

The Role of Private Security in Crime Prevention

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Contemporary security risks have led to the need for additional capacities that would support traditional institutions of formal control, primarily the police. In this context, the private security sector has assumed a significant role, not only in the protection of people and property, but also in proactive measures aimed at crime prevention in various social environments such as public spaces. For a long time, the central place in crime prevention was held by the police as a traditional, specialized subject of formal social control. However, numerous challenges faced by the public sector, including bureaucratization, an increase in crime, limited capacities, the burden of tasks, and high costs, contributed to the expansion of the role of private entities in the protection of people and property, i.e., control of criminal behavior, and led to a process that is often called 'privatization of security' in the literature, in which private entities take over tasks that traditionally belonged to public institutions. The paper starts from the assumption that private security actively contributes to the preservation of public security and investigates its evolving and increasingly complex role in crime prevention. The primary goal of the paper is to point out the significant role of private security in crime prevention, as well as to identify and interpret the key areas through which this role is realized in practice.

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Introduction

Over time, with urbanization and technological development, the security environment has become complex, making traditional public security models face significant challenges in terms of capacity and operational efficiency. In this context, private security is becoming a provider in the preservation of public order, especially in domains that include crime prevention. One study found that respondents believed that private security plays an important role in maintaining law and order in society, that it is as important as public police, and even that it should play a more significant role in public police work (Steenkamp, 2002, p. 52). Research also indicates that private security services are highly valued and relevant to public safety, and that their presence has significantly increased the effects of security (Stajić, 2015; Oyebambi, 2024).

To deal with the role that private security plays in crime prevention, it is first necessary to clarify what the concept of crime prevention entails. Being secure today means knowing vulnerabilities and taking measures to address those vulnerabilities. Starting from the fact that different entities participate in crime prevention, in the second part of the paper, special emphasis is placed on private security as one of those actors, which is in accordance with the theme of the paper. In this context, the process of the so-called privatization of security and the development of the concept of private police, i.e., private security, are discussed, with a more detailed definition of that term. By analyzing the activities that private security provides or can provide, attention is gradually directed towards the key issue of this work – the role of private security in crime prevention. This analysis does not mean only listing the existing services and tasks of private security, but aims at a deeper understanding of how it contributes to the general security environment. Formulating an answer to the above-mentioned issue is one of the main goals of the work, as it opens up space for further theoretical and practical reflection on the role and importance of private security in modern society.

Crime prevention

The history of crime prevention spans more than 200 years, and its basic principles still largely shape our preventive action today (Crawford and Evans, 2017, p. 798). Crime prevention, as a term, was first used in 1829 in the *Book of Instructions for the Metropolitan Police in London*, where it is stated that it is the first task of the police (Davidović, 2015, p. 346; Gilling, 1997, p. 1).

Van Dijk defined crime prevention as “the total of all policies, measures and techniques, outside the boundaries of the criminal justice system, aiming at the reduction of the various kinds of damage caused by acts defined as criminal by the state” (1990, p. 205). This definition includes the fear of crime that occurs as a consequence of crime, but also the policy of helping victims due to the consequences suffered. Similarly, Lab defines it in such a way that it “entails any action designed to reduce the actual level of crime and/or the perceived fear of crime” (2014, p. 27). Such a definition indicates that the actions taken are not limited to the efforts of the criminal justice system, but also include the activities of individuals and groups, both public and private. Crime prevention can be understood

basically as “the use of all means and measures aimed at preventing the occurrence of some form of crime” or “the use of all measures and means, for the mobilization of individuals, social groups, organizations and institutions, aimed at preventing those phenomena that are not in accordance with criminal legislation, and which by their essence cause harm to individuals, social groups or society as a whole” (Krivokapić, 2008, pp. 42-43).

Analyzing the literature on crime prevention, Gilling points out that the authors distinguish between situational and social prevention. The first focuses on “the management, design and manipulation of the built physical environment, to reduce the opportunity for crime to be committed and increase the risk of detection if deterrence fails”, while the second seeks to “change criminal motives, which are seen to lie in people, not things, in the social environment”. Authors like van Dijk or Graham and Rosenbaum introduce an additional form - community crime prevention, which includes a mixture of social and situational approaches, applied by individuals or groups (1997, pp. 5-7).¹ From the perspective of this study and the role of private security, situational crime prevention is of particular relevance, as it focuses on reducing opportunities and physical conditions conducive to criminal activity.

