



Policing tourism: the emergence of specialist units

Rob Mawby, Kwaku Boakye & Carol Jones

To cite this article: Rob Mawby, Kwaku Boakye & Carol Jones (2015) Policing tourism: the emergence of specialist units, *Policing and Society*, 25:4, 378-392, DOI: [10.1080/10439463.2013.870174](https://doi.org/10.1080/10439463.2013.870174)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/10439463.2013.870174>



Published online: 10 Jan 2014.



Submit your article to this journal [↗](#)



Article views: 714



View related articles [↗](#)



View Crossmark data [↗](#)



Citing articles: 8 View citing articles [↗](#)

Policing tourism: the emergence of specialist units

Rob Mawby^{a*}, Kwaku Boakyee^b and Carol Jones^c

^a*Centre for Criminology, University of South Wales, Newport, UK;* ^b*Department of Hospitality and Tourism, University of Cape Coast, Cape Coast, Ghana;* ^c*Faculty of Applied Sciences, University of Gloucestershire, Cheltenham, UK*

(Received 28 March 2013; accepted 19 November 2013)

Specialist tourist police units are a recent development in many countries where tourism is important to the economy and where crimes associated with tourism are recognised. However, such developments are scarcely universal. This paper focuses on three contrasting examples: the UK, where there are no specialist tourist police, despite a clear relationship between tourism and crime and disorder; Ghana, where tourist police have been introduced relatively recently; and the USA, where tourist police units are an established part of policing structures in tourist areas like Florida. After describing the current situation in each area, the paper concludes with a discussion of the advantages and disadvantages of specialist units and the reasons why contrasting policies have emerged.

Keywords: tourism; TOPS; tourist police; tourism police units

Introduction

One of the key features of post-modern police systems is a move towards specialist police units, targeting specific offences, victim groups, offenders or a combination of all three. One subcategory that has been recognised as closely identified with a high incidence of crime and disorder is tourism (Ryan 1993, Pizam and Mansfeld 1996, Mansfeld and Pizam 2006, Botterill and Jones 2010, Jones *et al.* 2012). Many tourist resorts, particularly those catering for youth tourism, are crime and disorder hot spots (Walmsley *et al.* 1983, Kelly 1993, Prideaux 1996, Pelfrey 1998, de Albuquerque and McElroy 1999); tourists are often seen as causing problems, especially associated with alcohol-related crime and antisocial behaviour (Cohen 1980, Homel *et al.* 1997, Bellis *et al.* 2000, Barton and James 2003, Jones *et al.* 2012); and tourists are regularly identified as at high risk of victimisation (Stangeland 1998, Mawby *et al.* 1999, Mawby 2000, Harper 2001, Botterill and Jones 2010, Mawby *et al.* 2010).

Given that the economies of many countries are heavily dependent on tourism (United Nations World Tourism Organization [UNTWO] 2013), it is therefore of little surprise that specialist police units have been formed in a number of countries to address tourism-related crime and disorder. Based in tourism centres, these may act in a preventive capacity through patrols and/or provide support to tourists who have been victimised. These public sector tourism police units are only one of a number of measures aimed at tourism-related crime and disorder, which include private police deployed in hotels and

*Corresponding author. Email: professorrobmawby@hotmail.com

amusement parks like Disney (Shearing and Stenning 1996, Jones 2010), specialist victim support, multi-agency partnerships and crime reduction measures such as target hardening and Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (Homel *et al.* 1997, Mawby and Jones 2007, Botterill *et al.* 2013, Mawby 2014). They are, nonetheless, a significant development.

The need to adopt tourism-based crime policies was recognised by the UN as long ago as 1991 at the UNWTO conference in Buenos Aires. Policies were classified into three broad categories: preventive measures, facilitative assistance and international cooperation. Preventive measures required countries to monitor the scope and degree of threat to the life and health, property and economic interests of tourists within their territory and develop a national policy on tourism safety commensurate with the prevention of tourist risks. Under facilitative assistance, states were expected to facilitate the possibility of participation by a tourist in such proceedings particularly in the case of the most serious offences. Finally, international cooperation required member states to cooperate, on a bilateral and multilateral basis, and, if possible, within the already existing legal framework, in the areas of information exchange and crime statistics.

Two broad genres of public policing strategies have been adopted worldwide to meet these requirements. The first of these interventions can be labelled 'tourism-specific police operations'. These are usually embarked upon by the police as preemptive attempts to discourage the incidence of tourist victimisation. They involve patrols being assigned to key hot spots and in some cases personnel being stationed there semi-permanently during the period of the intervention. Often, the emphasis of such police efforts is on robbery. The Dade County Police Department, Florida, for example, initiated the Tourist Robbery Abatement Programme in response to a widely publicised local problem (Brayshaw 1995). Similar strategies have been adopted by the police departments in Nairobi (D'Arcy 1995), New Orleans and Cape Town (Pizam *et al.* 1997), and New Zealand (Barker *et al.* 2002). It must also be noted that such operations are normally carried out purposely for some specific season or event.

The second strategy concerns the establishment of tourism police units. This is a relatively new approach employed across many parts of the world in which dedicated police units are specifically trained for tourism-related activities. In recent times, many major tourist destinations are adopting this approach because it provides adequate attention to tourists while ensuring that regular police work continues (Tarlow 2000). Normally, these units are headed by a police officer of the rank of inspector or similar and aim primarily at protecting tourists from victimisation, although they may also cover offending by tourists.¹ In addition to their policing roles, the units exist for the speedy processing of victimisation complaints to their logical conclusion, be they arrests, retrieval of stolen items or prosecution. In Egypt, for example, where tourists have been targeted by politically motivated factions (Mawby 2010), the tourism police are stationed at every hotel as well as major attractions. Tourism police units are more permanent and normally represent a higher level of commitment by the destination to fight tourist victimisation and, in the event that it occurs, ensure a quick processing of complaints and if possible a satisfactory resolution.

