

# Close Protection - Reaping the rewards of SIA ACS

In July last year Specialist Security Company Sec-Tech UK Ltd. joined a small band of elite companies when they were awarded with their SIA (Security Industry Authority) accreditation, making them only the thirteenth company in the country to be awarded with the coveted "Approved Contractor Status" to provide Close Protection Services.



Andy Redhill, Sec-tech co-founder and Director (right) receiving SIA Approved Contractor Status from Keith Leyland, Quality Assurance Manager, SIA, with Lynn Watts-Plumpkin, SSAIB Scheme Manager in attendance.

Former National Police Tactical Firearms Advisor and Sec-Tech Director Andy Redhead who has in the past worked with Royal and Diplomatic Protection explained,

*"There have been sweeping changes within the Security Industry over the past few years primarily the creation of the SIA (Security Industry Authority) who exist to manage the licensing and conduct of the private security industry whilst raising standards, professionalism and promoting best practice. The law now dictates that every Company and every Operative must be licensed with the SIA. Using non-licensed personnel is a criminal offence and will render most insurance policies null and void. This really is good news for everyone because it has helped to professionalise the private security sector."*

## So what exactly is close protection?

Andy explained, "Only around one percent of licences issued by the SIA are to Close Protection Operatives (CPOs). CP Operatives are required to undergo considerably more training and endure more rigorous testing than other SIA licensed personnel. The remaining 99% of SIA license holders carry out the equally important but more routine tasks such as Door Supervision, Manned Guarding, and Cash in Transit etc. The CPO's task is to continuously assess the environment that he/she is operating in (as an individual operative or as part of a team) to ensure that any potential threat or risk to the client (or Principal) is minimised at all times. Quality CP is all about non confrontation and removing the Principal from any potential incident particularly with regards to those who are permanently in the media spotlight. It is also about blending and fitting in with the Principal's work and lifestyle, thus giving the impression of no outward signs of protection. The Principal is anyone who may be at risk of harm. This could be a celebrity, sports star, a controversial figure in the limelight or simply a successful businessperson. The service extends to carrying out threat and risk assessments and developing personal safety plans, including residential protection and travel protection in order to keep them and their loved ones safe. The SIA have been enforcing the law quite forcefully more recently so the days of someone simply hiring a local Bodybuilder to protect them have come to an end. The SIA are now quite actively prosecuting those people and organisations who employ unlicensed staff.

## Threat and risk assessment

Businesses want to keep their people safe and people want to keep themselves and their families safe. For businesses we look at their current operating procedures and identify the risks i.e. for Lone Workers etc, the safe movement of sensitive material and documentation and we implement safety procedures and escalation procedures so that should anything go wrong, everyone knows what to do. With respect to individuals and their families we look at scenarios and create personal safety plans so as to minimise the potential impact of any risk or threat.

## What makes Sec-Tech different?

Most Close Protection companies employ predominantly Ex-Armed Forces personnel whilst Sec-Tech use, almost entirely, former Police Officers. This means that their people have a lot of experience of dealing with the public courteously and respectfully whilst maintaining control of a situation. It also means that when liaising with the Police, their people have an equal knowledge of the law and a wealth of experience to draw upon. All Sec-Tech Directors have front line SIA CP licences and lead their staff by example; they don't sub-contract out, but would rather use their own team.

## What does accreditation mean to Sec-Tech?

Whilst Sec-tech is confident in the quality of service it provides, Approved Contractor Status (ACS) accreditation means that the Security Industry Authority, the industry's governing body, has endorsed their excellence. Sec-tech was rigorously examined by SSAIB, as an independent SIA approved assessment body and feel that the credibility attached to this is almost immeasurable, in that it acknowledges that the organisation is of the highest pedigree and professionalism. The Directors of Sec-Tech are determined to build upon this accreditation, to further raise the standard of Close Protection services within the UK and beyond.

Recently appointed Commercial Director Bob Morrison added,

*"Gaining SIA accreditation was key to the strategic development of the business. It means that the degree of due diligence a potential customer needs to carry out on Sec-Tech prior to contracting us is reduced considerably.*

*Simply by having SIA Accredited Contractor Status people understand that we have been proven to work to the highest possible standards. It also reduces considerably the length of the sales cycle in that having overcome the source of supply concerns we can enter discussions further down the line. Gaining Accredited Contractor Status has opened up several new opportunities in the corporate arena to us where we have gained new clients as a result. I am delighted to say that our business has grown significantly!"*

## Sec-Tech's higher profile customers

Sec-Tech Director Tom Bell works closely with the O2 venue. Tom is located at the O2 arena in North Greenwich in London where his team supplies all security operation management for a number of venues including the O2 exhibition centre, recently host to the exhibition of King Tutankhamun's Treasures and currently displaying the world famous and controversial Body Worlds exhibition. Tom also looks after the Indigo live entertainment venue which holds events from corporate hospitality and classical music to all night clubbing events.

From these venues Tom and his team provide standard and emergency operating procedures which are now used across venues internationally and also incorporate business continuity planning.

Directors Andy Redhead and Peter Thompson have for the last two years made it to the finals at Wimbledon, providing close protection to the seeded players and the VIPs.



## Is the Sec-Tech service just for the rich and famous?

"Absolutely not! We have looked after the rich and famous and as Police Officers we looked after Royalty but the largest demands for our services are from the commercial sector," said Andy.

Andy explained,

*"Quite often we look after Business people from overseas visiting the UK on business. They are met at the airport in what at first appears to be simply a chauffeur driven car and taken to their host company or organisation. The driver then looks after them for the duration of their visit or as dictated by our customer.*

*The driver is actually a CP licensed operative, Police trained in evasive and defensive driving and is there to ensure that the businessperson's visit runs smoothly and incident free. Businesses regard this as a small price to pay to protect their VIPs. Furthermore it releases their staff and Directors from chauffeuring and entertaining duties and allows them to get on with doing their jobs. We can be overt and visible if required or we can act as the grey man and blend into the background. We do whatever is required to complete the task"*

## Planning for things you never want to happen

Businesses already plan for things they don't want to happen such as IT Disaster Recovery, Fire Drills, and Public Liability Insurance etc. yet often overlook less obvious threats and risks to their Companies. Sec-Tech's threat and risk assessment services are there to also ensure that best practice is applied at all times, duty of care and health and safety responsibilities are met and in extreme cases to protect against the potential of being investigated for Corporate Manslaughter.

For more information visit: [www.sectech-uk.com](http://www.sectech-uk.com) or contact Bob Morrison: [bob.morrison@sectech-uk.com](mailto:bob.morrison@sectech-uk.com) Tel: 0845 002 0696.

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