



Public Advocate for the City of New York

**UNDERTRAINED, UNDERPAID, AND UNPREPARED:
SECURITY OFFICERS REPORT
DEFICIENT SAFETY STANDARDS IN
MANHATTAN OFFICE BUILDINGS**

A Report by Public Advocate for the City of New York

**PUBLIC ADVOCATE BETSY GOTBAUM
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Executive Summary

Standards for New York City's private security officers are alarmingly low. Despite the heightened orange security alert that the City has been under since 9/11, neither City leaders nor private building owners have taken the initiative to train security officers to respond to terrorism, interface with police, or work with firefighters during an emergency. Upon interviewing over 100 privately-contracted security officers who work in 39 major Class A commercial buildings, the Public Advocate's Office finds that minimal training and limited enforcement of training requirements, combined with low pay, has left New York with a private security force that is ill-prepared to protect its public.

At a time when the Department of Homeland Security has kept New York City at a code orange terror alert, the City, businesses and building owners should have utmost concern for the public's security. Many officers report having much less training than the state requires or none at all, and have little to no background in pertinent areas such as anti-terrorism protection. 25% of officers surveyed have less than a year of experience at the building where they work. This report will demonstrate why current security officer training standards and enforcement practices need to be improved, compare New York's security standards to other large domestic and international cities, and explain why the City's Class A building owners need to play a more prominent role in developing and maintaining a professional security force.

Summary of Findings

- Security officers' wages are low, and healthcare benefits are unaffordable or not offered.
- Turnover is rampant: nearly one-quarter of security officers stay at their job one year or less.
- Most officers report having less training than New York State requires.
- Training fails to emphasize terrorism, working with police, or firefighters.
- Security officers are told to report emergencies rather than taught their role in responding to them
- New York's low training standards have not been revised since 1992 and are outdated.
- The State Legislature needs to update the curriculum and address terrorism in security guard training.
- The New York Department of State does not sufficiently police contractors to ensure that the security officers they employ are fully licensed and trained.
- High turnover in New York is due to low wages and lack of opportunities.
- Other large cities like Chicago and San Francisco use industry-specific minimum wages, which help promote a more stable workforce.

Recommendations

- The State Legislature should adopt legislation requiring additional hours of pre-licensing instruction—beyond the currently mandated eight hours—as part of a new minimum requirement to become a security officer.
- The Department of State’s Division of Licensing should strengthen and expand their auditing of security companies to ensure that all security officers are properly licensed and trained. Spot checks may be an effective tactic.
- The Office of Public Safety within the Department of State’s Division of Criminal Justice Services should revise and strengthen the training curricula to reflect current security concerns, such as terrorism, and update the curriculum regularly to address evolving threats and concerns.
- All private security officers in commercial office buildings should be required to complete comprehensive New York State-approved security officer training programs. A good example is Local 32BJ’s Training Fund 40-hour *New York Safe and Secure* program that includes state-of-the-art segments on terrorism, evacuation procedures and coordination with police, fire and emergency personnel during an emergency.
- As called for in City Council Resolution 569, the State Legislature and the Governor should allow municipal legislative bodies to adopt more stringent legislation in relation to training, background checks and licensing/registration for private security personnel to address the deficiency of current security measures.
- The New York Police Department should strengthen coordination with private security units and unilaterally expand its coordination to work with heads of small as well as large security firms.
- As part of a new citywide security protocol, the Police, Fire, and Emergency Response units and other first responders should all coordinate their emergency response efforts with private security firms.

I. Introduction

Despite the heightened orange security alert New York City has been under since 9/11, alarmingly few of the City's private security officers are trained to respond to terrorism, interface with police, or work with firefighters during an emergency. The Public Advocate's Office interviewed over 100 security officers in Manhattan's Class A commercial buildings¹—where hundreds of thousands of New Yorkers work and millions of tourists visit each year—and found that the City's security officers lack the training and experience they need to protect the public. This report will demonstrate why current security officer training standards and enforcement practices need to be improved, compare New York's security standards to other large domestic and international cities, and explain why the City's Class A building owners need to play a more prominent role in developing and maintaining a professional security force.