While tourism police units are still by no means universal, they have been established in a range of countries (D'Arcy 1995, World Tourism Organisation 1996, Tarlow 2000). One of the earliest and most ambitious developments was in Thailand. There the tourist police was established in the 1970s with 60 officers. Its services were subsequently expanded and it was restructured in 1990 with the formation of the Tourist Assistance

Centre, whose aims were to provide services for tourists regarding complaints about crime and other problems. The service has more recently been reorganised as the Tourist Police Division of the Central Investigation Bureau. The tourist police co-ordinates with the Tourism Authority of Thailand and provides help for tourists who have experienced difficulties during their visit to Thailand. They are responsible for handling claims and complaints and investigating any problems which tourists have experienced.² In Europe, Greece is an example of a country adopting a similar strategy. There are 64 tourist police departments that aim to help domestic and foreign tourists. Officers are allegedly 'well trained and bilingual' and ready to respond to 'every possible problem that may occur during the period of visiting our country'.³

Whereas the internet is a prolific source of data on tourism police units, there has been little academic research on their introduction or operations. In one notable exception, Pizam *et al.* (1997) provide a review of police policy towards tourism in three major tourism areas, Orlando and New Orleans in the USA and Cape Town in South Africa, through semi-structured interviews with key players. All three sites had suffered the negative effects of crimes aimed at tourists and had responded by setting up specialist tourist units within the police. In South Africa, the nationally organised South African Police Service operated tourism units in five tourism centres, including Cape Town. It focused on crime prevention and worked in partnership with tourism assistance units arranged by the tourist industry to provide a 'policing umbrella' of support.⁴ In New Orleans, a special area based police unit was formed in 1985, concentrated in the main tourist area. Some 60 officers were specially trained to deal with tourist crime. The emphasis, again, was largely on working in partnership with the tourism industry and through increased patrols in hot spots. In Florida, Orange County Sheriff's Department was one of the first in the country to form a specialist unit, the Tourist-oriented Police Service (TOPS). Comprising some 60 officers, TOPS was involved in providing crime prevention advice to hotels as well as high-profile police patrols. The sheriff's department also operated a victim assistance programme, with an emphasis upon helping tourist victims.

In a similar vein, the remainder of this paper addresses the development of tourism police units through a comparison of three areas of the world.

- Cornwall, as an example from England and Wales, where there are no specialist tourist police.
- Ghana, in Africa, where a tourism police unit has recently been established.
- And Florida, as an example from the USA, with a firmly established system in operation.

The examples chosen reflect the expertise and previous research of the three authors. Most importantly, though, the case studies cover examples where tourism-related crime and disorder is recognised as a problem but where the response to it differs markedly. In contrasting the situation in areas with very different responses to the crime and disorder problems associated with tourism, we seek to explain why a dedicated police response has emerged in Florida and, latterly, Ghana, but not the UK, and evaluate the need for such specialist units.

Cornwall (England and Wales)

The Devon and Cornwall Constabulary constitutes one of 43 police force areas within England and Wales. In September 2011, there were 3312 FTE-accredited officers and 352 Police Community Support Officers in the force (Dhani 2012). The force area is divided into three departments, comprising Cornwall, Plymouth and the rest of Devon.⁵ Both Cornwall and Devon are heavily dependent upon tourism. In Devon, this covers both the north and south coasts and inland rural national parks, with Torbay, in South Devon, the major site of mass tourism.

Cornwall, a county of about half a million people, is even more reliant on tourism. The 2001 census indicated that the numbers employed in hotels and catering alone exceeded the combined total in agriculture and fishing, the two traditional employment sectors. At the peak of the season, there are over 270,000 visitors to the county, which adds more than 50% to the all year population. The British Travel Awards confirmed Cornwall as the 'best holiday county' in the UK in 2012, the fourth year running it had achieved this award. Tourism accounts for at least 30,000 jobs, with many more at the peak of the season. It consequently attracts a sizeable number of seasonal workers. Nevertheless, while tourism may be crucial for the local economy, the seasonal nature of the tourist industry contributes to high rates of unemployment in the close season, while wages in the industry are also relatively low. However, both the extent and nature of tourism vary across the county. It is predominantly based around the coastline which bounds the county on three sides. While much of the industry is geared towards family holidays, Newquay stands out as the centre of mass tourism and young tourists.

The extent to which tourism acts as a crime generator is well illustrated through analysis of police data and the Cornwall Crime Survey and Cornwall Business Survey, which were conducted in 2001 and 2004 (Mawby 2007, 2008). While police data make it difficult to disaggregate the extent to which tourists feature as either offenders or victims, both official crime statistics and the surveys illustrated the concentration of crime and disorder in tourist hot spots. Additionally, local residents felt that tourism had a negative impact on a variety of crime and disorder problems and that tourists and casual workers were overrepresented as perpetrators of crime and, especially in the case of tourists, alcohol-related problems. They also thought that tourists were more likely than local people to both commit crime and be victimised. Furthermore, Newquay was seen as the main area of Cornwall where tourism acted as a generator of crime and – particularly – disorder (Jones *et al* 2012).

