

**SECURITY COMMITTEE
AUGUST 6, 2007
MINUTES**

ATTENDANCE:

Edd Siler
Félix Santoni
Erasmó Reyes
Agustín García
Antonio Maldonado
Luis López
Daniel Vasse
Julio Bagué
Agustín Cabrer, Jr.
Mary Jo Espasas
Agapito Cosme

OTHERS PRESENT:

Lt. Miguel Velásquez, CIC, PR Police
Lt. Victor Cruz, PR Police District Commander
Lt. Benjamín Orengo, St. James
Capt. Jaime Morales, St. James

I. CALL TO ORDER

Meeting was called to order at 6:45 pm by Antonio Maldonado.

II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Minutes of the June 2, 2007 meeting were approved upon a motion by Daniel Vasse seconded by Agapito Cosme.

III. SUMMARY OF DISCUSSIONS

A. Security Services

Antonio Maldonado reported that based upon the Security Committee recommendations the PHA Executive Committee and the PHA Board of Directors approved contracting St. James Security Company to replace Palmas Security and Protection Services Company as the security services provider for Palmas del Mar. Change over of services took place on July 21, 2007, ten days ahead of schedule, due to violation of contract clauses by Palmas Security and Protection Services. Primary contractual violation was Palmas Security's inability to renew its license to operate as a Security Service Company as required by PR Public Law 108.

A two-year contract was signed with St. James at excellent rates although significantly higher than the rates paid to Palmas Security and Protection Services. A pre-selected number of security guards that were working for Palmas Security were retained by St. James. These guards were personally interviewed by Mr. Antonio Maldonado, PHA Executive Director, and by Mr. Luis López, PHA Security Director. As agreed upon between St. James and PHA, salaries for these security guards will be above the new federal minimum wage level to stimulate retention and as a performance incentive. All security guards received a comprehensive retraining course based upon a new scope of work developed for each position of duty. Also, new Standard Operating Procedures (SOP's) for each post have been published. Major areas of training includes security patrol and surveillance, access control procedures, proactive community services, beach patrol and rescue procedures, equipment and uniform requirements, knowledge of the Palmas community, community rules and restrictions and training applicable laws and regulations. PHA as well as other organizations such as the ARB, the Business Association, PDMU and PDMPI are being incorporated into the security training sessions. New vehicles are equipped with first-aid kits and road-assistance equipment to help persons or vehicles during incidents or road emergencies.

Security Committee members commented that the change is already noticeable and good feedback is being received. Guards at the main entrances are strictly enforcing the access control rules and look very sharp in their new uniforms. Guards and patrols seem more proactive and engaging with people. Colonel López pointed out that services will continue through a refinement process specially over the next 90-days as guards are trained under the new standards and change in service orientation.

B. Police Assessment

Lt. Victor Cruz, Humacao District Police Commander, and Lt. Miguel Velázquez, Police Criminal Investigation Corps (CIC), gave the Security Committee their assessment of the delinquency and criminal situation for Palmas del Mar and for the Humacao area in general.

Lt. Velázquez from the CIC pointed out that overall criminal and delinquency rate for the Humacao region has been steadily increasing. Major crimes such as homicides, aggravated assaults, domestic violence and robberies are registered weekly while lesser crimes such as burglaries and illegal appropriations are registered daily. Fortunately for Palmas no major crimes have been registered, however, the CIC is concerned with the rise in burglaries that started last year. Although the tendency in burglaries have changed or declined in 2007, he remains concerned that a high number of these burglaries remain unsolved or without arrests.

According to Lt. Velázquez, he is currently tracking 16 burglaries reported committed at Palmas del Mar; however, cooperation from people is lacking. The CIC is unable to bring people to justice if people are not willing to collaborate in providing information, identifying possible crime perpetrators and being willing to have the cases prosecuted. His biggest concern is that the criminals are getting the message that its okay to steal and rob at Palmas because people are not going to accuse. Without an accusation there is little the police and justice could do and these elements will be back in your surrounding committing delinquent activity. Criminals need to receive a clear message from the communities and the most important part of that message is the willingness of those who have a suffered a crime to press charges.

Lt. Velázquez indicated that the CIC has good technical resources to trap delinquents. These resources include the use of polygraphs and finger printing. However, you need to have complaint filed against an individual to get the process going.

