Serbian Journal of Sports Sciences 2011, 5(4): 147-154 UDC 349:796(497.11); 351.758.1(497.11); 796/799(497.11) ISSN 1820-6301 ID 188276748 Scientific article
Received: 16 Nov 2011
Accepted: 14 Dec 2011



VIOLENCE AT SPORTING EVENTS IN THE REPUBLIC OF SERBIA AND POLICE ENGAGEMENT

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Abstract In order for police officers to be able to perform their duties and tasks in securing public gatherings and possibly restoring the disturbed public order, especially in the cases of large-scale outbursts of violence, they should be trained, equipped and organized in such a way as to maximize the effects of their engagement (e.g. in the period between July 2003 and September 2009, 4750 (86.06% of total number of measures taken at or related to sporting events) persons were apprehended by the police, 352 (6.63%) were detained, 208 (3.92%) were remanded in custody, etc.) as well as to minimize the effects of criminal acts in these conditions (e.g. within the same period, 1.533 (64%) criminal offences were related to the provisions of Section 20 of the Law on the Prevention of Violence and Misbehavior at Sports Events, and 2.990 (almost 45%) were related to other provisions of the same statute). The paper focuses on the organizational and technical arrangements as prerequisites for minimizing occupational hazards that threaten the lives and health of police officers as well as those of other persons, or that cause material damage. It is of particular importance that the paper specifically focuses on the security of law enforcers engaged at sporting events, i.e. while exercising their official duties against perpetrators of criminal acts and other offenders.

Key words: Violence, sporting events, police officers, use of physical action, police measures, police powers

INTRODUCTION

The social role of the police involves the execution of police duties and the performance of both their routine and special security tasks. The main characteristics of special police tasks, which occur in response to specific security problems, include the fact they are sporadic, exceptional, and very likely to induce the use of coercive measures for the purpose of preventing and suppressing criminal offences and violations. They involve intermittent temporary engagement of police units formed especially for the purpose of performing special security tasks, as well as a specific system of command. The specific tasks include ensuring the security of public gatherings, wherein the security of sports events takes a very prominent part. This type of public gatherings is characterized by a high-level risk of large-scale public disorders, perpetration of criminal offences and violations, which the police must prevent or suppress by restoring public order [23].

The central study problem of the paper is the impact of violence at sports events in the Republic of Serbia on the use of applied physical activity by law enforcement officers, in terms of both its contents and its scope. In order to realize the study, it was vital to identify the main features of violence at sporting events in the Republic of Serbia. This enabled the identification of cause and effect relations between violence at sports events and the physical activities applied by the police (in terms of both prevention and intervention). Finally, the paper explores the significance of this impact for the relevant elements of the police officer's working profile.

MEAN FEATURES OF VIOLENCE AT SPORTING EVENTS IN THE REPUBLIC OF SERBIA

Modern society in Serbia encounters serious violence-related problems. The problem of violence at sports events is remarkably serious and frequent, which makes it an exceedingly topical security issue. The complexity of the problem is aggravated by the fact that violence is a part of fan subculture, manifesting itself in the desire to inflict physical or mental pain to the opponent, rather than to support their clubs [16, p. 373].

All participants of the sporting events are exposed to violence, not only the immediate instigators but also police officers, spectators, athletes, referees, and other categories of the population. The data in Table 1 testify to this.

Table 1. Consequences of violent behaviour at sporting events threatening lives and wellbeing of the participants in the period 01/01/1997 - 30/09/2009 [1]

Fata	Fatalities Injuries					
Policemen	Others	Policemen O		Oth	ers	Tatal
	_	Minor	Grave	Minor	Grave	- Total
0	11	24	490	138	909	
0 (0%)	11 (0.00697%)	514 (32	.697%)	1047 (6	6.603%)	1572 (100%)

The tendency to violence at sporting events indicated by the number of the casualties and fatalities in fan riots in the Republic of Serbia within the observed period between 1997 to 2009 is presented in Figure 1.