At the global level, there is a definition of crime prevention provided by the United Nations in the Crime Prevention Guide. In it, crime prevention includes “strategies and measures that seek to reduce the risk of crimes occurring, and their potential harmful effects on individuals and society, including fear of crime, by intervening to influence their multiple causes” (ECOSOC, 2002). At the level of the European Union, crime prevention is determined in the context of the elements that it should cover, which are: “all measures that are intended to reduce or otherwise contribute to reducing crime and citizens’ feeling of insecurity, both quantitatively and qualitatively, either through directly deterring criminal activities or through policies and actions designed to reduce the potential for crime and the causes of crime”. Furthermore, the subjects, “government, competent authorities, criminal justice agencies, local authorities and the specialist associations they have set up in Europe, the private and voluntary sectors, researchers and the public, supported by the media”, have an active participation in crime prevention (Council Decision 2009/902/JHA, art. 2).

Crime prevention includes not only the practices of the criminal justice system, but also the practices of other social and public policies, as well as the practices of citizens and private organizations (Gilling, 1997, p. 2). Therefore, individuals, that is, different social subjects, are the ones on whom the implementation of crime prevention policies depends. Over time, private sector organizations have become proficient in prevention work, developing solutions to the problem of crime that can be sold to private consumers and public authorities, including law enforcement (Crawford and Evans, 2017, p. 805). More specifically, scientific and research literature, analysis of expert groups, resolutions, directives and recommendations of international agencies and institutions speak about the indispensable role of private security in crime prevention (Davidović, 2015, p. 353). Given that public police-private security partnerships carry unresolved issues related to “the appropriate balance of burdens, benefits, and controls that are allocated between the public and private

¹ See: Crawford, A. and Evans, K. (2017) ‘Crime Prevention and Community Safety’, in: Leibling, A., Maruna, S. and McAra, L. (eds.) *The Oxford Handbook of Criminology* (sixth edition). Oxford: Oxford University Press, 797-824.

sectors” (Joh, 2004, p. 51), the suggestion that private security should serve as a partner to public police in crime prevention must be viewed with caution. The issue of cooperation between private security and police, also known in the literature as public-private partnership, is increasingly relevant in both academic and professional circles, including in businesses. Especially after the privatization of critical infrastructure, an extensive body of literature has developed that examines public-private partnership in all contexts, including security. Public-private partnership was created as a paradigm that would use the capacities of both sectors in the best possible way, and today represents a “new value”, which aims to achieve a specific goal or set of objectives through cooperation between these two sectors (Busch and Givens, 2012; Carr, 2016, p. 48; Radivojević, 2019, pp. XI, 120).

Members of private security do not focus on punishment but on preventive action, which includes “the plugging of security breaches in the future, the exclusion of likely offenders and ensuring that security is not compromised” (Crawford and Evans, 2017, p. 812).² Hence, the private security sector is focused primarily on loss reduction and risk management, not on (criminal) law enforcement.

Evolution of private security

Industrialization and rising crime rates put a strain on the police, accelerating the development of private security, also known in the literature as private ‘policing’.³ In addition to the historical practice of engaging mercenaries in armed conflicts (Avant, 2004, p. 153), states, driven by motives such as financial efficiency and technological supremacy, have increasingly involved private actors in the field of security. As one of the key drivers of the privatization of security, in addition to economic reasons (White, 2012), the position that the police were unable to meet the increased demands for security of both citizens and organizations is most often highlighted as it was overburdened and limited by its focus on crime control, as well as by existing laws on private property (Shearing and Stenning, 1983). Taking into account all of the above, we conclude that the state’s behavior in combination with social, economic and political factors, including defendology factors (Vejnović et al., 2008, p. 13), accelerated the development of the private security sector.

Due to the newly established situation in which security affairs are performed by the entire system composed of “governmental, commercial and social bodies”, there has been a ‘fragmentation’ or ‘pluralization’ of the police (Jones and Newburn, 2006, p. 1). Although there are authors who believe that the term ‘multi lateralization’ is more appropriate for this phenomenon (Bayley and Shearing, 2001, p. vii), the term ‘privatization’ will be used in the paper due to its wide representation in the literature.

