side:

[D]eprivation of freedom is something that belongs to the government only. If I deprive you of your freedom, you can basically apprehend me on grounds of involuntary hostage taking, or whatever kind of form. That's crucial, 'cause I take your freedom of movement away. That's in theory, however. What happens in reality? Security officers who patrol in shopping centres, or at events, or wherever, they carry tie-wraps sometimes, 'cause if they have to deal with another one of those idiots who gets really aggressive. You don't want to be locked in one room with him because he just stole something, because then it goes wrong, most likely. So, what do you do? You tie his thumbs together, and then he remains much calmer. Is that allowed? No, that's not allowed. The cop who picks [the thief] up, will he say something about it? Nope, 'cause he understands it. Well, if it goes wrong, I don't know, [if] it goes really wrong, right? Someone tied his thumbs together, and as it happens, [that tied up person] chokes in his own vomit. [...] Not sure if it ever

happened, but just to explain. Will that cop cover [the security officer]? No, because then he has another problem! (P1).

The blue code of silence therefore really is a blue code for this police officer (Skolnick, 2005), which is not shared between police officers and security officers, in case a security officers stands trial for disproportionate use of force, which is another reason for security officers to fear applying coercion.

Weapon weary

Next to arrests, having a weapon to enforce was problematised. Security officers had specific concerns about using a baton, deploying a dog, and carrying a firearm. During an interview with SO5, it was mentioned to him how some of his colleagues, as well as security officers at other security companies that operate in SO5's port, sometimes use their flashlight as a baton. He replied:

SO5: Baton? What am I supposed to do with a baton? I solve nine out of ten problems with my mouth. [...] Baton, what should I do with a baton?

Me: Well, hit [someone]?

SO5: Yeah, who am I supposed to hit? If I get somewhere, [and] there are 4, 5 guys who take a vault along, you just [stand] there with a baton. What must I do? Smack around?

Me: Well...

SO5: No way... I prefer that they... that I walk around with a dead man's switch, that if I push the button, you know, they arrive here in x amount of minutes.

What becomes clear is how risk-aversion and personal safety dominate the mentality of the security officer, who, instead of having weaponry that would enhance his position (slightly) during a conflict and potentially (lethally) dangerous situation, rather would like to have equipment that notifies others to come and help but maybe arrive too late when the damage is done (for good),

reflecting ‘a culture of “safety in numbers” when dealing with incidents’ (Button and Park, 2009: 251).

The dog is another one of those “tools” security officers could be equipped with to use force (Sanders, 1990). Out of the 31 security officers, eight security officers used to work with a canine (K9) colleague. SO3 passionately told about how he enjoyed working with his ‘four-footed pal’ but that he always had to be aware of the position you have as a security officer handling and using a dog in a conflict situation:

[Y]ou’re always in the wrong [being a security officer with a dog], always. [...] That dog is purely there for yourself, so, for your own protection, but you cannot just be like ‘Oh, I’m gonna... I’m gonna... dog unleashed!’ That’s not possible, but [the dog] does have a deterrent effect (SO3).

SO1 still worked with a dog during fieldwork. He too finds it difficult to actually “deploy” (unleash) his dog once he notices something is off at a port facility:

I see you[re] stealing something, you run away, and then, seriously, there are people thinking that I can just unleash the dog. [...] That’s actually madness, ’cause you’re just a civilian in a uniform and you don’t want to know what kind of trouble you’re in if you unleash your dog just like that, as a security officer. I mean, even the police can deploy [a dog] only under certain strict constraints. The real toughs, as I said, the big boys [criminals] in the port know that. They know that as a security officer, you cannot simply unleash that dog (SO1).

Another security officer explained that you have to look for alternatives and always consider the proportionality of using a dog, even if you are in stressful situations.

No, that’s definitely not allowed! If [the dog] bites one time, even if it’s to protect you, you’ll have to explain in court why you couldn’t have corrected him, couldn’t have stopped him. Listen, I’m

against the wall, and you're here, and the dog's here, and I cannot go anywhere. Then he'll bite, but as long as you can get out, you should walk away. Only if there's no other option, then the dog can bite. You probably get a whole different idea now [about K9s], haha! (SO4).

