

Procurement of security personnel for the Tokyo Olympics in light of the failure in the London and Rio de Janeiro Olympics

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Development of the private security industry in Japan since the last Tokyo Olympics

The security industry is one of the most important industries that support the Olympics, particularly as the latter are an obvious target for terrorism, since they receive international attention; and when a serious accident occurs, people are disinclined to continue attending the Olympics, due to the perceived danger.

Interestingly, there is a deep connection between the Japanese security industry and the Olympics. SECOM Co., Ltd., one of the largest security firms in the Japanese industry, was established two years prior to the 1964 Tokyo Olympics, and grew dramatically as a result of providing security services for that event. In the year after the 1964 Olympics, the then Deputy Secretary General of the Organizing Committee established Sohgo Security Services Co., Ltd. (ALSOK), which is now the second largest firm in the industry.

The security industry has traditionally faced difficulties specific to it in procuring human resources. In the last two Olympic Games, in London and Rio de Janeiro, private security companies failed to meet the need for human resources. In light of this failure, a nationwide scheme designating both SECOM and ALSOK as official partners was developed for the 2020 Tokyo Olympics.

How will the Japanese security industry procure human resources for the second Tokyo Olympic Games? How will Tokyo exploit this great opportunity to present its current face to the world? In the following discussion, the author describes typical characteristics of the procurement of human resources in the security industry, reviews some cases from past Olympics, and discusses the challenges and possibilities of the Tokyo Olympics.

Three reasons why procurement of human resources is difficult in the security industry

There are three main reasons to anticipate difficulties in the procurement of security personnel for the Tokyo Olympics. First, the extent of procurement is very large. Roughly 40,000 security personnel were mobilized for the 2012 London Olympics, and roughly 85,000 for the Rio Olympics that ended in the summer of 2016. In the Tokyo Olympics, a total of 50,850 security personnel, consisting of 21,000 police personnel and 14,000 private-sector personnel,ⁱ are expected to be mobilized. Given that the total number of Japanese private security personnel is only about 540,000,ⁱⁱ we can see the extraordinary magnitude of this mobilization.

The second reason, specific to Japan, is chronic labor shortages. According to the Japanese Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare, the effective ratio of job offers to applications in the security industry in fiscal 2014 was 5.95, compared with an average ratio of 1.52 for all occupations, and a ratio of 3.69 for the construction industry, which is also facing a labor shortage. These figures indicate an overwhelming labor shortage in the security industry.ⁱⁱⁱ

The last reason is that the number of security personnel required varies greatly with the alert level. The government of a country may raise the alert level in response to terror attacks or accidents inside or outside the country; and because such changes are often abrupt and on a large-scale, it is all the more difficult to recruit and train security personnel to meet the increased demand.



Source of photo: Photo by Bloomberg /Getty Images

Military personnel mobilized in London due to a private company's failure to procure human resources

While the London Olympics successfully generated various legacies, it faced turmoil due to its failure to procure security personnel.

The initial plan was that G4S, one of the largest private security companies in the world, would mobilize 14,000 security personnel for the Olympics. However, just two weeks before the start of the Olympics, it was found that G4S could not, in fact, procure the number of

personnel required by the contract, and 3,500 military personnel were hurriedly mobilized to address the shortfall.

This was mainly the result of a stepwise increase in the number of security personnel required. While G4S's initial plan called for mobilizing 2,000 security personnel, the number eventually reached 14,000 as the alert level was raised. Due to the difficulty in recruiting such a large number of personnel within a short period of time, and the fact that some of those recruited did not end up accepting the offer before the start of the Olympics, the company could finally mobilize only about 10,000 security personnel.

Rio's failure to learn from London's experience

As the knowledge of Olympic management is passed on from one Olympic Games to the next, the Organising Committee of the Rio Olympics must have known of London's difficulty in procuring security personnel. However, strikingly, the same failure was repeated in the Rio Olympics, as management failed to procure security personnel on a timely basis, and for largely the same reasons.

In response to a series of worldwide terror attacks within the few months before the start of the Olympics, the Brazilian government announced in July, one month before the Olympics were to begin, that it would increase the number of security check personnel by 3,000. However, the private company commissioned with the task, Artel Recursos Humanos, could procure only 500 personnel, forcing the police to mobilize ex-service members and others to address the shortfall immediately before the start of the Olympics.^{iv}

Although the company's specialty was procurement of human resources, it had never procured security personnel before. Moreover, the 500 recruited personnel were trained only through on-line testing, and were not taught, for example, how to respond when dangerous goods were discovered. This failure in Rio further emphasizes the difficulty in recruiting and training security personnel for the Olympics.



Source of photo: Photo by Mario Tama/Getty Images

A unique approach to the labor shortage for the Tokyo Olympics

As in London and Rio, we expect to face difficulties in procuring security personnel for the Tokyo Olympics. Although every effort is being made, based on the abovementioned nationwide scheme involving the security industry's top two firms, SECOM and ALSOK, the mobilization of 14,000 personnel is not an easy task; and there is also the possibility that, as in London and Rio, the alert level and security plan may need to be significantly and rapidly revised, in keeping with numerous other modifications that have already been made in preparation for the Tokyo Olympics.

Nevertheless, there are positive signs for generating legacies in the Japanese security industry. As in London, a "trisection human resources portfolio" will be developed for the Tokyo Olympics, to procure human resources through trans-sector efforts of administrative bodies, private companies, and volunteers. It is thought that one reason for the shortage of security personnel, as reflected in the high effective ratio of job offers to applicants, is a negative image of the industry in Japan. This image may be improved by the active involvement of 14,000 private security personnel and 9,000 security volunteers.

There is also the possibility that technological advancement may dramatically alter the approach to human resources procurement for the Olympics. Recently, the security industry has been focusing on developing unmanned security systems using camera image recognition and drones; and it is hoped that, with the expansion of labor-saving services, it will be possible to achieve excellent security systems with fewer personnel.

If the industry can minimize the number of security personnel through trans-sector collaboration and the use of technology, it will be able to overcome the chronic shortage of

human resources.

In the coming Olympic Games, the first to be held in Tokyo in 56 years, the Japanese security industry is expected to present a new industry image to the world, which should enhance its procurement of human resources.

i "Candidature File", by the Tokyo Organising Committee of the Olympic and Paralympic Games

<https://tokyo2020.jp/jp/games/plan/>

ii "General Conditions of the Security Industry in 2015", by the National Police Agency

https://www.npa.go.jp/safetylife/seianki/statistics/H27_keibi_gaikyo.pdf

iii "Labor Market Analysis Report No. 61", by the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare

<http://www.mhlw.go.jp/file/06-Seisakujouhou-11600000-hokugyouanteikyoku/0000110648.pdf>

iv "Brazil Police to Take Over Security Screening at Rio Olympics", by The Wall Street Journal

<http://www.wsj.com/articles/brazil-police-to-take-over-security-screening-at-rio-olympics-1469814374>

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