Improved Standards were needed before 9/11

New York City was due for heightened security standards in the aftermath of the 1,100-pound car bomb that detonated at the World Trade Center in January of 1993. It injured 1,000 people and killed 6 at one of the City's most iconic landmarks.² Following the 1993 attack, the City closed the complex so that the 22 foot-wide and 5-story deep crater of wreckage that resulted from the blast could be repaired, but failed to take steps to better prepare the City's private security officers to handle future acts of terrorism.

The nation was shocked two years later with the Oklahoma City federal building bombing on the morning of April 19, 1995. *The Washington Post* described the lifetime sentence of Timothy McVeigh's co-conspirator Terry Nichols as the closing of "a searing chapter in American history that underscored the nation's vulnerability to domestic terror."³ Three years after 9/11, these events might be better be described as the precedents of a new chapter in which America has realized that it is not free from the homeland threat of global terrorism.

New York City Security Initiatives since 9/11

The federal government has been working to adopt a culture of increased security awareness with the post-9/11 development of the Department of Homeland Security and the Transportation Safety Administration. In New York City, the Office of Emergency Management, along with the police and fire departments, developed the Citywide Incident Management System "CIMS" in the effort to improve disaster coordination; the Metropolitan Transportation Authority introduced a "If you see something, say something" campaign to encourage riders to report suspicious packages; and the New

¹ "A term used to describe a modern and superior quality office building with state-of-the art mechanical, electrical and life safety systems and high quality interior and exterior finishes. These prestigious office buildings typically have a strong market presence and attract city's premier tenants." (Branscan Real Estate Glossary: www.branscancorp.com)

² Newsday. *Got 'em; The verdict in the Trade Center bombing says it well: Terrorists will pay a price.* March 5, 1994.

³ Washington Post. <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/national/longterm/oklahoma/stories/chron.htm>

York Police Department now reaches out to directors of large private security companies to inform them of possible terrorist threats in their areas.⁴

The Case for Strengthening Private Security Standards among City Businesses

The private sector's level of emergency preparedness is especially important given that the 9/11 Commission reported 85% of the country's critical infrastructure is controlled by the private sector.⁵ In New York City this includes work places, public spaces like Rockefeller Center and the Winter Garden at the World Financial Center, and some of the world's most trafficked tourists attractions like the Empire State Building, which hosts 3.5 million visitors per year alone. A 2002 study on real estate trends conducted by Ernest & Young found that 65% of commercial building owners report that physical building security had become a higher priority after 9/11, 59% of businesses had analyzed whether to increase their investment in physical security, and nearly 1 in 3 corporations responded that security of company property and facilities had been elevated to the board level with a high degree of interest.⁶

However, New York City private businesses have not been proactive about preparing the private security officers who protect their buildings to better serve the public's safety. In June 2004, John Jay College of Criminal Justice security expert Robert McCrie wrote that the industry had failed to adequately follow-through with higher standards as the third anniversary of the attacks on the World Trade Center approached:

That terrible day had the possibility of 'turning' the security guard market toward quality: better selection, training, supervision, pay and benefits, and career growth for security service personnel. This would be matched with lower turnover. Personnel would be paid better. Suppliers would improve... it hasn't happened... Significantly the security industry itself has not moved the line in raising better standards. The pressures of the market drive cost down, which keep quality down.⁷

Private security is provided in a number of ways. Security officers may work for the building management directly or for a security contractor. In some buildings the tenants contract for their own security. There may be a number of security companies working in the same building, each with different training programs, wages, and benefits. The training, wage and benefit standards vary tremendously. Some officers report extensive training and high wages, while many others report minimal training and low wages. Every building, and in some cases every tenant, has separate security administration.

In New York City, contracts are usually awarded to the lowest bidding contractor. These market pressures combined with no industry-specific minimum wage or benefit

⁴ NYC Office of Emergency Management (<http://www.nyc.gov/html/oem/html/response/cims.html>), MTA (<http://www.mta.nyc.ny.us/mta/news/newsroom/seesomething.htm>), NYPD Apple (<http://www.nyc.gov/html/nypd/html/dcct/dcct-home.html>)

⁵ The 9/11 Commission Report. *Executive Summary*. www.9-11commission.gov.

⁶ Ernst & Young, LLP. *Trends in Global Real Estate: The Latest in Technology, Security, and Corporate Real Estate Strategy*. May 2002.