A survey of police who were based in Cornwall, carried out in 2005, revealed a similar picture. Tourism was seen as a major contributor to crime and disorder, with tourists perceived as overrepresented as both offenders and victims, and Newquay was identified as the major hot spot for tourism-related crime (Mawby 2009).

This appreciation of the close association between tourism and crime has been reflected in a number of policing initiatives, both in Cornwall and Devon. In Devon, *Operation Columbus*, based on a project in Brighton, targeted crime against the large numbers of school-aged foreign language students on courses in the Torbay area. The Home Office (HO) funded Hotel Burglary initiative was also based in Torbay and was initiated by the local police there (Mawby and Jones 2007).

In Cornwall, the problems of crime and disorder in Newquay, identified by both academics (Mawby 2007) and journalists (Hattersley 2004),⁶ resulted in street protests in 2009 and a call for action to reclaim the resort for local people and 'responsible' tourists (Jones *et al* 2012). A

multi-agency partnership was established, incorporating police, local councils, licensees, the National Health Service (NHS) and residents. Under a 'designated public spaces' order, police in the town were given the power to confiscate alcohol and stop on-street drinking. The partnership similarly tackled the issue of under-age drinking, with pubs and clubs signing up to the 'Challenge 21' protocol on identification. The police have also dealt with young tourists found drunk or incapable by detaining them and contacting their parents to come and remove them from the area. Alongside such law-and-order measures, the partnership has also promoted alcohol-free clubnights.⁷ The scheme received national recognition, being named as one of the government's 12 'Pathfinders' to show other towns how agencies can work together to provide community safety, and receiving the endorsement of the new coalition government during a well publicised visit by the new Home Office Minister for Crime Prevention, James Brokenshire.⁸

Nevertheless, the Newquay example illustrates the extent to which tourism-related crime and disorder problems are contested by key players in the community (Barton and James 2003). Local residents and the police were explicit in blaming tourism for much of the crime and disorder locally, but local businesses were muted in their criticisms. As identified in other areas of the world where youth tourism has been promoted, a significant sector of the local tourism industry is financially dependent upon, and indeed markets itself towards, tourism based around the night-time (and indeed daytime) economy of alcohol consumption (Jones *et al* 2012). It was only, then, at the instigation of local residents, when national publicity over Newquay's tourist-related alcohol culture became 'exposed', that the police were pressured to respond. However, there are no plans to establish a specialist police unit, to cover either Devon and Cornwall or within Newquay. It is, moreover, notable that the 2005 survey of police officers based in Cornwall found little support for a specialist policing approach to tourism. In particular:

- Asked whether a dedicated crime reduction approach was warranted for tourism-related crime, only a third concurred, with two-thirds disagreeing.
- Only about 10% thought that tourist victims required a specialist service.
- Officers based in Newquay, the main hot spot for tourism-generated crime and disorder, were significantly more supportive of specialist approaches, but even there only 45% supported the idea of a dedicated crime reduction approach to tourism-related crime, and 28% a tourist victim service.

In Newquay especially, and Cornwall in general, it seems that tourism-related crime and disorder is perceived differently by three key constituencies. It is seen as a major problem by local residents and those aiming to promote the region as a family holiday location. It is seen as an incidental problem, perhaps even a 'necessary evil', by that part of the tourist industry that targets youth tourism with images of an alcohol-based vacation experience. And it is perceived as a problem by the local police, but one that can be addressed through traditional, generic strategies.

There is, clearly, a paradox here. On the one hand, there is a well-recognised relationship between tourism and crime in Cornwall, and this is acknowledged by the police. On the other, there is little support for specialist policing to tackle the issue. Moreover, and notably, there has been more concern expressed by the police and local people about the need for crime and disorder prevention than there has for providing support for tourists who experience crime. The following sections contrast this position with the responses of government and police in Ghana and Florida.

Ghana

Ghana is a West African country of about 23 million people with a per capita income of \$600 and a recurring balance of payment deficit. Tourism is the country's fourth major foreign exchange earner. Tourist arrivals and receipts have increased at an average of 10% over the past decade. According to the Ghana Tourist Board, between 2005 and 2009 arrivals grew by over 60%, and the revenue earned has increased correspondingly.

Ghana's current day police force has its antecedents in 1894, when the then colonial administration passed the police ordinance which gave legal authority for the formation of a civil police force. The country's attainment of republican status in 1960 came with the changing of the name Ghana Police Force into Ghana Police Service. Since independence, the force has expanded in both personnel and units, although with a little over 23,000 officers and a police to population ratio of approximately 1 police officer to every 1200 citizens it has a relatively small police force.⁹ The establishing of an experimental Community Policing Unit in Accra, the country's capital, is a recent attempt to address this deficit through forging collaboration with communities and building crime reduction partnerships and joint responsibility for security.

Currently, the service has more than 10 specialised divisions, including Criminal Investigations, Highway Patrol, Domestic Violence and Victims Support and the Commercial Crimes Unit. The day-to-day administration of the Police Service is under the unified command and authority of the inspector-general of police (IGP) who is based at the police headquarters in Accra. The police service falls under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Interior and its council is chaired by the Vice President of the Republic. There are 12 administrative regions that oversee 51 divisions, 179 districts and 651 stations and posts spread across the country.

While tourism has become a crucial element of the economy, Ghana's tourism industry can be described as falling within the early development stage (Butler 1980, Haywood 1986, Prosser 1995, Hovinen 2002). Hence, it is not by any means a mass tourist destination. This implies that owing to strong informal host-guest relationships, tourists are still perceived in a generally receptive manner across the country. The only known deviation to this pattern has been found to occur in Cape Coast which to all intents and purposes can be described as the most patronised tourist town in the country (Teye *et al.* 2002).