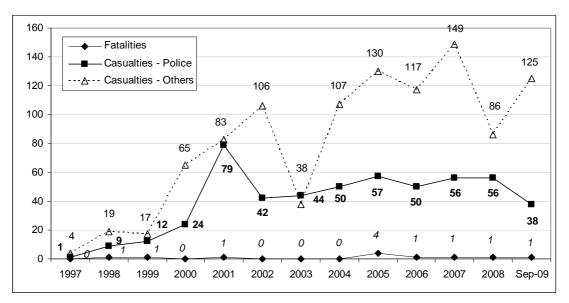


Figure 1. The number of casualties and fatalities in fan riots in the Republic of Serbia between 1997 and 2009 [1]

Violence related to sports events not only jeopardizes the lives and wellbeing of people, but also results in substantial material damage, reflected in the damage to sports facilities (e.g. breaking and burning seats and other inventory), public transportation vehicles (at which stones are thrown or the interior otherwise damaged, etc.), police vehicles, private cars, etc. Table 2 gives some relevant data on such damage.

Table 2. The number of vehicles damaged as the result of violent behaviour at sporting events in the period 01/01/1997 - 30/09/2009 [1]

Vehicles of RS MI	Other vehicles	Total
82 (23.1%)	273 (76.9%)	355 (100%)

Table 3. Main features of the analysis of violent behaviour at sporting events and its consequences to life and health of participants in the period 2009-2010 [16]

Year	Sports events (N)	Serious public disturbances (N)	Serious public disturbances (%)	Fatalities (N)	Casualties (N)
2009	43.692	130	0.0029	1 ¹	192
2010	44.748	102	0.0022	0	119

¹ The victim was a French national, Brice Sinclair Peter Taton. He was brutally beaten to death in Belgrade in September 2009 and the case is of special interest because the assault was prepared in conspiracy among a number of attackers, two of whom directed the very execution [19].

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The account of fan subculture is further combined with the number of sports events in the Republic of Serbia held annually. It is not surprising that there are vast numbers of serious violations of public order directly or indirectly related to such occasions, and the incidence of violent behaviour even appears to be comparatively small when compared to the overall number of events (Table 3). However, the problem becomes complex when specific cases of public disturbance are analyzed: for instance, during only one football match held in Belgrade in April 2009 as part of football championship "Jelen" Super League of Serbia between FC "Partizan" (Partisan) and FC "Crvena zvezda" (Red Star) as many as 18 police officer sustained injuries [8].

The data can be regarded as an introduction to an analysis of occupational hazards threatening police officers engaged during sports manifestations. The exposure of police officers to security threats is reflected in the number of criminal offences against police officers at sports events, as well as in the number of officers injured in the course of police interventions. The data are presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Main features of the analysis of police interventions during sporting events in the period 2009-2010 [16]

Year	Criminal offences against police officers committed at sports events (N)	Police officers injured in the course of interventions (N)
2009	40	45
2010	23	16

The data also may indicate absence of a significant share of crimes against police officers at sporting events² in the overall number of criminal acts targeting police officers. For instance, in 2010 this ratio was 1.224 %, given that the total number of criminal offences against police officers was 1879. However, the analysis of individual cases obtained a greatly different picture with respect to the significance of the share of criminal offences against police officers committed at sports events, primarily considering the incidence of grave bodily injuries sustained by police officers in charge of securing public order at sports manifestations in the perod between 01/01/1997 - 30/09/2009 (24 minor / 514 grave injuries, which represents 4.67% of the total number of injuries sustained in the analyzed conditions – see Table 1).

Nevertheless, not only supporters and police officers are the victims of violence in the sporting events. All participants are threatened by such conduct. For example, the number of attacks on referees distinguishes this category of participants as one of the most seriously threatened (see Table 5).

Table 5. The number of attacks against sports referees and the number of sports events suspended due to public disturbance in the period 2009-2010 [16]

Year	Attacks against sports referees (N)	Matches suspended due to public disturbances (N)
2009	75	69
2010	110	69

The above table shows that inappropriate security at sports events can be seen as another cause of violence against the referees and of disrupting sports manifestations. Namely, in the course of 2009 and 2010, a sports event was suspended every six days on average in the Republic of Serbia.