⁷ *Security Letter*, June 1, 2004, Vol. 34, No. 11.

requirements for security guards and lax training enforcement often mean that private security contractors skimp on training or licensing and employ workforces unprimed to excel in their posts. At a time when the Department of Homeland Security has kept New York City at a code orange terror alert, the second highest level on the scale,⁸ the City, businesses and building owners should have utmost concern for the public's security.

On average, security officers the Public Advocate's office spoke with felt that the remuneration for their work does not reflect the importance of their duties. One security officer described his low wage by saying "it makes me not want to work," while another put it more simply: "I'm not dying for \$9.80."

Updated Standards are Needed, Especially in New York City

The State's standards for training and licensing enforcement for the men and women charged with protecting our buildings have not been reassessed since 1992, before the first terrorist attack on the World Trade Center.

Upon interviewing over 100 privately-contracted security officers who work in 39 major Class A commercial buildings, the Public Advocate's Office finds that minimal training and limited enforcement of training requirements, combined with low pay, has left New York with a private security force that is ill-prepared to protect its public. Many officers report having much less training than the state requires or none at all, and have little to no background in pertinent areas such as anti-terrorism protection. Other officers specifically state that low wages promote turnover, and many officers with whom we spoke reported not being able to afford the health benefits available to them.

New York City is overdue for a security overhaul to provide private security officers with a more extensive, pertinent and regulated training and licensing protocol, along with improved working conditions that support the City's private security workforce under continued high warning levels. Their level of training, compensation and workplace standards need to match their responsibility to protect the public.

II. Methodology

Researchers from the Public Advocate's office interviewed 102 security officers (Appendix A) between October 14 and 19, 2004, who work in 39 of Manhattan's most prominent and iconic Class A commercial buildings and landmarks. They work for the City's largest private security contractors, including Copstat (22% of officers interviewed), Securitas (17%), Mulligan (15%), Topguard (14%), Summit (7%) and Classic (7%).

⁸ Department of Homeland Security. <http://www.dhs.gov/dhspublic/display?theme=29>

III. Interview Findings

Most guards report having less training than the State's low requirement.

- 12% of security officers report having no training at all.
- 17% have less than the State's required 8-hours of pre-hire training.
- On average, security officers reported having 19 hours of training while having been in their job for 2.3 years. By State law, a security officer in their second year of employment should have 40 hours of training. Only 6% of officers we spoke to report having 40 hours of training or more.

Training fails to emphasize terrorism, working with police, or firefighters.

- Only 37% of security officers report being trained to work with police officers.
- 37% report being trained to work with firefighters.
- Just 56% were trained to handle terrorism-related emergencies.
- 51% knew how to coordinate with emergency response units.

Instead, training emphasizes reporting emergencies rather than helping with them.

- 79% have been trained to report emergencies, after:
 - Identifying suspicious packages
 - Identifying suspicious people
- 33% have not been trained to help evacuate the building.
- 40% do not participate in regular emergency drills in their building.

Wages are low and healthcare benefits are unaffordable or not available.

- Reported wages ranged from the federal minimum wage of \$5.15 to \$16.25 per hour, while average wage was \$9.86 per hour. Most officers work 40-hour weeks.
- 43% receive health insurance provided by their job. Many choose not to participate in healthcare plans because they were too expensive.

Turnover is rampant: nearly one-quarter of security officers stay at their job one year or less.

- 25% of officers surveyed have less than a year of experience at the building where they work.
- Buildings replace nearly all of their security staff every one to two years, and one-quarter of those positions are replaced four times per year. Other studies have reported even higher turnover rates.⁹
- Low wages, reported by nearly 80% of security officers, and lack of benefits, reported by over half, were cited as the main causes of turnover.

⁹ Turnover may be as high as 600% according to the Freedonia Group. *Private Security Services to 2006*. 2002. 400% is reported by Howard Padwa in *What's Wrong With the "Security" Industry in the U.S.*, Labor Research Association: September 17, 2001. <http://www.laborresearch.org/story.php?id=66>

IV. Research Confirms: Outdated Training Standards, Inadequate Enforcement, and Low Wages are Prevalent in New York City

Experienced officers told our Office that in required training instruction standards are very low, and that they believe that their co-workers would benefit from remedial instruction. Of the officers we spoke to, 12% report no training at all, among a total of 17% who had less than the 8 hours required by New York State law.