Nevertheless, recent research demonstrates a clear and consistent relationship between tourism and crime, with tourists particularly at risk (Boakye 2008, 2010). Boakye interviewed 336 tourists: 114 from Cape Coast, 75 from Kumasi and the remaining 147 in Accra. Approximately one-third of tourists surveyed had suffered from at least one crime during their stay. Theft was found to be the most frequently occurring crime, experienced by over 15% of respondents and accounting for over half of the incidents described. Wallets, personal effects, electronics and mobile phones were the items most often mentioned. Following at a distance was verbal assault, which accounted for close to a third of all incidents, and was mentioned by one-tenth of tourists. In contrast, there is little evidence of tourists creating a problem, that is, as perpetrators, and this seemed to be widely accepted by the key stakeholders.

Boake also conducted in-depth interviews with 22 police officers, purposively chosen across the three study areas: consisting of the three crime officers of the respective towns, five divisional commanders, six station officers and eight officers from the Criminal Investigation Department. Respondents generally agreed that tourists were not

specifically targeted by offenders, but accepted that the routine activities engaged in by tourists contributed to their high rate of victimisation.

Crime-prevention strategies in place at the time of the research, including sporadic night patrols especially at beaches and vehicle spot checks, were not tourist-specific but were rather meant for the general citizenry. While tourist-related crime was not covered in police training, one rare tourist-specific training example was identified in Kumasi where the police had attended a few seminars on tourism security organised by the regional office of the GTB. Also, in a limited number of cases, the police upon request from the particular tourism bodies (especially attraction sites) provided security services. These normally lasted for a day or two, particularly during holidays. It was not uncommon, for example, to observe heavy police presence at popular crowded places such as the La Pleasure beach, Kakum National Park and Lake Bosomtwe during national holidays or festive periods such as Christmas and Easter when patronage tended to be highest. It is worth mentioning that these measures remained largely upon request and had not been institutionalised.

Indeed, respondents had somewhat mixed views on the need for a specialist tourist police. However, they agreed that high rates of crime against tourists had wider repercussions. As one officer astutely put it:

It is very important because our image as a destination depends on it and ultimately, it will affect our attractiveness as a destination. Tourists share a lot of information with their friends when they return, thus it is important that we protect them so others will also patronise.

This appreciation of the need to respond to crimes against tourists has generated two major tourism security-related initiatives in recent years. The first of these was the creation of a task force, a collaboration between the then GTB (now the Ghana Tourism Authority, GTA) and the police service. According to the public relations manager of the GTA who announced this, the purpose of the task force was to ensure that all service providers' facilities operate within the confines of the laws which regulate tourism practice in Ghana. As an indication of its importance, the task force was chaired by no less a high-ranking officer as the deputy IGP. The expected start date was 2012 and under the programme, police could at any time inspect operating licences of tourism service providers and offenders would be prosecuted.

The second major initiative was launched at a press conference organised by the Police Service's Criminal Investigations Department in March 2010. It accepted the need for a dedicated tourist police unit in view of the fact that Ghana's tourism was growing at a very fast rate and the challenge of insecurity had become clearly imperative. Called the tourism police, this specialised unit of the Ghana Police Service appears to have a two-pronged aim, one of which overlaps with the earlier-mentioned task force. The first purpose is protective/preventive in nature and is meant to provide safety to tourists and tourism-related installations/facilities. Thus the unit, when fully functional, is expected to have police personnel in mufti stationed at centres patronised by tourists, especially beaches, highways, airports, bus stops, public parks and hotel, lodges, entertainment spots, museums, tourist sites and market places. The core functions of the tourism police would include handling and receiving inquiries, claims and complaints by tourists as well as investigate tourist-related crimes and prosecuting offenders. The second tier of operation would be the enforcement of laws governing the provision of tourism-related services. To this end, the unit has the mandate to ensure that all tourism and tourism-

related establishments are registered and licensed by the GTA. Those establishments which flout the regulations face a mix of sanctions including prosecution and being closed down.

One of the specific strategies adopted to make the unit functional has been a collaboration with the Egyptian government to help Ghana maintain safety and security. To that end, the first batch of police officers was dispatched on a course to Egypt to study tourism policing. Under the same arrangement, a group of Ghanaian tourism private sector operators has also toured Egypt to study that country's systems of securing the tourism business. Nevertheless, the tourism police unit remains largely at the conceptual stage. Tourism desks are yet to be established (at least in the main tourist receiving areas of Cape Coast, Elmina and Kumasi).

Florida (USA)

There is no single police system in the USA. In fact, no more than 10% of public police work for national police agencies, with the remainder employed by a variety of local agencies, numbering well over 15,000 largely autonomous police organisations (Tonry and Morris 1992, Mawby 1999, Sullivan and Haberfeld 2005, Reaves 2011). Local police organisations may be based at state, county, city, small town or 'special district'. For example, in the State of Florida in 2008, the Florida Highway Patrol was the primary law-enforcement agency with over 1600 sworn officers, but the state had in total 387 different law enforcement agencies with over 46,000 sworn officers (Reaves 2011). State troopers have jurisdiction across the entire state while other police officers and sheriffs are restricted to the counties which they serve.

Florida is one of the USA's major tourist centres, attracting visitors from overseas as well as the USA. The largest percentage of these visitors are drawn to central Florida where there are two segments which between them attract most of the tourist visitors, International Drive and the area that incorporates the Disney theme parks and Downtown Disney. In spite of the global economic downturn, visitor numbers to Orlando indicate a continuous increase with an estimated 55 million domestic and overseas visitors in 2011.