Either you risk your own safety at the immediacy of violence by not acting against an offender, or group of offenders, which might lead to grave harm or even death; or, you do unleash the dog, risking to inflict disproportionate harm to (an) offender(s), and in doing so, risking to go to court to explain yourself. SO3 would not unleash his dog, even if a police officer would authorise him to do so:

[The dog] is a weapon, and if a dog attacks someone just like that, without any cause, then I'm f***ed. I can be prosecuted. Sometimes, the cops are like 'Well, you got a dog, right? Get him'. And then I say 'No, let that police dog do it, 'cause I'm not gonna unleash my dog'. Even not if that officer says 'I'll give you permission'. I'll be like... but if I'm front of the judge [that cop will be like] 'I don't know anything about it.' That's how everybody keeps their own house in order. I once stood there with my dog, but I didn't unleash him. [...] Listen, if there's really... if somewhere there's someone walking... you immediately notice from the [dog's] ears, or from the dog's reaction something's off. You're aware, and [if] I get attacked, physically, and that dog bites [the attacker], it's an act in defence. Then nothing's wrong (SO3).

Still, it might be too late for SO3 if the dog did not respond on time and/or adequately enough. What becomes clear though, is in the heat of the moment, the security officers in the port fear prosecution post-conflict situation more than that they fear bodily harm and death during the actual conflict situation itself. This supports the idea of how security officers are not happy about their violence-orientated and trigger-happy colleagues (elsewhere) (Löfstrand et al. 2016), as practical and legal realities do not even allow them to be using (violent) coercion.

When it comes down to carrying a firearm, the security officers were very concerned and emphasised that they would not want to carry a firearm, resembling the wider concern about armed security officers (Florquin, 2011: 121–123). In their explanations, they themselves upheld the very stereotypes about security officers being trigger-happy cowboys (Higate, 2011: 332–334; Löfstrand et al. 2016: 303–305). As SO1 stated: ‘I cannot even imagine if some people [in security] have a gun or something, you know? Can’t imagine it’ (SO1). One of the main fears there existed among the security officers was of younger male security officers who think the port, or any other security domain, is the Wild Wild West with ‘a bunch of cowboys. You don’t want that. You really don’t want that! And they exist!’ (SO12). SO9 explained:

I’ve seen guys of 19 years old coming in, straight from school, who think it’s about playing cowboy. For them, it’s usually a step up to the police, right? Or they’ve been in [military] service for some years, which is voluntary these days (SO9).

SO10 is happy his security officers have fewer rights than policemen do, and are therefore not able to carry a firearm in the port to deal with danger and people:

I’ll tell you this, I’m very pleased it’s arranged that way, because in security, I believe, there are some people that I’ve got to know... that if they’d get that power [to carry a firearm], they’d act on it. They’d simply transgress their powers they have to enforce (SO10).

SO12, who also had managerial responsibilities, fears a dystopian future in which security officers, not only in the port, but everywhere in his country would be weaponised:

In my point of view, [the monopoly of violence shared with security officers], in the future, I think it will become necessary, unfortunately. And then your question becomes, ‘Should we want that?’ Under certain very well-defined restrictions, yes. But you do need to know VERY WELL who

[should carry a gun...]. Educational demands, yeah. If you look at someone who has an x amount of years of experiences, I'm like 'Okay, you've got enough self-control to use a gun, perhaps'. Psychological assessment, that'd be a good one, but just be careful (SO12).

A security officer from the Netherlands claimed it is a particular Dutch characteristic to be against armed security officers:

We Dutch are usually not very charmed by armed civilians, because we don't [live in] the time and place for it. Look, if I do my groceries, yeah, I basically don't need a gun, but if I'm in Baghdad, and I want some milk, and I'm white as I am, well, you're basically a target. I'm taking a risk. Plus, in those countries everyone is armed. There, only the survival of the fittest counts (Security officer in Rotterdam).

Still, when he was asked whether armed security officers in ports would be a good idea, he responded firmly: 'No, absolutely not, no, absolutely not!'. In fact, security officers considered their port to be very safe and uneventful, making armed security officers useless there:

You can see it in the fact that we're unarmed. Abroad, [security officers] walk around with guns, so, you got victims way faster than here. Here [in the port] nothing happens to a security officer, relatively spoken. It may happen in a shop, a guy gets arrested. However, during [car patrol] surveillance, I've never experienced it, security officers being harmed. Look, the odds you bump into someone in a building where a burglar alarm went off, [that chance] exists, but [remains] also very small. We usually arrive when... they're gone. I barely experienced that they we're still around in the building. [...] If we don't trust it, police comes in. I won't go inside, so I wait until [the cops] are there (SO3).

