

ALL-ROUND protection

Public awareness of safety conditions on board cruiseships has risen dramatically since the terrorist attacks of 9/11. Robert Beh, vice president of surveillance and security for Carnival Cruise Lines, talks to Phin Foster about why safety and security must be a top priority for every voyage.

Having a highly visible security team on board means that passengers can enjoy their cruise, knowing they are in safe hands



being replaced by increasingly complex and well-drilled programmes.

Robert Beh, the vice president of surveillance and security for Carnival Cruise Lines, has noticed an explicit shift in attitudes over the last five years. '9/11 ramped everything up,' he says, 'Properly designated ship security is now an international requirement, and the industry has had to react accordingly. Companies cannot afford to stand still.'

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Traditional values

The reality of security challenges can often appear rather mundane, for example, raucous behaviour by overexcited holidaymakers or on-board petty crime. Old-fashioned tactics are still readily applicable. Beh invests much faith in the rather unglamorous benefits of an on-board uniformed security force working in tandem with a shoreside security department, made up of former law enforcement professionals.

'Each team is highly visible, well trained and clearly identifiable,' Beh explains. 'Guests feel safer and any incidents that may occur can be dealt with smoothly and professionally.' All these officers have either law enforcement, military or private security backgrounds.

Beh concedes that this set-up is not unique to Carnival, but believes that it is the standards of training officers receive that makes for a particularly well functioning system. 'The most important thing is that the officers are multifaceted,'

Security conditions, both external and internal, have shifted markedly in the years since 9/11. Not only have increased regulations made the area more of a focal point than

ever before, consumer expectations and standards have also risen dramatically. This has made security both a safeguard and a selling point. Many of the more antiquated, unsophisticated attitudes towards security measures are



he explains. 'On-board officers have to be prepared to deal with anything, from petty crime to rowdy behaviour. It's a long list. We have to ensure that they are up to the task.'

On the subject of ensuring complete transparency and impartiality, Beh is bullish. 'If an incident occurs, people have to be prepared to step up and take action.'

Training procedures

Basic training takes place on shore, covering security procedures and instruction on a variety of ship operations. Once assigned to a ship, personnel undergo a more comprehensive schedule. The programme includes securing and preserving a crime scene, dealing with alleged perpetrators and victims and collecting evidence.

By the time they come to start their work, officers should be well drilled for almost any eventuality. 'Chief security officers also have to attend a 40-hour course at least once a year, at which they participate in seminars conducted by experts from across the security field,' says Beh, 'We have to keep learning and moving.'

Planning ahead

Constant training and self-improvement emphasises the importance of ongoing security reviews. 'The industry cannot afford to stand still,' says Beh, 'We are constantly reviewing our security, externally and internally, at terminals and on ships. There needs to be a commitment to providing an optimally safe and secure environment, and this only comes from future planning and initiatives.'

In order to plan properly, data is required. Beh believes that installing the right reporting infrastructure is vital if a comprehensive overview of reality and priority is to be realised.

'The chief of security on each ship will send back a weekly report,' explains Beh, 'A correlator will go over these reports and look for any trends or worrying developments.'

He believes that Carnival's size – it has a fleet of 21 ships – is beneficial in

Carnival safety training

Although security personnel who join the company are already experienced in basic security procedures, they still receive special training. Before joining a ship they must complete a one-week basic training course, which is conducted ashore. In addition to learning the basic security procedures used on Carnival ships, they are provided with instruction on a variety of ship operations and undergo intensive training in first aid, personal safety, dealing with emergency situations, fire prevention and fire fighting.

Once security personnel are assigned to a ship, they receive additional shipboard security training conducted by the chief of security and the assistant chief of security. This includes:

- Practical and theoretical instruction in preserving a crime scene
- Dealing with alleged perpetrators and alleged victims
- Collecting evidence

Shipboard security personnel also receive specialised training in crowd control and crisis management in dealing with a variety of emergency environments. At least once a year, seminars are conducted on board that include an update of any new security procedures, as well as training in specialised areas such as terrorism, bomb detection and piracy.

this regard: 'We spot trends and areas of concern far more quickly and are able to act upon them with assurance and speed.'

Being able to compile comprehensive data is certainly critical, but how one processes and acts upon the information gleaned truly defines its value. For Beh, cooperation is the key. 'Dialogue is vital,' he believes, 'Any trends or developments are picked up on, and we can contact the Drug Enforcement Agency, police forces from the Caribbean islands or any other relevant organisation instantly. Liaising with these parties makes life easier for both sides.'

Perhaps more surprisingly, Beh has

recognised 'a complete metamorphosis' in the manner in which he and his competitors coordinate. 'We are in constant contact with one another,' he says, 'Dialogue is completely transparent and we share in trends. It is vitally important that such relationships are maintained and strengthened.'

Such developments, in Beh's eyes, make for a safer industry. 'The sector is performing its duties very well,' he claims, 'With ports now having to be certified, a certain standard is being maintained. The issue has become far more focused.'

Regulations and common sense

This does not mean that there is no room for improvement. In recent years, the line has intensified its efforts in a variety of areas, such as children's programmes. 'At Carnival, we follow extremely strict guidelines,' he begins, 'Staff entrusted with children are exhaustively vetted, we have concentrated CCTV wherever minors may be present and, consequently, have experienced very few incidents.'

Beh does not dispute that more closely defined regulations across the board would help further standardise industry security levels, but believes that many of the safeguards are already in place.

'If you follow the IMO minimum standards then you are operating within the ballpark,' he says, 'The rules are there. Beyond that, it is about having an eye for detail and not dropping off the top of your game.' Guests would expect nothing less. ●



Profile

Robert Beh is vice president of surveillance and security for Carnival. Working with the line for 18 years, his duties include overseeing a shipboard security force of several hundred and a team of shoreside investigators. Beh has wide-ranging experience, including 20 years with the New Jersey State Police, working in the organised crime and casino gambling divisions, as well as two years at the Lucayan Beach Hotel & Casino in the Bahamas where he served as executive director of special projects.