The extent to which offenders have targeted tourists in Florida has been the subject of prolonged discussion, albeit it has been argued that media presentation of the risks faced by tourists is exaggerated (Schiebler *et al.* 1996, Wolf and Potter 2012). Nevertheless, one current example of crime specifically directed against tourists concerns 'pizza flyers'. Fast-food outlets are abundant and professional criminal gangs have made a living from the distribution of bogus flyers, often using ex-offenders to do the deliveries. The flyers are put under the doors of hotels and motels. Once the unsuspecting potential customer rings the number given they are required to give their contact particulars including credit card details which are then illegally used.

Rather a different example of crimes against tourists, which led to the creation of tourist police (see below), occurred in the early 1990s when hire cars driven by British and German tourists were targeted by gangs who tricked the drivers into stopping and then robbed them. Victims were injured and in some cases killed (Brayshaw 1995, Pizam and Mansfeld 1996). Despite the fact that the number of crimes against non-residents had apparently been decreasing, the way these homicides and other incidents were reported by the media suggested that crimes against tourists were 'rampant and on the increase' (Schiebler *et al.* 1996, p. 37). According to the *Economist* (1993), there were 800 media

reports worldwide concerning one murder in 1992. Headlines such as ‘wave of killing’, ‘crack-crazed murders’ and ‘tourists easy prey’ presented an image of Florida as more dangerous than, for example, Corsica and Southern France, where there were numerous bomb explosions, and Spain, where there were nine deaths through bombings around the same time (Brayshaw 1995). The impact on tourism was devastating, with a decline of 11% between 1993 and 1994, with numbers from the UK and Germany declining by 22% (Brayshaw 1995, Pizam and Mansfeld 1996). This had a significant detrimental effect on the economy of the state and particular areas of Florida that were most dependent on tourism.

However, it appears that the police were generally unaware of this. Muehsam and Tarlow’s (1995) assessment of police attitudes towards tourists found police to be aware of the important financial contribution that tourism made to their communities, and positive about tourism and their involvement with tourists. But they failed to appreciate the relationship between tourism and crime, were sceptical about the need for specialist training and had poor relationships with the tourism industry.

Nevertheless, the financial impact of the loss of tourist revenue led local governments, with considerable and direct influence on local policing structures, to act to change this situation. An analysis of crime incidents against tourists in the Miami airport area and on routes to Greater Miami in the early 1990s led, in February 1994, to the establishment of the TOPS. The introduction of what amounted to a specialist service that based its responses on problem-oriented policing techniques was assigned to the Metro-Dade Police Department’s Airport District and made possible through funding by Dade County, the Federal Aviation Authority and airlines which used Miami International Airport. This funding and the backing of the then police commissioner ensured an increased police presence in the area known as The Triangle, which covers an area bordered by the Miami River, LeJeune Road and NW 21st Street from the Doral District to the airport. Its proximity to the airport, restaurants and hotels ensured a large visitor presence and the introduction of TOPS endeavoured to provide assistance and education for the tourists, residents and the hospitality industry.

Since then, the development of specialist law enforcement services has been extended across Florida, notably in Orlando. In spite of the fact that the crimes which deterred tourists from Florida in 1993 did not occur in Orlando itself, visitor numbers to the region in general declined significantly and measures were introduced to reduce the risk and improve visitor confidence in the area. For example, the fact that tourists’ hire cars were readily identified was countered in 1994 when the distinguishing ‘lease’ tag was removed from rental vehicles to make them less evident. Additionally, a community-based proactive model of tourist police was introduced wherein visibility and rigorous enforcement contrasted with the established policing role within the police department. In order to ensure that this different approach could be sustained, personnel into TOPS were appointed based on their voluntary transfer into the service and their positive record of initiative and reliability. Multi-lingual and computing skills were also deemed important as was their proven track record of community engagement, team working and a good service record.

While the focus of this new service was in part to provide a ‘tourist safety approach’ through the provision of information, the role of the hospitality industry was central and this theme was adopted with the establishment of the TOPS in the area of International Drive, Orlando, Florida in April 2010. The area covered by TOPS is that which includes International Drive and extends to 40 square miles. International Drive (I-Drive) houses

more than 100 hotels, six theme parks, almost 500 retail outlets and the second largest convention centre in the United States (International Drive Resort Area) and attracts a significant proportion of the total visitor numbers.¹⁰

TOPS in the International Drive sector comprises two teams each consisting of a sergeant, corporal and three deputies. They are answerable to the Sector Lieutenant and form a part of his or her personnel. They are all full-time officers who have been selected to this service working generally in shifts that suggest the 'problem times' tend to be during afternoons and night-times when bars and restaurants are at their busiest. TOPS officers drive vehicles with decals that identify them as members of the 'TOPS' and their uniforms consist of short-sleeved polo shirts and police bicycle shorts. Officers who work in TOPS have been recruited from existing personnel within the local force and are therefore known to the rest of the agency. It is reported that relationships between TOPS and regular officers is good because they are recruited from within their own organisation and have generally served in that administration for some years.

As one of their lieutenants emphasised in our conversation with him, their primary responsibility is focussed on crime prevention. They maintain a high level of visibility and engage with both visitors and the tourist industry. For those officers who volunteer to join TOPS, they are required to embrace the philosophy of the policing of the tourist area which is to provide a first class service to both tourists and those who serve them. According to TOPS, the relationship of OCSO with the industry is valued and valuable and it is clear in the interaction between the bodies that the needs of tourist victims are acknowledged. For example, in cases where visitors have been subjected to crime, the tourist industry has stepped in to provide shelter, food and, when necessary, transportation.