SO2 and SO11, one in Hamburg, one in Rotterdam, pointed out that arming security officers for port security reasons would actually create the hazard you want to prevent from happening, which is armed violence in the port:

If we consider Belgium, where a money and value transport security officer carries a Magnum .44, and in supermarkets in Barcelona also [security officers] with a Magnum .44, I'm just saying, right? I see foreign security officers walking with a long rifle, well, eh... sorry, but if you carry those things, you risk getting shot dead quicker than when you're unarmed, that's what I think. [...] No, I really don't wanna have a gun. Pepper spray is safe enough, or a spray can, with paint. I always carry it on me. Never used it. It's called Bodyguard, [stating] 'In dread, spray the offender red' (SO2).

If it were up to me? A firearm, I don't like it. No, don't like it. I'm a member of a rifle club and I expect that a firearm will be used against you. The moment someone knows 'He, that security officer, has a gun on him', I don't think it would end well. Don't think so (SO11).

Arming yourself with a firearm would not only trigger the possible armed offender to shoot you, because (s)he would know about your possession of a firearm; it would also motivate the security officer to use it, as SO8 argued:

If I have a gun, I expect to use that thing at a certain point. If I got a dog, or I got a flash light on me, and the guy in front of me has a gun... Rationally explained... eh... it's more difficult to shoot someone unarmed than when I'm in possession of the same kind of violence across from him. An act of self-defence begins quite quickly. I wouldn't wait to shoot until he shoots. I can shoot him first (SO8).

He continued to explain that at the end of the day an armed conflict can happen anywhere, so why would armed security officers make a difference? He referred to the shootings by a gunman who, from 11 till 19 March, 2012, shot several people dead (a paratrooper, two soldiers, a teacher, and eventually also three children) in the French cities of Montauban and Toulouse in (Willsher, 2012). The incidents happened that week when SO8 was interviewed. More importantly, regarding armed security officers, he stressed that...

...the client won't pay for it. That's the main issue. [...] I get shot. [...] That's only important for insurances. [The client's] stuff will get paid anyway. The life of the security officer is a problem for the security company. [My security company] has a problem then (SO8).

Here, once more, as in general, we see how strongly they live up to 'their principal task [which is] protecting the property of clients and the paying customer' (Löfstrand et al. 2016: 302). It makes SO8 worrying about carrying a gun, because his client, the port company, would not want to purchase such armed security services due to insurance reasons. Now, how should we understand and frame the security officers' weapon weariness; their feelings of being necessary but powerless evil; their worries about lacking and getting more authority; and finally, their avoidance of making (violent) arrests and coerce?

Discussion: hypengyophobia and placebo security?

Generally, security officers are considered: short-tempered, aggressive, rowdy, law-breaking 'cowboys' (Higate, 2012a, 2012b, 2011); 'mega-masculine Rambos', 'trigger-happy brutes', 'mercenaries', and 'dogs of war' (Fainaru, 2008; Joachim and Schneiker, 2012); and individuals with a criminal record, predominantly 'motivated by status, salary, joy, and success' (Van Steden et al., 2015: 224). Those images, however, 'ignore the heterogeneity among companies' (Joachim and

Schneiker, 2012: 496). Whether the stereotypes reflect any “truth” about security officers, the negative images do make security officers feel stigmatised (Löfstrand et al. 2016).