The Security Guard Act¹⁰ established the State's training standards in 1992. Two years later, following the 1993 World Trade Center attack, the Department of State eased the Security Guard Act's requirement for a federal background check in favor of a state-level check only.¹¹ Not until November 24, 2004 did Governor Pataki sign a law to amend the Act back to its 1992 mission to run federal background checks.¹² This change, which will take effect in May 2005, is an important first step. Assuming current officers renew their license every 2 years as required by law, the City's existing 65,440¹³ security officers will undergo the more thorough background check by May 2007.

The statewide Act requires a security officer to submit a certificate showing that s/he completed an 8-hour pre-assignment training course and a state-level background check. The guard then has 90-days to complete 16 hours of On-the-Job training. Officers are required to continue their education with 8 hours of in-service training each year. Enactment of the law in 1992 changed the state's industry by mandating that security officers be trained and licensed in private training schools. Under the law, the State Division of Criminal Justice Services' Office of Public Safety provides administrative oversight of the program and runs the officer certification program, while licensing and spot checks are the responsibility of the Department of State's Division of Licensing Services. Each citation can carry up to a \$60,000 penalty.

However, a Department of State audit underway that compares payroll records with lists of licensed officers has confirmed multiple cases of private security firms that employ unlicensed officers, many of whom have committed crimes in other states or whose fingerprints were never even sent to Albany for the required check.¹⁴ The Department has referred half of the 868 companies audited for disciplinary action, issued violations to 193 security firms it found to have hired unlicensed officers, revoked 5 firm licenses, and issued \$3 million in fines.¹⁵

¹⁰ New York State General Business Law Article 7-A § 89-g.

¹¹ The Security Guard Act of 1994 amended New York State General Business Law Article 7-A § 89-i.

¹² Chapter 699 of the New York Laws of 2004 amends General Business Law Article 7-A § 89-h sub 10 and § 89-i, November 16, 2004.

¹³ Bureau of Labor Statistics, May 2003. http://www.bls.gov/oes/2003/may/oes_5600.htm

¹⁴ Crain's New York Business. *Security Guards Face Scrutiny: Government, Unions push for Better Background Checks, More Training*. August 30, 2004.

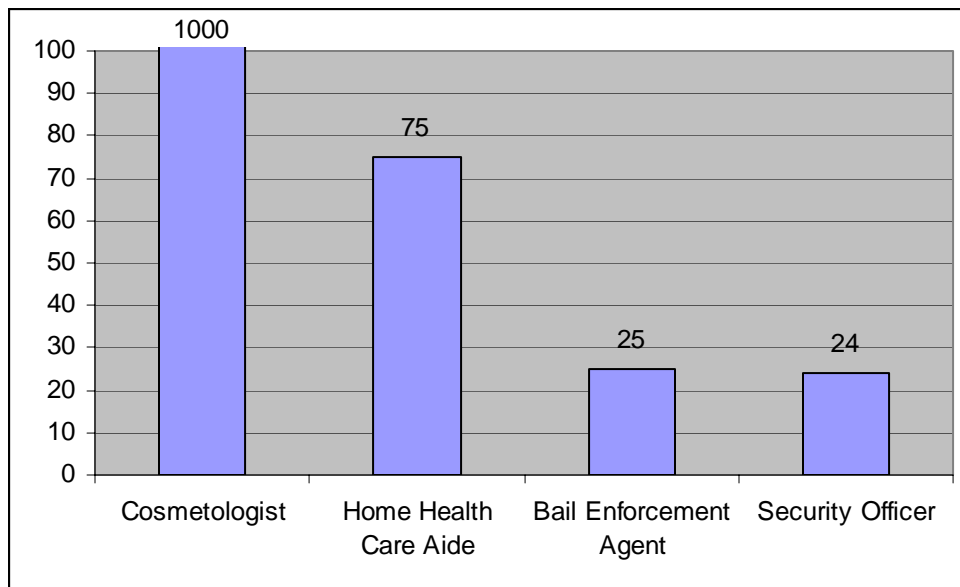
¹⁵ Ibid; New York CBS 2, *Criminals Working as Security Guards*, October 7, 2004.

