

[EXTRACT]

World Cup 2010: Four countries go private to protect teams in South Africa

At least four countries are planning to employ private security guards to protect their teams during the World Cup, Telegraph Sport can reveal.

Police protection: Argentina manager Diego Maradona tests out South Africa's security measures on a visit to Soweto ahead of this summer's World Cup Photo: GETTY IMAGES

Despite assurances by World Cup 2010 organisers over the safety of players and officials, several countries are already making their own arrangements.

Australia, Germany, Italy and New Zealand are planning either to engage a local security firm or to take their own protection to South Africa. Greece admits that it is considering it as "an option".

While the attacks on the Togo team at the Africa Cup of Nations in Angola do not appear to have had a direct effect on countries' planning, they have highlighted the attractiveness to terrorist organisations of what are known in the security industry as "target-rich environments".

The host nation has spent more than £100 million on extra security for the tournament, including helicopters, water cannon, highway patrols and 41,000 dedicated officers. But the use of private security guards is an indication of the reluctance of certain national associations to hand responsibility for protecting their players to the South African authorities.

New Zealand Soccer said it was happy with the arrangements by organisers, but that it would be "engaging a private security company who will support that provided by Fifa". A spokesman for the German Football Association said that it would probably employ six to eight unarmed private security officers to travel with the team to South Africa.

Italy's football association said it had decided to use private security, "but we do not know how many people yet". A Football Australia spokesman said it planned to use "some local resources".

Many of the other countries are waiting until after February's Fifa security workshop in Sun City before they finalise their plans.

The FA declined to comment on specific security measures for the England team, but it is understood that in addition to its head of team security, who will travel with the squad, it has enlisted security consultants BGP Global Services to provide secure transportation for the team in South Africa.

Lee Niblett, head of corporate intelligence at security consultants Red24, said that the hiring of private security firms was inevitable, given the scale of the event.

"It's nigh on impossible to secure every World Cup-affiliated venue," he said. "The South Africans are looking after the venues, training facilities and hotels, but in terms of the players, federations will probably want their own guys involved.

"The South African police have lost a lot of experience and are also bringing in a lot of new officers."

Such is the scale of the private-security industry in South Africa that their personnel outnumber police by three to one. Indeed, many of the officers being deployed by tournament organisers are security guards rather than full-time police.

Telegraph Sport has seen a copy of a briefing document that Red24 provides its corporate clients, outlining the major security risks to the tournament. It identifies Al-Qaeda sympathisers in the local Somali community as the most credible terrorist threat.

It also isolates the games most vulnerable to unrest and hooliganism. England's ties with Slovenia and Algeria are seen as potential flashpoints, as is Germany versus Serbia.

A spokesman for the South African FA said: "South Africa has hosted major sporting events and our security agencies have always been vigilant. There is absolutely no panic."

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Source: Telegraph.co.uk website (22 January 2010)

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/sport/football/world-cup-2010/7046733/World-Cup-2010-Four-countries-go-private-to-protect-teams-in-South-Africa.html>