POLICE MEASURES RELATED TO VIOLENCE AT SPORTS EVENTS

A particular problem in our country stems from the police practice of relying on traditional police measures taken in response to security threats at sports events, which are regarded to be outdated in the broader international context. A prominent feature of this traditional approach, referred to as 'high profile' approach in the relevant literature, is conspicuous presence of uniformed police at the venue of a sports event and around it, made manifest through intensive official activities in relation to the participants of the public assembly and the number of deployed police officers as well as the duration of their engagement. An analysis of the above mentioned elements of the deployment of police officers at sporting events is given below.

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² Preventing a police officer from performing his duties related to security and maintaining public order, Section 23 of the Public Order Act; preventing a law enforcement officer from taking legal action, Section 322; assault on the law enforcement officer in the execution of his duty, Section 323; participation in a group preventing a law enforcement officer in the execution of his duty, Section 325, as well as aggravated murder, Section 114 paragraph 6 of the Penal Code of the Republic of Serbia.

When securing public order during sports events, the police are equipped with crowd dispersal equipment, special vehicles, as well as service dogs and horses. The officers are grouped into larger police units and engaged at the order of the commanding officer, who accompanies the unit at the location of its deployment. This strategy is based on the classical concept of creating a buffer zone between the opposing groups of supporters, i.e. preventing contact between them (by forming cordons or intervention lines), which averts riots that may arise if they clash, both in or outside the sports facilities. Plans and decision-making regarding the number of deployed police officers and their actions frequently fail to take into consideration the specific traits of different groups of fans (their objectives, nationality, number of extremist fans, culture-specific details, etc.). However, when such differences are not considered and when the police approaches the task of securing the public order at such an event routinely, the risk of large-scale disturbance of the public order increases.

Police measures related to protecting public order during sports events include physical security measures, in-depth security, traffic safety, operative crime-investigative action, anti-sabotage and fire protection. The measures of physical and in-depth security are of utmost importance. Namely, the physical security measures on the premises of the sports facility and in its vicinity are taken in three stages (prior to, during and after the event) with the deployment of strong and highly conspicuous police force. In these circumstances, the officers are in charge of admitting the fans to the sports facility, exerting control over monitors, preventing physical contact between the opposing groups, maintaining the order at the venue, and overseeing the dispersal of fans following the event.

The duration of the event is of immediate importance for determining the duration of police force deployment and the number of officers engaged. The law defines the duration of a high-risk sports gathering as the time of the actual event plus 120 minutes before and after it. This means that the minimal duration of deployment of the police force for the task of securing public order at a high-risk sporting event is approximately 360 minutes (6 hours). However, when the event is a high-risk football match, the gates sometimes open as many as four hours earlier due to the large number of spectators who must be scanned upon entering the facility so that two additional hours are added to the above mentioned time of deployment (at least 480 minutes or 8 hours). Therefore, the engagement of police officers in charge of securing public order at sports events lasts at least eight hours provided that there are no riots but, depending on the security assessment, the deployment may frequently extend to 12 hours.

The number of police officers deployed during high-risk sporting events is best illustrated by the fact that 25,000 spectators attended the Serbian derby between the football clubs of "Partizan" and "Crvena zvezda" from Belgrade on October 16, 2004, whereas the police force was 1.378-men strong, which means that for the purpose of securing this football match a police officer was deployed per every 18 fans / spectators. Five and a half years later, on April 16, 2010, when the semi-final match of the championship took place at the stadium of "Crvena zvezda", there were around 38.000 spectators, whereas 2.843 police officers were deployed to secure the event, which meant the presence of one officer per 13 spectators [20]. This implies that the already extensive involvement of police officers in performing security tasks during high-risk sporting events shows an increasing tendency, especially with respect to fan groups.