Discussion

Specialist police units are a facet of post-modern police systems, and tourism police units are one example of this, common in many countries where tourism is important to the economy and where crimes associated with tourism are recognised as a problem and a threat to the economy. However, such developments, while featuring in the USA and many other parts of the world, have not emerged in most Western countries. Here Florida in the USA, with a long tradition of tourism police units, is contrasted with Ghana, where tourist police have been introduced recently; and Cornwall in the UK, where there are no specialist tourism police units. In explaining the differences, it would appear that at least five conditions must be met before specialist units are established:

- *Tourism is crucial to the local economy.* That is, it is both important and it significantly benefits the local economy, and is not restricted to enclave tourism, where tourists may be insulated from crime and disorder problems in 'gated communities' that are protected by private security. In all three of the examples cited here, tourism is crucial to the local economy. While this is well established in Florida, its recent expansion in Ghana may be linked to the creation of a specialist tourism police unit. However, tourism has also been a key contributor to the Cornish economy over a number of years, albeit a highly seasonal one, without generating any demand for such a specialist unit.
- *Tourism creates crime and disorder problems.* The role of tourism as a crime generator is widely accepted in the academic literature, and is demonstrated in research conducted in Florida, Ghana and Cornwall. It is also often recognised by

the police, and this, ironically, is particularly clear from research in Cornwall, although here, as in Florida in the 1990s, the police did not see this as sufficient reason for the creation of specialist units. However, it is also clear that the Cornish public and police placed more emphasis on tourists as creating crime and, most especially, disorder problems, than as victims, with the implication that it was an increase in policing resources in peak season that was required rather than a qualitatively different approach to policing.

- *The impact of crime and disorder on tourism is acknowledged.* In Florida, the impact of crimes against tourists on tourist demand in the early 1990s was immediate and unequivocal, and the creation of tourism police units along with other dedicated crime reduction measures was seen both as a means of reducing victimisation of tourists and as a means of demonstrating to potential overseas visitors that the ‘problem’ had been addressed. In Ghana, the impact on the tourism industry is less evident and more presumed, and the creation of a tourism police unit may be seen as precautionary, proactive and preventive rather than reactive. In Cornwall, and indeed Devon, police and public concern has not been matched by concern from the tourist industry. This is illustrated in the reluctance of hotels to engage with the Hotel Burglary initiative in Devon (Mawby and Jones 2007), but is indicative of a wider problem, where a core sector of the tourism industry is ambivalent towards disorder, especially where youth tourism, with the emphasis upon alcohol and sex, is concerned (Homel *et al.* 1997, Barton and James 2003, Jones *et al.* 2012). Thus in Newquay, recent concern from locals about the resort’s growing reputation for public drunkenness by young tourists and concerns from them and some parts of the tourist industry that this deters ‘traditional family tourism’ sit alongside the interests of a significant part of business community whose profits depend on attracting to the area tourists with money to spend on alcohol, for whom the disorder caused by tourists is less of a problem. This conflict of interests, which leaves the police responding to different constituencies with different perceptions of whether or not a problem exists, would appear most evident in areas attracting mass youth tourism, like Newquay, the Gold Coast and Faliraki, where disorderly tourists equate to high spending tourists, than in areas where tourists feature predominantly as victims, allowing for a greater consensus on the need for action. However, even here, it may be that the tourism industry is unwilling to acknowledge the problem, and it is only required to confront it when negative publicity forces its hand.
- *The political will and power exist at local or central government level.* The fact that there is no political consensus about the problems caused by tourists is evident in Cornwall. As a result, the police, in partnership with public and private sector agencies, may adopt a generic approach to crime and disorder reduction. However, a more immediate issue relates to the impact that the local tourist industry can exert upon local policing. Florida, with local police answerable to local politicians, provides a good example of the direct influence that a tourist industry concerned about a fall in demand can exert upon local government and hence on the local police. Traditionally, this link has been weaker in the UK, where the local forces like the Devon and Cornwall Constabulary, while ostensibly answerable to their local publics, have in reality been more influenced by central government. The recent introduction of police and crime commissioners in each force area may change this, although the fact that their constituencies are so large may mitigate

against significant changes. The Ghana example is notable because it appears that the impetus came from central government and the national tourism board, and it seems likely that the Egyptian model offered a relatively easy option for policy transfer at a time when Ghana was concerned about maintaining growth in the industry.

- *The practicality of change.* Finally, though, the establishment of specialist tourist police units depends on their practicality. In an area such as Florida, where tourism boasts a 12-month season, TOPS can offer a permanent mechanism for addressing tourism-generated crime and attract a core of dedicated officers. The situation would appear similar in Ghana. In Cornwall, where tourism, and crime and disorder associated with tourism are distinctly seasonal, it would only be practical to establish a seasonal service, which would be less attractive both to the police organisation and to those interested in an attachment to such a unit.

The above suggests that while recognition of a link between tourism and crime is necessary for the creation of specialist tourist police units in tourist areas, it is by no means sufficient. Firstly, the key problem for policy makers is not that tourism generates crime and disorder, but that tourists are perceived as the victims of crime, and publicity concerning the risk faced by tourists acts as a deterrent to tourists and impacts on the local economy. Secondly, where local police forces exist, as in the USA, local influence over policing structures is greater. Finally, where the problem is persistent, rather than seasonal, it is more practical to establish specialist units. It thus seems unlikely that tourism police units will be established in the UK. Whether the recent developments in Ghana are sustained is a matter for further future research.