Training Standards in New York are low compared to other States and Countries

New York's training standards still pale in comparison to states like California and Florida, which require 40 hours of training for a license. Many European countries require even more training and also update their training curricula more frequently. However, a 2002 survey of security officers in California, Texas and Florida found that approximately 40% of employers in those states had not issued new procedures to strengthen private security following 9/11.¹⁶ Our findings show that this trend is also true in New York City: 44% of security officers interviewed have not received training to handle terrorism, and 46% of security officers who have been working since 2001 have not received additional training in how to handle emergencies since 9/11.

Security officers also undergo far less training than other State-licensed professionals. There is a disparity in training requirements between security officers and other vocations such as cosmetology, home health aides, and bail enforcement agents (Graph 1). While there is no dispute that all of these professionals need to be trained well, it is unfounded that a security officer charged with protecting public safety needs only one fortieth the training that a cosmetologist is required to have.

Graph 1: Security Officers' training is far less than other State-licensed Professions¹⁷



¹⁶ Peter D. Hart Research Associates, Inc. *A Post-September 11 Report on Surveys of Security Officers in California, Texas, and Florida*. June 2002.

¹⁷ Cosmetology: <http://www.dos.state.ny.us/lcns/instructions/0034ins.html>; Home Health Aides: http://nyshcp.org/about_home_care.shtml; Bail Enforcement Agent: 19 NYCRR Part 172 (1)(b).

Wages for security officers in New York City are very low

While New York State does have training and licensing requirements, there are no special minimum requirements for remuneration or benefits for security officers. In our study, the average wage reported by private security officers was \$9.68, notably less than the Bureau of Labor Statistics reported average wage among all of the City’s 65,440 security officers in 2003 of \$10.62 per hour. It is evident that security guards in New York City make less than many other less skilled professions (Table 1).

Table 1: NYC security guards make less than waiters, maids, landscapers, and hotel clerks¹⁸

Profession	Number Employed	Hourly Mean Wage	Annual Mean Wage
Security Guards	65,440	\$10.62	\$22,090
Waiters and Waitresses	48,230	\$11.49	\$23,900
Maids and Housekeeping Cleaners	24,830	\$14.03	\$29,180
Landscaping and Groundskeeping Workers	11,350	\$14.58	\$30,330
Hotel, Motel, and Resort Desk Clerks	2,170	\$15.69	\$32,640

V. Higher Wages and Less Turnover in Chicago and San Francisco make them Models for New York City

In researching other models that have been successful in improving the quality of the security service and reducing turnover we found some positive examples. Both Chicago and San Francisco have established industry-wide standards for wages and benefits. Through a collective bargaining process, Chicago has established an industry supported training initiative based on a collaborative approach between the Chicago Building Owners and Managers Association, the Association of Guards and Protective Agencies and SEIU Local 1. Both the unions in Chicago and San Francisco represent nearly all security officers and most security contractors.

Chicago’s long history of low turnover and higher wages makes it a model for New York. The local union contract has benefits, holidays, and a starting rate of \$8.90 per hour—far above New York’s \$5.15 per hour, the national minimum wage.¹⁹ Its 25% turnover rate is far below the national average.²⁰ Last year San Francisco became the second major

¹⁸ Bureau of Labor Statistics, May 2003. http://www.bls.gov/oes/2003/may/oes_5600.htm

¹⁹ BOMA/Chicago-SEIU Local 1 2004 Security Agreement: April 26, 2004-April 29, 2007.

²⁰ SEIU Local 82. *Building Security: Working Together to Improve Standards in the Security Industry in Washington, DC*. April 2004.

American city to enact a security guard contract. Its agreement yielded a 22% increase in the City's wages for security guard to a minimum wage of \$10.50 per hour.²¹

Table 2: Manhattan has higher turnover and lower wages than Chicago or San Francisco

	Manhattan ²²	Chicago	San Francisco
2000 Population ²³	1.5 million (8 million in NYC)	2.9 million	776,733
Security Guards in Class A Commercial Buildings	6,000 ²⁴	1,800 ²⁵	1,080 ²⁶
Annual Turnover	44-100% Other studies report up to 600%	25% ²⁷	Decreasing since contract signed in Summer 2003 ²⁸ 100-300% reported in 2002
Mean Hourly Wage	\$9.68	\$10.80 ²⁹	\$11.88 ³⁰
Lowest Reported Wage	\$5.15	\$8.90 ³¹	\$10.50 ³²

Training Initiatives for New York City

New York City is rated as having a higher threat of security than the rest of the state and most of the country; however the State's Security Act preempts cities from having their own jurisdiction over their own private security standards. The City Council recently passed Resolution 569, co-sponsored by the Public Advocate, calling upon the State Legislature to allow municipal legislative bodies to adopt more stringent legislation in relation to training, background checks and licensing/registration for private security personnel to address the deficiency of current security measures.

