

## Security Industry Authority (SIA)

The Security Industry Authority (SIA) was established in April 2003 under the terms of the Private Security Industry Act 2001. It is tasked with regulating the private security industry effectively; reducing criminality, raising standards and recognising quality service. It has two main duties. One is the compulsory licensing of individuals undertaking designated activities within the private security industry; the other is to manage the voluntary Approved Contractor Scheme, which measures private security suppliers against independently assessed criteria. Following review for the Public Bodies Bill the SIA was placed in Schedule 1.

The proposal to abolish the SIA was leaked prior to the official announcement, an occurrence which arose from the requirement for the government to consult the devolved authorities on this decision. One of those consulted in Scotland leaked the information, providing the SIA with advance notice (Interview Data). This allowed the SIA to launch a pre-emptive response to the Government's decision, building on foundations that had been put in place in the case of such an eventuality, and on historically good relationships with stakeholders. This advance notice was seen, by one interviewee, to be crucial because "if you know what's coming down the track at you, you can take action to at least try and mitigate it", but "once the announcement came, it would be too late" to exert influence.

Prior to the official announcement made in the 14<sup>th</sup> of October, and after the leak, stakeholders sprang into action to lobby the government. On this front the British Security Industry Association, the International Private Security Association and the Security Institute took a leading role. A number of different arguments were used to gain influence, tailoring messages to the interests of the individual concerned. Hence, the defence implications of this decision and the negative impact abolition would have on the country's security were spelt out to Teresa May, whilst the SIA's own plan for reform (in train before the announcement) were emphasised to others. These different approaches helped to put pressure on decision makers and meant that by the time the list was published the SIA and its partners had already managed to convince the Government that it was reform, not abolition which was required.

The Government's justification for the abolition was seen by the SIA to be poorly evidenced as the body had already embarked on a process of internal reform to move away from licensing individuals to licensing companies. This policy had been developed by the SIA in coordination with stakeholders and there was widespread support for the move, support which the Home Office did not seem to be aware of. As one interviewee detailed:

They clearly hadn't realised that it was the industry that had pressed for regulation in the first place and that the origin of the Private Security Act was a result of years of campaigning by the industry. So it was unlikely, therefore, that the industry would be happy to go back to that situation of being unregulated.

The SIA played a limited role in opposing the changes directly, rather it used its links and experience to co-ordinate a campaign fronted by others, advancing an informal strategy directed by key members of the board. The SIA developed a strategy to last six months – a period they felt which would see them through the initial thrust to close bodies.

Despite the initial lobbying the progress of the Public Bodies Bill through Parliament was still seen to be important as reflected in the significant concern expressed by Lords at second reading. Their concerns were manifest in an amendment tabled by Baroness Royall of Blaisdon who argued that the SIA should be removed from schedule 1, citing police concerns over the changes and negative implications for the industry and the country's security (Hansard, 28th February 2011, Column 902). This amendment received support from Lord Whitty, Baroness Henig, Baroness Meacher, Lord Foulkes of Cumnock, Lord Ramsbotham and Lord Kenny of Southwark amongst others, but it was ultimately withdrawn. At the report stage a further amendment was tabled by Lord Kenny of Southwark to remove the SIA from schedule 1 which was supported by the Government (Hansard, 23<sup>rd</sup> March, Column 831). In justifying their position The Minister of State, Baroness Neville-Jones argued that 'it remains the Government's intention to abolish the SIA in its present form. We have, however, decided that this will be best achieved through a different piece of legislation' (Hansard, 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2011, Column 832). As yet, further legislation has not been pursued.

Stakeholders played a key role both in lobbying before the official announcement and afterwards. Post-announcement a number of organisations challenged the decision publically with, for example, Russel Kerr, managing director of SecuriGroup, arguing that the abolition 'may knock us back 10 years. There's a danger also that the serious and organised crime element would find it easier to get themselves re-established' (BBC, 22<sup>nd</sup> September 2010). These concerns were compounded by a co-ordinated response from the industry. This reaction is well documented by Brian Sims and Bobby Logue who detail how their respective publications, SMT Online and Infologue.com:

...called on the key industry bodies to jointly write to the Home Secretary asking for time and space to work with the SIA in deciding the best way forward. Organisations including the British Security Industry Association, the International Professional Security Association, The Security Institute and the UK Chapter of ASIS were quick out of the blocks – some of them with comments to the trade press, others with letters to the Home Secretary (Info4Security, 19<sup>th</sup> October 2010).