On the other hand, in neither Florida nor Ghana was the police itself proactive in the establishment of tourism police units. This can be set in the wider context of tourism-related crime, where it is the tourist industry that shapes the form that tourism takes in the area, and might be accused of creating the ‘monster’ (Hyde 2003) for the police to manage (Jones *et al* 2012). The role of the police in tackling the problem is then restricted to policies regarding operational policing, far from the mega-level of resort image creation. The establishment of tourism police units is a proactive approach to tourism-related crime and disorder, but it is not one that is generally instigated by the police themselves. Nor is it sufficient as a stand-alone measure, but should be seen as one of a broad range of strategies adopted by the tourist industry, police and other partners.

Notes

1. www.guardian.co.uk/travel/2003/sep/07/travelnews.observerescapesection.
2. www.thailandguru.com/thailand-tourist-police.html. <http://www.phuket-tourist-police-volunteers.com/>.
3. <http://gogreece.about.com/cs/embassies/a/greektouristpol.htm>. www.sapphotravel.com/sappho/tourist_police.php.
4. See also George (2001).
5. www.devon-cornwall.police.uk/Pages/Default.aspx.
6. See also www.telegraph.co.uk/travel/familyholidays/2080090/Newquay-The-teenage-invasion.html. <http://www.guardian.co.uk/alcoholandyoungpeople/waves-of-partying> [Accessed 13 October 2010].

7. <http://www.cornwall.gov.uk/Default.aspx?page=24605>. <http://www.cornwall.gov.uk/default.aspx?page=24927>. <http://neighbourhoodpolicing.devon-cornwall.police.uk/BCU-1558/Sector-1628/Pages/NewquaySafe.aspx> [Accessed 13 October 2010].
8. www.homeoffice.gov.uk/media-centre/press-releases/newquay-safe-partnership [Accessed 13 October 2010].
9. See www.ghanapolice.info/main.php. <http://ghanadistricts.com/news/?read=32993>.
10. Hotel occupancy data suggest that the area covered by Disney attracts a higher proportion of staying visitors (<http://corporate.visitorlando.com/research-and-statistics/orlando-hotel-statistics/annual-hotel-occupancy-and-adr/>).

References

- Barker, M., Page, S.J., and Meyer, D., 2002. Modeling tourism crime. The 2000 America's Cup. *Annals of tourism research*, 29 (3), 762–782.
- Barton, A. and James, Z., 2003. Run to the sun: policing contested perceptions of risk. *Policing and society*, 13 (3), 259–270.
- Bellis, M.A., et al., 2000. Ibiza uncovered: changes in substance use and sexual behaviour among young people visiting an international night-life resort. *The international journal of drug policy*, 11, 235–244.
- Boakye, K., 2008. An empirical investigation into tourism oriented crimes: focus on Cape Coast, Kumasi and Accra. Submitted to the University of Cape Coast as partial requirements for the award of the PhD (Tourism) Degree.
- Boakye, K.A., 2010. Studying tourists' suitability as crime targets. *Annals of tourism research*, 37 (3), 727–743.
- Botterill, D. and Jones, T., eds. 2010. *Tourism and crime: key themes*. Oxford: Goodfellow.
- Botterill, D., et al., 2013. Violence, backpackers, security and critical realism. *Annals of tourism research*, 42, 311–333.
- Brayshaw, D., 1995. Negative publicity about tourism destinations: a Florida case study. *Travel and tourism analyst*, 5, 62–71.
- Butler, R., 1980. The concept of a tourism area life cycle of evolution: Implications for management of resources. *Canadian geographer*, 24 (1), 5–12.
- Cohen, S., 1980. *Folk devils and moral panics (new edition)*. Oxford: Martin Robertson.
- D'Arcy, S., 1995. Nairobi's crime busters. *Sunday Times*, 10 December.
- de Albuquerque, K. and McElroy, J., 1999. Tourism and crime in the Caribbean. *Annals of tourism research*, 26 (4), 968–984.
- Dhani, A., 2012. Police service strength, England and Wales: 30 September 2011. Home Office Statistical Bulletin (HOSB 03/12). Available from: www.homeoffice.gov.uk/publications/science-research-statistics/research-statistics/police-research/hosb0312/hosb0312?view=Binary.
- George, R., 2001. The impact of crime on international tourist numbers to Cape Town. *Crime prevention and community safety: an international journal*, 3 (3), 19–29.
- Harper, D.W., 2001. Comparing tourists crime victimization. *Annals of tourism research*, 28 (4), 1053–1056.
- Hattersley, G., 2004. Welcome to Sin on Sea. *Sunday Times*, 18 July (News Review), pp. 1–2.
- Haywood, K.M., 1986. Can the tourist-area lifecycle be made operational? *Tourism management*, 7, 154–167.
- Homel, R., et al., 1997. Preventing drunkenness and violence around nightclubs in a tourist resort. In: R.V. Clarke, ed. *Situational crime prevention: successful case studies*. 2nd ed. Guilderland, NY: Harrow and Heston, 263–282.
- Hovinen, G., 2002. Revisiting the destination lifecycle model. *Annals of tourism research*, 29 (1), 209–230.
- Hyde, J., 2003. The folly of Faliraki. *Observer*, 24 August. Available from: <http://observer.guardian.co.uk/travel/story/0,6903,1028229,00.html>.
- Jones, T., 2010. Governing security in tourist spaces. In: D. Botterill and T. Jones, eds. *Tourism and crime: key themes*. Oxford: Goodfellow, 167–186.
- Jones, C., Barclay, E., and Mawby, R.I., 2012. *The problem of pleasure: leisure, tourism and crime*. London: Routledge.