The security officers of this study rather reveal an opposite image. By carrying out ‘the state’s dirty work [...] the relative institutional invisibility of privatized policing makes it a perfect supplement to failed regular policing’ (Huggins, 2000: 129), in this case, supplemented security officers who *avoid conflict and violence*, thus not fulfilling their (expected) role as a forceful deterrent, and producing *placebo security*. The security officers of this research, firstly, consider themselves powerless and mere necessary evil, being pawns for insurance reasons and not authorised (enough) to use any force to begin with. Moreover, they are sceptical toward the use of force and being weaponised to coerce compliance more intrusively. So, security officers may avoid coercion as a legal tool, not only because of ‘a very low degree of confidence in their knowledge of how to use them’ (Button and Park, 2009: 260), but as well, or just because of, being too aware of using legal tools and fear negative legal consequences, which indicates a heightened awareness, if not fear, of accountability. Maybe regulation to promote transparency and professionalisation of the security industry is required in the private policing of protests (Button and John, 2002: 120). In other sectors though, once in excess, such regulation could cause and aggravate accountability fear. That type of fear is also known as *hypengyophobia* (Arapoglou, 2004; Grint, 2010; Isay, 1977; Joiner, 2001; Szasz, 1993) and could lead to ‘strong uncertainty avoidance cultures’ (Joiner, 2001: 233) that, altogether, ‘paralyses much initiative and destroys good qualities’ (Fayol, 2015: 54). Moreover, hypengyophobia can signal someone’s ambiguity about an unconscious wish or intention, and (unwillingness) to express unconscious internal conflict and frustrations (Isay, 1977). It is ‘the unbearable silence of responsibility’, making us ‘moving away from the comforting security of being to the fearsome insecurity of responsibility’ (Bauman, 1992: 78), making you may conceal and avoid responsibility by using rhetoric to move your burden onto others, while protecting your own righteous identity, claiming glory in case you succeed (Arapoglou, 2004: 625–627).

The security officers' hypengyophobia is reflected in their use of rhetoric about feeling like powerless, necessary evil, lacking and simultaneously dreading more authority, risk-and accountability-avoiding by not making arrests, and being weapon weary, which could be considered as an outcome of the culture of control by fear. Like any other member of society (if not more so), security officers live their daily (professional) lives that are constantly ready (and prone) to be changed due to their line of work, resulting into continuous feelings of distrust that saturates the everyday with fear (Garland, 2001). The state has always struggled to bring order and discipline to take away such (existential) fear (Bauman, 2006), especially after 9/11 when our fear produced an obsession to control 'risky others' (Hudson, 2009). In its struggle, the state has 'shift[ed] [...] responsibility from the state to the individual, [which] although it brings the luxury of greater choice, also brings with it the fear of responsibility' (Grimshaw, 1999: 26), making citizens insecure in what to do and in turn may try to find security and hope elsewhere (Bauman, 1992). The security officers of this study are also citizens responsibilised for their personal safety and security, on- and off-duty. Hence, the participants are as afraid and risk-averse as any other individual, which means that during the execution of their work, they avoid the very conflict and danger they are expected to prevent, or at least, control.

Conclusion

What does this case-study reveal? Whereas in some under-regulated security sectors where violence is a systemic problem, such as door supervision (Hobbs et al. 2002), perhaps in (over)regulated security sectors, 'private security operators have [also] developed their own informal and pragmatic techniques of [*non-violent!* – my addition] containment which conform to the demands of commercial and cultural, rather than legally justified imperatives' (ibid. 352). On a more abstract level, this means that the culture of (precautionary) control, and risk- and accountability-avoidance that has bred and spread the security industry and its (overly) violent security officers, simultaneously brought forward security officers who are highly precautionous and risk-averse

themselves, fearing to be harmed, and not using coercion out of fear being held accountable for (disproportionate) violence. Those fears turn them idle in the immediacy of policing dangerous situations, in this case, in the port. Such idleness defeats the purpose of security work anywhere, and from a security consumption point of view (Goold et al. 2010), this means that the port companies where the security officers work at, have purchased, to an extent, a false sense of security, or an illusion of control; illusion, because security officers do not actually (want to) engage coercively, which subsequently affects (their delivery of) port security. This begs the question what it is that makes those who consume and those who deliver such a placebo security still continue to do so. Or, as has been argued by Van Steden and De Waard (2013: 306): 'is what private security is selling, exactly: a social good, an emotion, a (false) promise, reassurance that can never be fully realized?' These and many more questions relating to security (officer) coercion and accountability deserve further critical inquiries that, as this case-study has done, remain sensitive to (inter)national, cultural and sectoral diversity of the security industry. This includes remaining sensitive to security officers' diverse attitudes toward the (non-)use of coercion and toward their accountability (experiences) and hypenphobia that effects and affects their delivery of (placebo) security.

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