² The evidence suggests that arrests and prosecutions are not necessary for crime control (Grunwald, Rappaport and Berg, 2024, p. 464).

³ For more on the development of private policing and its impact on future governance in ‘collective life’, see: Kempa, M. et al. (1999) ‘Reflections on the Evolving Concept of ‘Private Policing’, *European Journal on Criminal Policy and Research*, 7(2), 197-224; Davidović, D. (2007) ‘Klasifikacije i tumačenje privatnog polisinga’, *Zbornik Instituta za kriminološka i sociološka istraživanja*, XXVI(1-2), 389-397.

This so-called ‘privatization’ of security can be explained by means of Fiscal constraint theories and Pluralist (structuralist) theory (Jones and Newburn, 1998 according to Button, 2002, pp. 27-32). According to Fiscal constraint theories, the growth of private policing occurred due to the inability of the state to meet the demand for services, and the private sector emerged as an entity that fills the fiscal ‘gap’. The radical direction of this theory sees the growth of private policing as an inevitable consequence of the crisis, where the state attracts the private sector to strengthen its legitimacy. The liberal-democratic perspective sees the growth of private policing as an inevitable consequence of demands that the police simply cannot satisfy. The pluralist (structuralist) perspective emphasizes the fragmentation of power that led to this that private corporations and local communities take over the ‘reins of power.’

Consideration of the transformation of the security sector and the inclusion of non-state actors in the performance of security tasks can be analyzed analytically through the prism of Principal-agent theory (Avant, 2005). In this theoretical model, the ‘principal’ is the individual who delegates authority, while the ‘agent’ is the one who is delegated the authority. In addition to the mentioned approach, there is also an alternative application of this theory in the literature, which places the principal-agent relationship in the framework of the relationship between private security companies and subjects who pay for their services for the purpose of property protection or personal security. In this case, the principals are individuals, groups or organizations that have a need for security services, while the agents are private organizations that provide security services (Abrahamsen and Williams, 2011, p. 108). It is necessary to emphasize that this delegation model does not imply the marginalization or reduction of the role of the state in the security sector. On the contrary, it is possible that the presence of private security actors contributes to the strengthening and support of state authority. According to Abrahamsen and Williams (2007, p. 238), “authority is not necessarily a zero-sum game”, which implies that the relationship between the state and private security can be seen as complementary instead of competitive.

According to some authors, the transfer of certain public functions to private security entities should not be viewed exclusively as a process of privatization, but as a “formalization of secondary activities of social control”. This approach indicates that, due to the decline in the influence of actors who perform social control as a secondary activity (such as park guards, railway guards or conductors), there has been an intensification of primary forms of control — both through the strengthening of the role of the public police, and through the increase in the importance of private security structures (Jones and Newburn, 2002, p. 142). A group of authors pointed out that the mass production of private property led to the privatization of social control when the scope of this control was expanded by the so-called non-specialized security (Shearing and Stenning, 1983, p. 501). Under these circumstances, private security entities gained legitimacy to exercise social control.

Finally, the authors engaged with the concept of police nodalization, i.e., the diversification of policing and the creation of other nodes, as a result of which in the “age of nodal security management”, policing is not limited to the police but includes “nodal groups such as the military and now the huge and growing private security sector” (Shearing, 2005, p. 58; Walby and Lippert, 2015, p. 241).

Conceptualizing private security

To more precisely define private security, it is necessary to refer to the term that is often used in literature as its synonym, 'private policing'. Policing is a term used to describe police action or work. As the primary protection responsibility shifted from the public to the private sector, policing, which was primarily related to the public sector, was basically divided into public – *Public policing* and private – *Private policing*.⁴