SEIU Local 32BJ, New York City's building service union, which represents 2,000 security officers, is working to raise training standards and professionalize New York's private security industry. The union recently initiated a 4-hour Security and Awareness Training program, *NY Safe & Secure*, for the City's residential building workers. Working together with the New York City Partnership and Real Estate Board of New

²¹ SEIU Local 24/7 Bay Area Master Contract Summary, June 2003.

²² Annual Turnover, Mean Hourly Wage, and Lowest Reported Wage as found in the survey by the Public Advocate for the City of New York. October 2004.

²³ U.S. Census. *Cities, 2000 in Rank Order*. <http://www.census.gov/statab/ccdb/cit1020r.txt>

²⁴ SEIU Local 32BJ. *Security Campaign*.

²⁵ Phone conversation with SEIU Local 1. October 21, 2004.

²⁶ Phone conversation with SEIU Local 24/7. October 27, 2004.

²⁷ SEIU Local 82. *Building Security: Working Together to Improve Standards in the Security Industry in Washington, DC*. April 2004.

²⁸ Phone conversation with SEIU Local 24/7. October 27, 2004.

²⁹ Bureau of Labor Statistics, May 2003. http://www.bls.gov/oes/2003/may/oes_1600.htm

³⁰ Bureau of Labor Statistics, May 2003. http://www.bls.gov/oes/2003/may/oes_7360.htm

³¹ BOMA/Chicago-SEIU Local 1 2004 Security Agreement: April 26, 2004-April 29, 2007.

³² SEIU Local 24/7 Bay Area Master Contract Summary, June 2003.

York (REBNY), the Union has developed a 40-hour security officer curriculum with technical assistance from the City’s Police Department, Fire Department, Office of Emergency Management and John Jay College. The commercial security officer training program has gained broad support.

VI. International Cities Also Serve as Models for New York

In early August, national intelligence officials warned that the Citigroup buildings in Manhattan and the New York Stock Exchange are both likely targets for terrorism in the near term.³³ In this continual state of code orange alert, New York should be working to meet or exceed international standards. 9/11 proved without a doubt that New York landmark buildings are targets in much the same way as other global cities are targets of domestic and international terrorism.

Europe’s strengths are in its guard training and industry coordination. Security authorities in every member-country of the European Union apply to become part of the Conference on European Security Standards (CoESS) as well as Europe’s Union, Uni-Europa. Security officer reform is a continual process in Europe, and nations are working together to determine and unify high standards for the private security industry across the European Union.³⁴ CoESS recently held its 4th Annual European Conference on Private Security Services entitled “Towards a European Model” held in October in Madrid, which even drew an audience of American private security leaders.

Table 3: Europe: Higher pay, More training, and Coordinated security representation

	Manhattan	Berlin ³⁵	Paris ³⁶	Madrid ³⁷
2004 Population ³⁸	1.5 million (8 mil in NYC)	3.4 million	2.1 million	3.2 million
Lowest Reported Wage	\$5.15 ³⁹	€5.25 ⁴⁰ (=\$6.97)	€7.91 (=\$10.42)	€9.04 (=\$11.91)
Required Training	8 hours for license; 16 hours vocational; + 8 hours annually	40 hours	32 hours	180 hours plus 20 hours/year
Benefits	None	National Healthcare	National Healthcare	National Healthcare
Turnover	44-100% ⁴¹ Other studies report up to 600%	15%	66%	35-50% ⁴²

³³ New York Times. *U.S. Warns of High Risk of Qaeda Attack*. August 2, 2004.

³⁴ Conference on European Security Standards. <http://www.coess.org/>.