- Kelly, I., 1993. Tourist destination crime rates: an examination of Cairns and the Gold Coast, Australia. *Journal of tourism studies*, 4 (2), 2–11.
- Mansfeld, Y. and Pizam, A., 2006. *Tourism, security and safety: from theory to practice*. Burlington, MA: Butterworth-Heinemann.
- Mawby, R.I. 1999. *Policing across the World: issues for the twenty-first century*. London: UCL Press.
- Mawby, R.I., 2000. Tourists' perceptions of security: the risk-fear paradox. *Tourism economics*, 6 (2), 109–121.
- Mawby, R.I. 2007. Crime, place and explaining rural hotspots. *International journal of rural crime*, 1, 21–43. Available from: www.ruralfutures.une.edu.au/rurcrime/ijrc.htm.
- Mawby, R.I., 2008. Understanding and responding to crime and disorder: ensuring a local dimension. *Crime prevention and community safety: an international journal*, 10 (3), 158–173.
- Mawby, R.I., 2009. Perceptions of police and policing in a rural county of England. *International journal of police science and management*, 11 (1), 39–53.
- Mawby, R.I., 2010. Violent crime and tourists. In: D. Botterill and T. Jones, eds. *Tourism and crime: key themes*. Oxford: Goodfellow, 37–52.
- Mawby, R.I., 2014. Crime and disorder, security and the tourism industry. In: M.Gill, ed. *Handbook of security*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Mawby, R.I., Barclay, E., and Jones, C., 2010. Tourism and victimization. In: S.G. Shoham, P. Knepper, and M. Kett, eds. *International handbook of victimology*. Boca Raton, FL: CRC Press, 319–344.
- Mawby, R.I., Brunt, P., and Hambly, Z., 1999. Victimisation on holiday: a British survey. *International review of victimology*, 6 (3), 201–211.
- Mawby, R.I. and Jones, C., 2007. Attempting to reduce hotel burglary: implementation failure in a multi-agency context. *Crime prevention and community safety: an international journal*, 9 (3), 145–166.
- Muehsam M.J. and Tarlow P., 1995. Involving the police in tourism. *Tourism management*, 16 (1), 9–14.
- Pelfrey, W.V., 1998. Tourism and crime: a preliminary assessment of the relationship of crime to the number of visitors at selected sites. *International journal of comparative and applied criminology*, 22 (1–2), 293–304.
- Pizam, A. and Mansfeld, Y., 1996. *Tourism, crime and international security issues*. Chichester: Wiley.
- Pizam, A., Tarlow, P.E., and Bloom, J., 1997. Making tourists feel safe: whose responsibility is it? *Journal of travel research*, Summer, 23–28.
- Prideaux, B., 1996. The tourism crime cycle: a beach destination case study. In: Pizam and Mansfeld, eds. *Tourism, crime and international security issues*. Chichester: Wiley, 59–76.
- Prosser, G.M., 1995. Tourist destination lifecycles: progress, problems and prospects. *Paper presented at National Tourism Research Conference, Melbourne, Australia*.
- Reaves, B.A., 2011. *Census of state and local law enforcement agencies, 2008*. Washington, DC: US Department of Justice. Available from: www.bjs.gov/index.cfm?ty=pbdetail&iid=2216.
- Ryan, C., 1993. Crime, violence, terrorism and tourism: An accident or intrinsic relationship. *Tourism management*, 14 (3), 173–183.
- Schiebler, S.A., Crotts, J.C., and Hollinger, R.C., 1996. Florida tourists' vulnerability to crime. In: Pizam and Mansfeld, eds. *Tourism, crime and international security issues*. Chichester: Wiley, 37–50.
- Shearing, C.D. and Stenning, P.C., 1996. From the Panopticon to Disney World: the development of discipline. In: J. Muncie, E. McLaughlin, and M. Langan, eds. *Criminological perspectives*. London: Sage, 413–422.
- Stangeland, P., 1998. Other targets or other locations? An analysts of opportunity structures. *British journal of criminology*, 38 (1), 61–77.
- Sullivan, L.E. and Habersfeld, M.R., 2005. *Encyclopedia of law enforcement (3 volumes)*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Tarlow, P., 2000. Letter from America: a short history of tourism oriented policing services. *Crime prevention and community safety: an international journal*, 2 (1), 55–58.
- Teye, V., Sönmez, S., and Sirakaya, E., 2002. Resident attitudes toward tourism development. *Annals of tourism research*, 29 (3), 668–688.

- The Economist, 1993. Tourism in Florida: Hiring and firing. *The Economist*, March 13, issue 326, 35–35, 36.
- Tonry, M. and Morris, N., 1992. *Modern policing*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNTWO), 2013. *UNWTO tourism highlights, 2012 edition*. Available from: http://dtxtq4w60xqpw.cloudfront.net/sites/all/files/docpdf/unwtohighlights12enhr_1.pdf [Accessed 17 May 2013].
- Walmsley, D.J., Boskovic, R.M., and Pigram, J.J., 1983. Tourism and crime: an Australian perspective. *Journal of leisure research*, 15 (2), 136–155.
- Wolf, R. and Potter, H., 2012. Sin City v. Fantasyland: crime, legislation, and policing in two different tourism environments. In: C. Jones, E. Barclay, and R.I. Mawby, eds. *The problem of pleasure: leisure, tourism and crime*. London: Routledge, 108–122.
- World Tourism Organisation, 1996. *Tourism safety and security: practical measures for destinations*. Madrid: WTO.