Private security is also referred to as *Private police* or *Private security industry*. Namely, numerous foreign authors choose the terms private policing and private police (Stenning, 2000, p. 326), with the fact that private security is not and cannot be a "private form of public police" (Shearing and Stenning, 1983, p. 495). The term Private Security is used to denote "a whole set of activities for securing property, persons and business performed by private legal entities for the provision of security services" (Davidović, 2011, p. 456; Kesić, 2009, p. 33). Pioneers of private security research in the United States indicate that it "starts where public policing leaves off and therefore does not encroach on public policing" (Shearing and Stenning, 1981, p. 220), because it undertakes what "public policing either does not do because of resource constraints or cannot do because of legal constraints" (Kakalik and Wildhorn, 1971, p. 19). A more detailed definition would refer to "employed individuals and organizations/legal entities that, for money, provide security services to clients, individuals or organizations that hire them or have employed them, with the aim of protecting the staff, private property and interests of those clients from various forms of threats" (Dempsey, 2010, p. 2). More comprehensively defined, private security is "a planned and organized independent or joint activity and function of individuals, organizations, private or professional agencies, aimed at their own protection or the protection of others, as well as the protection of appropriate persons, spaces, facilities, businesses or activities, which are not covered by the exclusive protection of state bodies" (Daničić and Stajić, 2008, p. 14).

Foreign and domestic authors have recognized as adequate the definition given by the American Society for Industrial Security, which defines private security as "the non-governmental practice of the private sector of protecting people, property and information, conducting investigations, and otherwise safeguarding the organization's assets" and which has a role in "helping the private sector to secure its operations and critical infrastructure, either from natural disasters, accidents or planned actions, such as terrorist attacks, vandalism..." (Strom et al., 2010, pp. 2-3; Keković and Dimitrijević, 2017, p. 235).

From the above definitions, it follows that the term private security means the performance of security tasks that do not fall under the jurisdiction of state authorities. These

⁴ Academic literature identifies four categories of policing actors, differentiated by the extent of their public or private engagement: 1. public police bodies; 2. hybrid policing bodies: (central and decentralized public policing bodies, specialized police organizations and private policing (non-private security)); 3. voluntary policing and 4. private security (Button, 2002, p. 16). Division of private policing subjects see: Sparrow, K. M. (2014) *Managing the boundary between public and private policing*. New Perspectives in Policing Bulletin. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, National Institute of Justice. Compare with four groups of policing providers: 1) commercial security companies; 2) nongovernmental auspices acting as their own providers; 3) individuals and 4) governments (Bayley and Shearing, 2001, pp. 13-15).

jobs are carried out in two basic directions – for their own purposes or for the benefit of third parties, usually with monetary compensation, and are aimed at protecting individuals, property (space, facilities, information) and business activities from various forms of threats.

A very comprehensive classification of private security services was developed by experts who attended a symposium of the American Society for Industrial Security. They identified eighteen fundamental components of private security, encompassing physical and personnel security, information systems protection, investigative functions, risk and crisis management, legal frameworks, emergency preparedness, as well as strategies addressing crime prevention, counterterrorism, and workplace violence (ASIS Foundation, 2009, p. 4). Defining and classification of private security requires a careful approach, mostly because of the thin line of its distinction in relation to other related terms found in the literature.⁵

Private Security in Crime Prevention

Private security represents an important segment of the overall security system, especially in the domain of crime prevention and protection of people, property and information. The preventive function of private security is primarily achieved through various operational activities such as access and behavior control, physical presence (e.g. patrols, surveillance), securing facilities and persons, as well as implementing internal procedures and security rules. These activities are aimed at preventing and detecting various forms of criminal behavior, including unauthorized access, vandalism, theft, embezzlement, physical assaults, as well as violations of property rights and security procedures (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2014).

Classifications of private security services encompass a wide array of activities that reflect the sector's complexity and functional diversity. Based on classifications from the literature (CoESS, 2016; Radivojević, 2022, pp. 110-111), private security activities can be classified into four groups according to function: *preventive activities* (commercial manned guarding, beat patrols, in-house security services, public space patrolling, risk assessment and risk management, loss prevention, occupational safety and health, prevention of cyber and property-related crimes, workplace violence prevention, anti-terrorism measures, fire prevention and protection, urban security, critical infrastructure protection, screening procedures, alarm and CCTV monitoring, monitoring center operations, tracking and tracing services, integrated security solutions, front desk/reception and concierge services, security consulting, private security training, and canine (K9) services in their preventive role); *response/intervention activities* (mobile alarm response and call-out services, emergency medical response (first aid services), rapid response to alarms, canine (K9) services (active threat response)); *investigative activities* (corporate investigations); *operational activities* (event security and crowd control, door supervision, personal protection (bodyguarding), cash-in-transit (CIT) operations and transport of valuables, cash processing, aviation security, maritime security, protection of private residences); *logistical and support activities* (combined or

⁵ See more: Marković, M. J. (2025) *Korporativna bezbednost kao element sistema nacionalne bezbednosti u zaštiti kritične infrastrukture Republike Srbije*. Doktorska disertacija. Beograd: Univerzitet u Beogradu, Fakultet bezbednosti.

integrated security services, tracking and tracing logistics, monitoring center operations).⁶ The mentioned activities and services are implemented across various domains of private security operations. At this point, the following key aspects warrant particular attention.