In addition to conspicuous presence, constabulary and patrol activities, stand-by status, marching, regrouping, and other non-intervention measures, there are activities of police deployment at sporting events which are referred to as interventions. Unlike non-intervention police activities, which do not have to be strictly regulated by norms, police intervention actions have to be legally defined. Besides, they involve the use of police powers that may impinge on human rights. Hence, the necessary and sufficient condition of police intervention is compliance with the norm governing interference with human rights [9, p. 110, 113, 114].

Police intervention measures include all police powers except warning, because it is not a coercive power (it may be observed but not necessarily) [9, p. 110]. Since the term *police measures* is usually used in plural, the term can be concluded to imply a simultaneous use of a number of powers. Unlike intervention measures, a police intervention comprises the use of only one power which lawfully interferes with human rights. According to Miletić "the measures imply the possibility of using multiple powers, if required, in keeping with the law" [10].

The intervention measures of police officers at sports manifestations are very frequent. For instance, the current data for years 2009 and 2010 point out to the fact that approximately the same number of police interventions were undertaken at sporting events in both years [16, p. 110, 111]. It should be noted that the sheer number of police interventions at sports events is not sufficient to illustrate the complexity of this police activity in the Republic of Serbia because questions have been raised regarding the interventions of foreign police forces within their jurisdiction on the occasions of violations performed by fans from Serbia in foreign countries on the one side, as well as the measures taken on the occasion of sporting events outside sports facilities, on the other side. The best example of this was the violent conduct of Serbian supporters at the Marasi stadium in Genoa (2010) due to which the football match between the teams of Italy and Serbia was canceled, resulting in additional engagement of police on escorting the supporters upon their return to the country [16].

The analysis showed that out of the total number of 2.391 criminal acts perpetrated before, during and after sports events in the six years of observation (July 2003 – September 2009), 1.533 or 64% were

subject to the provisions of Section 20 of the Law on the Prevention of Violence at Sports Events, and 2.990 or approx. 45% out of the total number of 5.534 offences were the offences provided for by the same statute [1]. Besides the Law on the Prevention of Violence and Misbehavior at Sports Events, the system of criminal justice offers other instruments of protection against violence, such as special provisions of the Penal Code of the Republic of Serbia and the regulations contained in the Public Order Act. Regarding the above crimes and offences, the police have taken extensive measures, as shown in Table 6.

Table 6. Basic characteristics of police interventions at sporting events in the period July 2003 – September 2009 [1]

	Total		
Apprehended Detained		Deprived of liberty	Total
4750 (86.064%)	352 (6.629%)	208 (3.917%)	5310 (100%)

The analysis of individual measures from the aspect of applied physical activity can be reduced to the elements of apprehension of the offenders because the two other measures (detention and deprivation of liberty) are not possible without it. Besides, the use of coercive power most often takes place in the circumstances preceding or executing apprehension, whereas in the cases of detention or deprivation of liberty coercion is less likely to occur and when it does, it does not depart from the pattern of apprehension.

Prior to exercising police powers in case of violence during sports events, it is most frequently necessary to gather the police units, organize marches aimed at their regrouping, deploy cordons and engage in intervention. As the result of the intervention, all persons who are identified as perpetrators should be apprehended. At sports events, the offenders are usually apprehended without a warrant as well as in case that they are to be detained or, rarely, deprived of their liberty. These persons can be taken to the premises of police or another competent state authority or any other appointed place between 6 a.m. and 10 p.m. Exceptionally, when apprehension is needed for the purpose of taking further police action that cannot be delayed, a person may be apprehended beyond this time span.

A police officer addresses anyone he/she is supposed to apprehend and requests them to follow. When doing so, the police officer warns the person that he/she will use force if the apprehended person resists or tries to escape. If there are grounds to believe that the apprehended person may resist, try to escape, assault the police officer or another person, or try to inflict self-injury, before executing apprehension the police officer restrains and searches the person, temporarily seizes suspicious items, and finally apprehends them.