Subsequent to this initial pressure key players in the security industry – the British Security Industry Association, the UK Chapter of ASIS, The Security Institute, Skills for Security and The Worshipful Company of Security Professionals – came together to form The Security Alliance. Their activities have been detailed as follows:

On Wednesday 13 October, The Security Alliance sent a high impact letter titled: "Careful consideration is essential in deciding the SIA's future, The Security Alliance tells Theresa May,". This communication included the following comments:

"Regulation in the future could take many forms, not least that of 'lighter touch' regulation signalled by the SIA's chairman, Baroness Ruth Henig, earlier this year at the Regulator's annual Stakeholder Conference. The Security Alliance has already responded positively to this initiative, and pledged the industry's support in principle for such a path. Continued policing and enforcement by the SIA has also been mooted among the industry, and The Security Alliance feels that the SIA would be best placed to undertake this since independent oversight is key to maintaining

public confidence in the private security industry. As an industry-wide alliance, we stand ready to work alongside the Home Office to develop the most suitable framework for addressing the needs of Government, the public and the private security industry, and look forward to working with Government to shape our industry's future, if and when an announcement regarding the SIA is made" (commented the BSIA's CEO James Kelly on behalf of The Security Alliance)' (ibid.).

This prompted a series of responses from the Cabinet Office which ultimately committed the government to a '[p]hased transition to a new regulatory regime' and argued that it would 'work with the industry to take forward these proposals, and ensure that public safety is not threatened by significant non-compliance issues in the immediate future' (ibid.).

In responding to these developments Brian Sims and Bobby Logue argued that 'the security industry demonstrated great professionalism and maturity as it spoke with almost one voice in convincing the Government that the rumoured decision to abolish the SIA was flawed' (ibid.).

The media coverage of this case was fairly limited, yet some attention was directed to it. For example the BBC reported that 'abolishing the SIA will not save taxpayers money because it is largely self-financing, but a Home Office document, seen by the BBC, suggests the move would save security firms money and contribute to "reducing burdensome regulation"' (Campbell, 22<sup>nd</sup> September 2010).

Future regulation in Scotland and Northern Ireland will be subject to decision by the devolved administrations. A separate consultation on the position of future regulation in Northern Ireland was launched by the Department of Justice on the 17<sup>th</sup> of May 2012 and closed on the 24<sup>st</sup> of August 2012. It received 27 written responses; five of these had no comment to make, while four commented only on the vehicle immobilisation section of the paper. Most respondents agreed that, in general, Security Industry Authority licensing has had a positive impact leading to a raised standard of behaviour and an improvement in customer service (Department of Justice, 2012, p.4). The majority who commented on the relevant section also felt that a UK wide system of regulation would be most appropriate. This has prompted the devolved authorities to engage in a UK wide consultation being held by the Home Office between 20<sup>th</sup> November 2012 and 15<sup>th</sup> of January 2013. This consultation proposes 'a phased transition to a business regulation regime and a significant change to how individuals are licensed to work within the industry. The changes proposed would achieve a reduction in the regulatory cost and burden on the private security industry as a whole' (2012, p.4). However, a legislative vehicle for passing the legislative changes necessary for these plans has not yet been located; hence the consultation is seen as the first of a two stage process of changing regulation in this area.

### **Key Documents:**

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Department of Justice. (May 2012) Future Regulation of the Private Security Industry in Northern Ireland – A Consultation Paper.

Department of Justice. (2012) Future Regulation of the Private Security Industry in Northern Ireland – Response to Consultation.

Department of Justice. (May 2012) Equality Screening Form: Future Regulation of the Private Security Industry in Northern Ireland – A Consultation Paper.

Featherstone, L. (12<sup>th</sup> October 2011) ‘Commitment to Regulation’ Speech given to SIA Conference 2011 in Sheffield.

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Info4Security, 19<sup>th</sup> October 2010,  
<http://www.info4security.com/story.asp?storycode=4125992>, accessed 12<sup>th</sup> November 2012.

Security Industry Authority. (24<sup>th</sup> March 2010) Statement From Our Chairman, March 2011, <http://www.sia.homeoffice.gov.uk/Pages/future-statement-110324.aspx>, (accessed 6<sup>th</sup> September 2012).

Security Industry Authority. (15<sup>th</sup> October 2010) Statement From Our Chairman, October 2010, <http://www.sia.homeoffice.gov.uk/Pages/future-statement.aspx>, (accessed 6<sup>th</sup> September 2012).

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Security Industry Authority. (1<sup>st</sup> December 2010) Open Letter from Bill Butler, Chief Executive of the Security Industry Authority. Liverpool: Security Industry Authority.

Security Industry Authority. (3<sup>rd</sup> March 2011) Update From Our Chief Executive, <http://www.sia.homeoffice.gov.uk/Pages/future-update.aspx>, (accessed 6<sup>th</sup> September 2011).

Security Industry Authority. (January 2012). Future of Regulation – Factsheet. Liverpool: Security Industry Authority.