Engagement on public surfaces and in public space

Public areas such as streets, squares, parks and green areas, playgrounds and sports fields play a significant social and functional role in the daily life of individuals and communities. This category also includes closed spaces such as markets, fairs, bus and train stations. Designed to facilitate movement, gathering, and social interaction, these spaces often constitute environments in which various forms of criminal behavior may occur. They are frequently characterized by manifestations of social disorder related to “indecent or suspicious behavior, as well as some forms of social deviance such as homelessness, public drunkenness or consumption of psychoactive substances, excessive noise, unsupervised gatherings of young people, insults and insults, confinement in a closed space, physical and verbal conflicts in the neighborhood” (Marinković and Đurić, 2025, p. 57). Add to that urinating in a public place, begging or lighting pyrotechnic products or shooting, as well as criminal activities, more specifically, theft, fights and assaults, sexual harassment and sexual violence, destruction of public property, possession and sale of psychoactive substances or, ultimately, terrorism. Private security carries out its activity in crime prevention in public spaces primarily through physical direct presence, patrolling and visiting critical points, as well as monitoring certain areas and points through video security systems. Members of private security respond to suspicious or criminal actions, whereby, in addition to notifying the competent state authorities, they can secure the scene, temporarily detain certain persons or, in accordance with the law, apply physical force. A key part of their activity is communication with citizens, both for the purpose of providing information and guidelines, and for the purpose of resolving potentially conflicting situations.

In addition to the direct involvement of private security in crime prevention within public spaces, it is important to highlight other relevant aspects that further illustrate the sector’s preventive role. Namely, when members of private security protect persons or property (objects, i.e., rooms, facilities and spaces in general), they can recognize and notice in their surroundings signs that indicate the planning or preparation of suspicious or specific criminal activity, as well as such activity itself, and immediately inform the police about it. For example, when visiting client locations, private security patrols may spot suspicious persons or vehicles, missing persons or they may witness potentially illegal activities. This aspect is particularly significant if we consider the claims that private security operates more in the commercial sector and business environment, and thus deters and prevents crime against individual clients, rather than against the society in which it operates (Muhammed and Musa, 2025). Although this

⁶ This classification should be interpreted with caution. Firstly, it is derived from a selected set of activities referenced by other authors and does not encompass the full range of activities described in the broader body of literature. Secondly, the classification is organized according to the primary function of each activity, which implies that certain activities may be relevant to multiple functional categories and could reasonably be placed in more than one group depending on context.

claim may initially be acceptable, it would not be correct because by securing its clients, private security prevents criminal activities at both the micro and macro levels.

Taking into account that the transport of money, valuables, confidential documents and other values that represent high-risk assets is carried out in public space, the role of private security in crime prevention can be seen from that aspect as well. To provide these transports, trained personnel must be present, specialized vehicles must be used, and security procedures must be strictly defined. This method not only protects the property, but also decreases the chances of property crimes targeting those values. At the same time, this form of protection represents an important mechanism in the prevention and suppression of organized crime.

Private security plays a significant role in the control and prevention of crime during public gatherings such as music events, sports events, etc. Then, the main task is to prevent violent and criminal behavior before, during and after the gathering. Public gatherings represent complex security environments in which different forms of criminal behavior intertwine. As a rule, the most common forms of crime that occur under these circumstances are violent behavior, vandalism, bringing in illegal items such as weapons or pyrotechnics, property crimes, illegal trade including the distribution of alcohol and narcotics, sexual harassment. In these cases, private security can be used for security consulting, for material and technical equipment or for the engagement of members of private security who, performing their activities, will promptly detect and prevent any type of violation of security at the gatherings. Depending on the specifics of the gathering itself, the latter most often includes the provision, in the form of immediate presence, of the gathering at rest or in motion or the provision of a specific zone where the gathering takes place, including crowd control; access control – checking tickets or accreditation, inspection of individuals, vehicles and their items in order to prevent unauthorized entry of persons or the introduction of prohibited items; visitor movement control – directing the visitors; observation by direct presence or by technical resources⁷ in order to intervene or forward security-related information to relevant subjects; and in case of unexpected (harmful) events, conducting evacuation and directing the movement.