However, if the person refuses to follow or resists apprehension, the police officer will use coercion. This means that in such circumstances the police officer has the right and duty to use coercive power, in a legally justified and appropriate way, in order to overcome resistance or repel an attack and to bring the person before the competent authority or take them to the appointed place. The police officer will also restrain the persons who resist apprehension, try to escape, assault the police officer or another person, or attempt to inflict self-injury. In order to subdue the person, it is usually necessary to use means of coercion, most often physical force and/or the police baton.

The use of physical force involves various elements of martial arts or similar techniques on the body of another person, aimed at repelling an attack or subduing the resisting individual while causing the least harmful outcome. An attack is defined as any action taken in order to cause injury to another person or to deprive a person of life, to forcefully enter a facility or the surrounding space wherein the entry is prohibited, or to prevent a law enforcement officer from executing his legal duty. On the other hand, resistance is defined as any opposition offered to lawful official measures and actions in the form of disregarding orders, kneeling, sitting, lying or taking a similar position by way of passive resistance; hiding or holding on to another person or an object; snatching, showing intention of an assault or taking any such actions as to present active resistance. Physical force is used in accordance with the rules of self-defence and its use stops as soon as the assault or the resistance of the person is overcome. The use of physical force can result in the cessation of resistance whereupon the person is cuffed and searched, items are temporarily seized, and the person is apprehended. If the desired objective cannot be achieved by physical force, the police baton is used. So the use of the police baton is allowed if the more lenient action is ineffective or without promise of success.

The service baton is used for hitting a person in the areas of large groups of upper arm or leg muscles at an approximate angle of 45° relative to the vertical - horizontal plane. Restrictions for the use of police baton involve the prohibition to use it in the areas of the head, neck, vertebral column, thorax, genitals and articulations, except as a last resort. The use of police baton is also limited in the case of children (persons 14 and younger), apparently ill, emaciated or disabled persons, and women whose pregnancy is obvious, against all of whom this means of coercion may be used only if any such a person should threaten the life of another person by the use of firearms, tools or other dangerous objects. The use of police baton may result in the cessation of resistance, whereupon the person is cuffed and searched, items are temporarily seized and the

person is apprehended. If the legitimate objective cannot be achieved using this measure, then more powerful means of coercion, most frequently firearms, can be used, in keeping with the principle of the gradual use of force.

Finally, the means of restraint may be used in order to prevent resistance of a person or repel an attack against a law enforcement officer; prevent the escape of persons; or, prevent self-injury or inflicting injury to another person. The means of restraint include, as a rule, the cuffing of the person's hands in front or behind their back. Restraint includes handcuffs, zapstraps, and other items designed for this purpose. The same restrictions apply to restraint as in the use of police baton.

The number of registered instances of the use of coercion at sporting events in the Republic of Serbia in 2010 was 39; physical force and the police baton were used on 20 occasions each, while no use of firearms, chemicals or other means of coercion were registered [19].

Having successfully overcome resistance or repelled the attack, a police officer will search the person he/she has apprehended in order to find and seize items convenient for the purpose of attacking other persons or inflicting self-injury. The seized items are delivered to the person who further processes the apprehended. Exceptionally, if weapons are found, they may be forwarded to the organizational police unit responsible for taking further legal action.

CONCLUSION

Police work and security threats to law enforcement officers raise numerous questions that cannot be answered without a thorough analysis of all determinants exerting influence on the observed phenomenon. The engagement of police officers during sporting events in the Republic of Serbia is characterized by the following specific conditions: the officers are obliged to expose themselves to danger, work long hours under unfavourable weather conditions at any location at all times at the orders of the superior officer; at the same time, they must resolve a large number of conflicts under stress and other factors which may affect their health. Besides these, problems have been identified with respect to the permanent likelihood of being wounded or sustaining injury resulting in permanent disability, as well as to the stress related to difficulties in making decisions on the use of force and firearms when there is a possibility of wounding or killing another person.