³⁵ Lilany Morr . *Panoramic Overview of the Private Security Industry in the 25 Member States of the European Union*. Union Network International: September 9, 2004.

³⁶ *ibid.*

³⁷ *ibid.*

³⁸ World Gazetteer, 2004. <http://www.world-gazetteer.com/>

³⁹ Survey by Public Advocate for the City of New York. October 2004.

⁴⁰ Union Network International. *Berlin Collective Agreement: January 8, 2003-January 31, 2005*.

⁴¹ Survey by Public Advocate for the City of New York. October 2004.

⁴² S curit  Priv e et Organisation du Travail (Private Security and Work Organisation): March 2003. http://homepages.vub.ac.be/~vcortese/SPOT-Espagne_uk.pdf

Most security officers in European countries earn more per hour than their New York City counterparts. Table 3 compares New York City to major European cities chosen for their comparable size and history of being targeted by terrorism. Most European Union countries also have national healthcare and provide paid holidays. While training in Europe ranges from zero to 265 hours (in the case of Sweden), most European countries require more training than in the United States, and train officers on more currently relevant information. Turnover, however, is an international problem in the private security industry.

VIII. Conclusion and Recommendations

New York City's public needs its security workforce trained in all key areas of safety and emergency prevention, and a regulated industry that upholds the State's training and licensing standards. Neither the private sector nor State Government has addressed these clear and persistent threats to the public's safety.

Research shows that the most productive and efficient security officers are those who are well trained and have real wages and benefits. New York needs to professionalize its private security industry with rigorous academic standards and a multifaceted training program focusing on anti-terrorism awareness. The 9/11 Commission recommendations, as they apply to private sector preparedness, cannot wait for another attack.

Better security is better for building owners, company employees, visitors, and the public. Professionalizing the City's security industry with comprehensive training and better compensation will lessen turnover, and make security officers more familiar with their buildings, co-workers, and emergency procedures. A more stable and knowledgeable security workforce gives real estate owners and tenant businesses a more sound and secure investment for their money. Nearly 1 in 3 firms have highly considered greater security expenditures since 9/11. More secure offices facilitate more peaceful work environments and more highly coveted real estate.

There is clearly a need in New York City for a higher standard of training and a level of compensation that would attract and retain a consistent workforce. Security officers are New York's first responders against terrorism; they secure our most precious landmarks, and protect our City's famous commercial and human capital.

The Department of State audit finding that nearly a fourth of New York's security contractors employ unlicensed officers is evidence that the State has not been devoting enough effort to ensuring that the security officers protecting our City and State's most visible buildings are properly trained, licensed, and background-checked. In an attempt to close the State's background information gap, the State Legislature recently passed legislation to require existing licensees to also undergo a federal background check. This is an important first step; however, the State has more to do to improve the industry as a whole. Reforming New York's private security industry will require multilateral change, including incentives for better wages, to further professionalize this industry. The State

Legislature must act with deliberate speed to either mandate a relevant topical training standard or authorize municipalities to adopt more stringent standards than the minimum State requirements set forth in the Security Guard Act of 1992 as recommended by the above-mentioned City Council Resolution 569.

To facilitate necessary improvements in New York City's private security industry to effectively protect the public, the Public Advocate recommends the following:

- The State Legislature should adopt legislation requiring additional hours of pre-licensing instruction—beyond the currently mandated eight hours—as part of a new minimum requirement to become a security officer.
- The Department of State's Division of Licensing should strengthen and expand their auditing of security companies to ensure that all security officers are properly licensed and trained. Spot checks may be an effective tactic.
- The Office of Public Safety within the Department of State's Division of Criminal Justice Services should revise and strengthen the training curricula to reflect current security concerns, such as terrorism, and update the curriculum regularly to address evolving threats and concerns.
- All private security officers in commercial office buildings should be required to complete comprehensive New York State-approved security officer training programs. A good example is Local 32BJ's Training Fund 40-hour *New York Safe and Secure* program that includes state-of-the-art segments on terrorism, evacuation procedures and coordination with police, fire and emergency personnel during an emergency.
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- The New York Police Department should strengthen coordination with private security units and unilaterally expand its coordination to work with heads of small as well as large security firms.
- As part of a new citywide security protocol, the Police, Fire, and Emergency Response units and other first responders should all coordinate their emergency response efforts with private security firms.