Mr. Maldonado added that in order to encourage the community to file and pursue cases, PHA has offered to have the Security Director or security guards accompany victims through the police and through the court process. PHA pays for the hours of those guards involved in assisting victims during these processes. It has done it already and the results have been positive in those cases where victims have chosen to pursue the cases with PHA's assistance. Unfortunately, this does not happen in the large majority of these cases as most people seem unwilling or afraid of pressing charges.

Lt. Victor Cruz, Police Humacao District Commander, pointed out that there is an excellent line of communication between the PHA Security Director with himself and the Police Area Commander. This has allowed for a close coordination and a quicker response when problems or delinquency tendencies arise. Lt. Cruz believes that workers at construction projects and individuals providing domestic-type services are contributing to a large extent to the burglaries and illegal appropriations experienced by Palmas in the last 18 months. Residents must be very careful who they hire to work inside and around their homes and who those employees bring with them when they render their services. Often the crime perpetrator is not the employee but someone the employee brings around to scope the surroundings and determine where and when is the most opportune time to strike. It is important that character checks be made on these people and that they be forced to go through Palmas security for identification purposes so that profiles may be established on these individuals.

Lt. Cruz pointed out that burglaries cannot go unchecked or allowed to take place without victims becoming involved. A very dangerous pattern is being established when this occurs as burglars are encouraged to come back and one day the victim and the perpetrator may come face-to-face and a tragedy may take place. It does not matter how much local security or police involvement you have, if victims are not willing to bring delinquents to justice criminal acts will continue to occur at an increasing rate and lesser crimes tendencies will eventually become major crime statistics.

Lt. Cruz indicated he will be working with the CIC on an analysis to establish a profile for burglars operating in Palmas in order to determine the best type of surveillance to deal with this situation. He also informed he has coordinated with Colonel López for at least two police operations a month. These operatives or police checkpoints will take place in the mornings or afternoons at different locations throughout Palmas but with particular emphasis at construction sites and service entrance/exit gates.

Daniel Vasse asked about the possibility of having PHA security implement at random trunk checks. Lt. Cruz explained that this authority is normally given to the police using reasonable suspicion criteria. Nevertheless, he will review the Access Control Municipal Ordinance to see if there is any way that such a procedure could be established by PHA Security. Mr. Maldonado pointed out that this matter was explored about three years ago. A legal opinion was rendered indicating that private regimes could implement such a procedure as long as they informed people in advance at the entrance point that their vehicles could be subject to a check upon departure. Information can be printed in the passes or in signs posted at the entrance.

Daniel Vasse suggested that having all employees registered with PHA Security and implementing electronic passes for them would contribute to alleviating the problem as well as improving the flow of vehicles through the main gates.

Regarding the question of assigning permanent police patrols at Palmas del Mar, Lt. Cruz indicated he is aware of the previous commitment made by the Police Superintendent on this matter. However, due to very low level of resources currently assigned to his District it will be impossible to honor such a commitment. The District had to reorganize and redistribute its officers according to a new plan and areas of responsibility. Patrols will be patrolling Palmas but not on a 24-hour basis. Of course they will respond to complaints or problems when called. Also, as in previous times they will also respond and coordinate special patrols when a particular situation or tendency is identified in a particular area.

Julio Bagué inquired into the possibility of using PHA security to patrol with the Police. Lt. Cruz replied that the police does not have such an authority due to the inherent problem of putting such guards at risk in a given situation. The police has the authority to use Municipal Police ; however, although tried in the past, the program did not work due to availability of municipal resources when needed by the police. Lt. Cruz also believes that PHA Security can significantly help the police by continuing to patrolling effectively and reporting and calling for assistance during problems or unusual situations. Also, since the police patrols cannot be at Palmas at all times it will not be beneficial to Palmas to have security riding with the police. It will be more beneficial having both patrols, security and the police, riding independently.

Both Lt. Velázquez and Lt. Cruz expressed their willingness to attend future Security Committee meetings and other community meetings as well. Mr. Maldonado will coordinate to have them attend the October Delegates and Security Committee meetings. The Security Committee members thanked Lt. Velazquez and Lt. Cruz for their presence and for their cooperation, suggestions and observations.