In order for police officers to be successful in their activities of providing public safety at sporting events in such circumstances, they should, among other things, possess a certain level of *specific professional skills and capabilities*. Basic motor skills have been identified as a significant factor in the performance of physical actions of the police related to violence at sports events in the Republic of Serbia as a requirement of lawful and efficient engagement. They are to be combined with the skills of self-defence and attack techniques as part of the use of coercive power, especially open-hand techniques, use of the police baton and means of restraint. They are required for both non-intervening activities (stand-by, formation from inspection line to marching and regrouping, beat and patrol duties, communications, etc.) and interventions (cordons restricting the movement of the crowd, the use of police powers and the use of force) in the given circumstances.

The listed activities of law enforcement officers constitute the distinctive features of their working profile. The scope of these activities is of significance to their working profile with respect to the overall number of criminal offences and violations, criminal reports, injuries to the participants, material damage, and other indices of serious violence at sports events. Moreover, the analyses of consequences of criminal offences and violations taking place at sports events (such as the murder of Brice Taton in 2009) and the study into security threats involved therein, make the problem of violence at sporting events and its marked hooliganism one of the most important national security issues in the Republic of Serbia, closely following terrorism and organized crime.

Bearing this in mind, some questions can be raised regarding the existing educational curricula and the need for continuous redesigning and implementation of new educational content focused on the execution of police duties and the use of police powers. Besides, permanent development of personal and professional integrity is very important, as well as cherishing the notion of accountability of police officers, which contributes to personal mental and physical development. At the same time, we should bear in mind that successful interventions aimed at restoring public order at sports events frequently depend both on the officers' mental and physical preparedness for such tasks and on certain individual aspects of their personality, such as neatness, decency, personal and professional respectability, etc. Further research in the sphere of violence at sports events in the Republic of Serbia as a factor bearing impact on the physical actions of the police officers should focus on exploring its mental and educational aspect.

PRACTICAL APPLICATION

Practical use of the study results regarding the impact of violence at sports events in the Republic of Serbia with respect to the application of physical actions of police officers is aimed at maximizing the effects of the police engagement while at the same time minimizing the effects of violations and crimes committed during public assemblies. Legal regulations, instructions and prescribed procedures present the normative ground

for engaging the police in the execution of certain tasks. The regulations are developed making use of the findings on the impact of violence at sports events in the Republic of Serbia when defining physical actions by the police, so as to allow for balanced, rational, lawful and efficient performance of police tasks and duties related to the security of public gatherings. It is therefore possible to adopt special regulations and internal rules pertaining to the tasks of ensuring security of sports events, specifying police deployment in the conditions described and taking into account the factors related to violent behaviour of supporters at sporting events.

Preparations for professional execution of police tasks and duties in the Republic of Serbia include the education of personnel at the Academy of Criminalistic and Police Studies in Belgrade, professional inservice training and development programmes in specific organizational units of the RS MOI, permanent inservice training of police officers in their line of work, and the preparations immediate to the specific task of securing a sporting event.

The purpose of the immediate professional preparations for the execution of security tasks related to sporting events is to inform police troops about the specific task and the manner in which it is to be performed, its tactics and rules. Such direct professional preparations for specific tasks invariably involve practical exercise of certain tactical procedures and the use of certain physical actions. High level of continuous mental and physical preparations are of particular importance for the successful performance of long-lasting, exhausting tasks of securing public order during sports events and suppressing violence caused by rioting fans.

Such professional preparation is marked by comprehensive sharing of knowledge among police officers, both theoretical and practical. The educational aspect of this relation is reflected in the need to adapt to specific features of police work, especially in the conditions described above, and to accept this modality of work as inherent both to the occupation and the lifestyle (long working hours, stress exposure, unfavourable weather and terrain conditions, duty to face danger, possibility of sustaining injury, health hazard, or even loss or taking of life) (compare: [21, p. 188]).

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The paper has resulted from the project entitled The Effects of Applied Physical Activity on the Locomotive, Metabolic, Psycho-Social and Educational Status of the Population in the Republic of Serbia reg. no. III47015, as part of the sub-project entitled The Effects of Applied Physical Activity on the Locomotive, Metabolic, Psycho-Social and Educational Status of the Police Population in the Republic of Serbia, financed by the Ministry of Science and Technology Development of the Republic of Serbia - The Cycle of Scientific Projects 2011-2014.

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