


# SECURITY LESSONS FROM THE 2016 OLYMPIC GAMES IN RIO DE JANEIRO

With large events such as the Olympics, there is absolutely no room for strategic planning errors – the consequences can be tragic. These events attract thousands of people from all over the world and require multiple layers of security, pre-planning and efficient coordination in order to ensure such a massive multi-venue and multi-week event is safe.

Fortunately, up to now, the Rio Olympics have proceeded without major issues despite a number of early strategic planning errors that could have been disastrous had they not been rectified in time. One of the early missteps was [the selection of a largely unknown human resources staffing company](#) to serve as the primary security vendor for  Rio. The chosen company was likely comfortable providing services linked to their core services, but event security staffing was not one of those core services. Not only did the company fail to hire the expected number of guards to act as venue screeners, Brazil's federal police union also [reported](#) to the Brazilian government that the company wasn't even registered with the federal police. Given these failures, Brazil was forced at the last moment to turn to members of the federal government's National Force, plus retired state police officers from Rio and elsewhere. To add to the confusion, news outlets such as the Wall Street Journal [reported](#) that even though the company was formally dismissed by Brazil's Ministry of Justice before the start of the Olympics, many of the company's contractors still showed up to work at various venues throughout Rio.

The circumstances described above outline a major breakdown in event security planning that resulted in more than 90 minute waits for the opening events the first day of the games and guests missing their events, forcing organizers to allow guests to essentially bypass thorough inspection. Untrained security staff responsible for screening jeopardizes sound security practices, and offer several lessons for governments and private industry in the importance of vendor selection.

## **Smart vendor selection is essential.**

Security staffing is not interchangeable with other staffing positions. When selecting event security, you should consider industry reputation and check the potential provider's references. The last thing you want to learn at an event is that your chosen security provider is just now starting to branch out into event security. When it comes to security, your event should never be a "learning opportunity" for your vendor. You also don't want to learn after your event is underway that tools like metal detection, [X-rays and bag check](#), for example, are not being properly used because spectator lines at checkpoints become long.

**Contract considerations are absolutely key.**

There are also lessons to be learned in the area of contract consideration. If you are utilizing a RFP to choose a vendor, it is important that the contracting officials understand the variations in security services so that the officials can make an intelligent judgment when choosing the best vendor. You should develop security milestones for the firm to show readiness for the event and those milestones should be accompanied by measurable metrics. Importantly, you should have a Plan B ready in case something goes wrong with your original event security vendor. Brazil was fortunate to be able to utilize retired, active, federal and/or state law enforcement resources when its planned security firm became unavailable. You should also consider whether to use a surge contract if you anticipate attendance varying dramatically.


These contract considerations are not an optional add-on. With today's threat environment the security staffing model of the past is no longer sufficient. Adding multiple layers to the management, supervision and oversight of the screening areas is critical to a successful, thorough and efficient staffing model.

**Valuable lessons can be learned from post-event analyses.**

Once the event is over, especially for recurring events, it is essential to conduct a post-event analysis. This analysis might look at what was deployed successfully and how future modifications might be used in the future. For example, Rio could have considered lessons it learned by hosting a number of soccer matches during the 2014 World Cup. You should consider tabletop exercises to refresh your security plan and look for ways to pilot new technologies.

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## About the Author

 **JULIE MYERS WOOD**  
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER  
[jwood@guidepostsolutions.com](mailto:jwood@guidepostsolutions.com)

[Julie Myers Wood](#) is the chief executive officer of Guidepost Solutions. She focuses on regulatory compliance, investigations and security consulting. Prior to joining the private sector, Ms. Wood served as Head of Immigration and Customs Enforcement for the U.S. Department of Homeland Security leading its largest investigative component and the second largest investigative agency in the federal government. She also had oversight of the Federal Protective Service, which provides security and law enforcement oversight for federal facilities. Julie can be reached at [jwood@guidepostsolutions.com](mailto:jwood@guidepostsolutions.com).



## JULIE MYERS WOOD

Chief Executive Officer

As the Chief Executive Officer of Guidepost Solutions, I focus on helping corporations resolve problems with government agencies, and ensure they are proactively addressing compliance requirements. Prior to joining the private sector, I held leadership positions with the U.S. Departments of Homeland Security, Commerce, Treasury and Justice. This includes serving as the Head of Immigration and Customs Enforcement, Homeland Security's largest investigative component, as well as the Assistant Secretary for Export Enforcement and the Chief of Staff for the Criminal Division at the Department of Justice. Throughout my government and private sector career, I have helped develop, implement and execute compliance programs and crisis management plans and responses across a wide range of industries for numerous companies. I am nationally recognized as a speaker

for my expertise on compliance, security, immigration and other law enforcement issues and have testified before Congress.