C. Beefing-Up Access Control

Based on the Security Committee recommendations, strict access control procedures have been implemented at the main entrances to Palmas. No one without an AVI sticker is being allowed to use the fly-by lanes unless specifically opened by security for such a

purpose. Also, anyone with expired homeowners registration stickers are being directed to PHA to update their access credentials. No employees are being allowed through the service entrance without a current pass. In order to obtain vehicle passes, employers need to submit a prior list to PHA listing the employees or workers, working days/hours and place of employment. Once the list is received by PHA, the Access Control Office can issue appropriate passes and identification credentials to the employees/workers provided the individual provides the required personal information such as name, address, license information vehicle registration information and any other information that may be required as outlines in PHA access control procedures. This procedure is in accordance with the requirements outlined in Municipal Ordinance No. 7, and applies to all concessionaires, construction sites, business establishments and other entities operating within Palmas del Mar. A memorandum outlining this requirement has been sent to all appropriate establishments and organizations.

The Security Committee pointed out that cooperation is needed from the regimes or its administrators to insure no unauthorized persons are entering those areas without the appropriate permit or the previous authorization from the resident for which the visit is intended. This will eliminate people driving around and reduce the potential for delinquency in private residential areas.

IV. SECURITY DIRECTORS REPORT – COLONEL LUIS LOPEZ

Colonel Luis López, PHA Security Director, distributed and discussed a comprehensive report detailing criminal/delinquency activity within Palmas del Mar year to date. It was noted that year-to date there has been a decline in burglaries and illegal appropriations while interventions and individuals detained and turned over to the police have increased. No homicides, sexual aggressions, aggravated assaults or car thefts have been reported. Three robberies have been reported so far in 2007.

During the month of July there were no major crimes reported. There were six (6) burglaries, three of them in Harborlights, and seven (7) illegal appropriations reported. A trend was identified in Harbourlights and immediate action was initiated. Coordinated action with the police and the CIC included lifting finger prints, identifying potential perpetrators through interviews with the victims and their neighbors, analysis of the perpetrators avenues of approach and laying out courses of action. Actions implemented included assignment of security tactical elements to this area at night, doubling frequency of security and police patrols, clean up of perimeter fence areas to include cutting down trees and building a 20-foot fire-wall and meetings with victims to recommend individual measures to enhance the security of their properties.

Ten rescues were performed by the Beach Patrol saving thirteen (13) people from drowning. Nearly 100 golf-cart fines were issued during the month of July. It was noted

that in spite of a very busy summer with an extraordinary number of visitors and guests at Palmas, there were no major incidents or problems reported in residential or commercial areas associated with this high level of activity.

Colonel López also reported that new procedures have been instituted at the Dispatch Desk to insure every complaint received is immediately assigned a complaint number for ease of information tracking, investigations and preparation of reports. Also, a log containing calls related to problems or reporting anything unusual or an event will be accurately maintained.

V. OTHER BUSINESS/ISSUES

Ms. Mary Jo Espasas pointed out that the strobe lights being used by the new security patrols are blinding to on-coming traffic. Lt. Orengo, St. James Services Coordinator, indicated he will look into this matter immediately and implement required changes to eliminate a potential problem. St. James is using dash-mounted white strobe lights.

Mr. Daniel Vasse and Agapito Cosme informed that the Sunrise community had also changed security service providers from Palmas Security and Protection to St. James. On the last day of services Palmas Security took everything that was located at the Sunrise entry gate. This included private information such as addresses, phone numbers and points of contact of residents and homeowners of that area. Also, information that had been posted pertinent to protection orders for specific residences, administrative instructions and general guidance to the security post were removed without notifying the regime administrator or its Board of Directors. This information is considered privileged and intellectual information that belongs to the regime and Mr. Vasse and Mr. Cosme are concerned it can fall in the wrong hands or used for unauthorized purposes.

Mr. Edd Siler recommended that St. James, CIC and police representatives be invited to future PHA Delegates meetings to share same level of information presented to the Security Committee. Contents of this information was excellent and the PHA Delegates will appreciate what is being done to protect the community. Mr. Maldonado concurred with Mr. Siler's recommendations. Both St. James and police representatives will be invited to the October PHA Delegates Meetings and to all future PHA Security Committee meetings.

VI. ADJOURN

The PHA Security Committee adjourned at 8:50 p.m.