The operation of private security on public areas and in public spaces also has a wider preventive effect. Not only does their presence and activities contribute to a safer environment, but it also reduces citizens' fear of crime, thereby strengthening the perception and real sense of security.

Corporate security – Organizational security

Corporate security is distinguished here as part of private security. In fact, it can be understood as a form of private security that is established in an organization (profit and non-profit legal entity of a public and private nature) with the aim of protecting the basic values of the organization (people, property and business) and achieving organizational

⁷ This primarily refers to the video security system. However, other surveillance and recording technologies, such as drones, are also being used, which contribute to reducing crime rates (Isbir Turan, Ali Tekine and Akincioglu, 2020).

goals, which is achieved by proactive and reactive actions of its subjects. Basically, it encompasses every type of security of an organization and is responsible for every security activity carried out in it. The scope of its work can be seen through the following areas: physical and technical protection, data and information security, human resources and employee security, occupational safety and health, environmental protection, fire protection and disaster and emergency risk management (Marković, 2025).

Organizations can face various forms of criminal activity. Without a detailed analysis of each of them, the most significant are crimes against property and economy, computer crime, crimes against general security, diversion, sabotage and terrorism, crimes against the environment. Let's add to that abuse at the workplace, as well as various forms of deviant behavior that can be a prelude to criminal behavior. The task of corporate security is timely detection and prevention of all forms of crime. In this way, preventing criminal activity at the organizational level also prevents criminal activity in general. In this context, it can be concluded that corporate security affects the overall level of crime, reducing it through the actions of its subjects.

Public safety also includes the protection of critical infrastructure. It is highlighted here because it represents the basis for the functioning of the state and society, and the prevention of criminal acts that are in any way connected to it (whether they threaten the infrastructure from the inside, outside or combined) gains more importance. Networks, systems, facilities or their parts have been under the management of the private sector in recent years and even decades, which opens up special issues of its protection. One of these issues relates to the recognition of the private sector as key to the protection of critical infrastructure facilities (CoESS, 2016, p. 12). Looking at it from an organizational perspective, critical infrastructure is like any other organization that is exposed to risks from various forms of crime. Whether viewed in its basic form or as part of it (corporate security), private security plays a significant role in protecting and strengthening the resilience of critical entities, as well as ensuring their ability to provide services.⁸ It also implies improving security and strengthening the resilience of the entire community.

Emergency situations

From the previous classifications of private security activities and services, it can be concluded that private security can play a significant role in the management of emergency situations. Private security engagement can be conceptualized along two primary forms: as a response to an emergency occurring within the organization itself, and as a reaction to an emergency declared at the community level.⁹ Given the topic of the paper, we will limit ourselves to private security activities in the event of emergency situations and crime prevention activities.

⁸ See more: Marković, M. J. (2023) 'Uloga korporativne bezbednosti u zaštiti kritične infrastrukture Republike Srbije', *Bezbednost*, 65(2), 197-214; Marković, M. J. (2024) 'Resursi privatne bezbednosti za zaštitu kritične infrastrukture u urbanim uslovima', u: Stanarević, S. i Đukić, A. (ur.) *Urbana bezbednost i urbani razvoj: Zbornik radova*, 471-485. Beograd.

⁹ About the role of private security in emergency situations see: Cvetković, V. M., and Janković, B. (2020) 'Private security preparedness for disasters caused by natural and anthropogenic hazards', *International Journal of Disaster Risk Management*, 2(1), 23-33; Radivojević, N. (2022) 'Uloga

In an organization, certain forms of crime can be manifested by malicious actions or omissions by people. Extraordinary events caused by the malicious actions of people, such as terrorism, diversion or sabotage, are especially highlighted (Kešetović, 2017, p. 602). In this context, private security resources can be used both for prevention and early response, as well as for remediation of the consequences of those criminal activities. Proactive activities include risk assessment and preparation of documents (primarily assessment documents and action plans), detection of early warning signals, that is, signs that indicate planning or preparation of criminal activities. Reactive activities in the context of crime prevention would include securing the scene, controlling access, protecting property, as well as conducting an investigation, that is, providing assistance to the competent authorities, in order to discover the perpetrator of the crime.

On the other hand, when an emergency situation occurs at the community level (such as natural disasters or technical-technological accidents), there is an increased risk of criminal activities. Then, private security has a reactive role – in addition to engaging in evacuation activities, providing first aid, search and protection of persons, it also carries out other activities such as securing space, facilities and property, access control (identity check, recording presence, directing the people and vehicles), implementing technical or physical-technical protection, temporarily detaining suspects until the arrival of the police, etc. Activities to protect buildings and property in order to prevent potential criminal activities are particularly significant, because property becomes an ‘easy target’ for crime, in this case.

Conclusion

Although various formal and informal social control actors contribute to crime prevention, modern security challenges highlight the growing importance of the private security sector in this field. No longer limited to reactive protection of property and individuals, private security increasingly assumes a proactive role through activities such as surveillance, access control, and cooperation with local stakeholders. Within the broader process of security privatization, it emerges as a partner to public institutions, especially the police, not only complementing but at times also initiating measures to preserve public order and safety.

The research conducted in the paper yielded several findings. Private security fulfills its role in crime prevention through *operational activities*. Through access control, physical presence, patrols and surveillance, as well as securing facilities and persons, private security entities contribute to the reduction of incidents such as theft, vandalism, violence and other criminal acts. In this context, the preventive action of private security proves to be an effective mechanism in detecting and deterring illegal or deviant behavior. In the context of *public spaces*, the presence of private security in high-traffic locations – such as shopping malls, stations, parks and public events – significantly contrib-

privatnog obezbeđenja u upravljanju rizicima od katastrofa, u: Cvetković, M. V. (ur.) *Zbornik radova Naučno-stručnog društva za upravljanje rizicima u vanrednim situacijama*, Beograd: Naučno-stručno društvo za upravljanje rizicima u vanrednim situacijama i Međunarodnog instituta za istraživanje katastrofa, 110-120.

utes to the preservation of public order and peace. Video surveillance, physical patrols and quick interventions in the event of incidents enable timely response and increase the sense of security among citizens. In the segment of *protecting the transport of value*, private security resources enable the safe transfer of money and other valuables, which reduces the risk of value being compromised. This function represents an important component in the fight against organized crime, especially in the financial sector. Within *corporate (organizational) security*, private security enables comprehensive protection of persons, property and business processes, which contributes to the stability of both the organization and the business environment, as well as the overall reduction of security incidents at the micro and macro level. *Protection of critical infrastructure*, which includes energy, communication, transportation and other key systems, increasingly relies on private security capabilities. In this context, the private sector has a responsibility not only to protect, but also to improve the resilience of infrastructure against potential security threats. In *emergency situations*, private security has a dual role: prevention and early detection of threats within organizations (such as terrorism, sabotage, and diversion), as well as community-level emergency response (such as natural disasters), including evacuation, first aid, access control, and property protection. Finally, the *social aspect* of private security operations should not be neglected either. Its presence in the everyday life of citizens has a positive effect on the subjective sense of security and contributes to reducing the fear of crime, which indirectly encourages community cohesion and increases trust in protection systems.

The paper pointed out the importance of precisely defining the role, functions and importance of private security, as well as the need for its strategic inclusion in the wider crime control system. Nevertheless, despite the positive tendencies, there remain numerous challenges. The first challenge is to develop a normative regulation that will define the competencies, obligations and limitations of private security and their cooperation with public institutions. Along with that comes the development of Public-Private partnerships as an institutional mechanism for the aforementioned cooperation. Through clearly defined responsibilities, information exchange and joint action, such partnerships contribute to a more effective response to security challenges. The next challenge would be related to standardization of work and professionalization of personnel. These prerequisites are necessary for both the public sector (police) and the private sector (private security), in accordance with the legal framework and adopted standards. It is also important to develop effective supervision mechanisms, as well as raise public awareness of the role of private security in crime prevention. Finally, there remains space for empirical research on the real effects of private security on the crime rate, citizens' sense of security, as well as on legal security and protection of human rights, which would fill gaps in knowledge and help in understanding the role of private security in crime prevention.

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