



*Gheorghe Papuc, Moldova's former Minister of Internal Affairs, warned security firms that they must help the then ruling Party of Communists or face trouble.*

**Political parties and leaders push to maintain government control, while a new group of owners favor free market and competition.**

**By Dumitru Lazur**

On the eve of Moldova's parliamentary elections campaigns last year, Minister of Internal Affairs Gheorghe Papuc called a meeting with managers of private security companies and asked for help. He also added a warning.

Papuc asked the managers to spread electoral propaganda in favor of the Party of Communists that had governed Moldova since 2001. "We need your support and backup. You must take part in convincing citizens by means of the trustworthy people that you have" [he told them](#) .

Papuc also reminded the managers at the July meeting that they "do business together with police" and made it clear they could "remain without business" unless they cooperated. Companies that "disobey" could face even more "severe methods."

What Papuc didn't know was that his comments were recorded and later sent to the [media](#) .

In the end, the threat was just that. The communists lost to a Liberal-Democrat coalition and Papuc was dismissed. Had he not been, a "witch hunt" would have followed said Victor Pantiru, a well-known lawyer.

"If he had remained in power, Papuc would have definitely tried to expose the traitor," Pantiru said.

In Moldova, the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MIA) has almost total control of security companies. It also competes against them. The situation has made it difficult for companies to prosper or even to operate at all.

Moldovan law mandates that any license for a company engaged in private security work must be issued by the Licensing Chamber, but only after the MIA has approved it. However, the MIA also controls licensing procedures and is responsible for all regulation. Credentials, uniforms and activities of private security guard companies must be approved by the [MIA](#) . Consequently, security companies have little choice but to follow MIA orders, said Pantiru.

At the same time, the State Security Service, an agency under the auspices of the MIA, performs most of the same tasks as private security companies. That means the agency in charge of setting rules for the private security business is in that business itself.

The SSS controlled all security agencies until 1992, when Moldova opened up the security guard market and allowed the creation of private security firms. But by vesting control in the Ministry of Internal Affairs, it left the government as the dominant player and, with state backing, it remains firmly at the top of the market.

Starting in 1992, a number of private security companies formed and today perform an array of services, including work as bodyguards, keeping order during public events, guarding cash and

other valuables in armored cars and detective services. They work alongside the [SSS](#) , which is still allowed to take on private contracts.

Compared to private companies, which operate mainly in Moldova's capital on Chisinau, the SSS is a much larger organization, with 35 territorial subdivisions, 500 policemen, 20 specially-trained dogs and about 5,000 civilian paramilitary employees who are paid from the budget of the MIA. There are also 55 mobile intervention groups, which are special teams of officers who are constantly on standby to be called in for important cases.

The SSS provides security to 700 individuals, 10,000 apartments and houses, about 200 banks and their branches and 1,500 commercial enterprises.

Its clients vary from ordinary citizens to politicians. For example, the houses of the family of former president of Moldova, Vladimir Voronin, are guarded by SSS. Anybody can pay for the agency's services, and in general people in power prefer the SSS because it is considered more prestigious.

By comparison – the largest of the country's 97 licensed private security guard companies has about [300 employees](#) .



*Gheorghe Stepuleac was the director of Tantal Group, a security firm that was put out of business by governmental pressure.*

In addition, under Moldova law, only the SSS can provide security to state institutions and other entities of “vital importance”, including companies the government owns or has a stake in.

The SSS, despite having a government budget, is largely financed through contracted security services, giving it financial autonomy. In 2009, SSS earned \$11.5 million in revenues and had \$11.6 million in expenses. Their officers have perks not offered to regular police officers, including discounts that allow them to pay less for heating, electricity and social services.

Moldovan security companies must be licensed. However, during the past six years the Licensing Chamber [withdrew the permits of 19 security companies](#) . Some companies appealed to the courts and regained their right to practice while others were closed for good.

### **The case of Tantal Group**

In 2005, Gheorghe Stepuleac, Director of Tantal Group Ltd., claimed that Government officials were trying to put him out of business. Stepuleac and his brothers are former policemen and the company they founded in 1992 quickly became one of the most important security companies on the market.

But then, in November 2005, Stepuleac was arrested and charged by prosecutors with detaining and trying to blackmail a former employee out of \$1,000. The next month, Tantal SRL's license was revoked after the MIA said the company violated rules about the colors they could use for their uniforms. The complaint also said that Stepuleac had been involved in criminal activities.





MINISTERUL JUSTIȚIEI AL REPUBLICII MOLDOVA  
„CAMERA ÎNREGISTRĂRII DE STAT” Î.S.  
Secția fonduri speciale și informații curente

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la nr. 02/259/408/12.09 din \_\_\_\_\_

- SOCIETATEA CU RĂSPUNDERE LIMITATĂ "JUSTAR" a fost înregistrată la data de 23.11.1992 cu numărul de înregistrare 105012993.

Sediu – mun. Chișinău, str. Ștefan cel Mare 160.

Administrator – Ustimenco Serghei.

Fondatori: 1. Ustimenco Serghei – 36,36%; 2. Velimojina S. – 31,82%; 3. Volcov V. – 31,82%.

Capital social la momentul înregistrării – 11000 ruble.

La data de 28.03.1996 au fost înregistrate modificările operate în documentele de constituire ale întreprinderii privind componența asociaților și părților sociale, după cum urmează: 1. Ustimenco Serghei – 55%; 2. Berlinschii Vitalii – 45%.

La data de 19.06.1997 au fost înregistrate modificările operate în documentele de constituire ale întreprinderii privind schimbarea sediului în str. Russo Alecu 1, ap.(of.) 504, mun. Chișinău.

La data de 03.10.2001 au fost înregistrate modificările operate în documentele de constituire ale întreprinderii privind componența asociaților și părților sociale, după cum urmează: 1. Ustimenco Serghei – 55%; 2. Berlinschii Vitalii – 45%. Capitalul social a fost modificat până la 5400 lei.

La data de 08.11.2001 au fost înregistrate modificările operate în documentele de constituire ale întreprinderii privind schimbarea denumirii SOCIETĂȚII CU RĂSPUNDERE LIMITATĂ "JUSTAR" în AGENȚIA DE SECURITATE "JUSTAR" S.R.L.

La data de 22.04.2003 au fost înregistrate modificările operate în documentele de constituire ale întreprinderii privind modificarea listei genurilor de activitate.

La data de 10.05.2007 au fost înregistrate modificările operate în documentele de constituire ale întreprinderii privind modificarea listei genurilor de activitate.

La data de 22.10.2007 au fost consemnate în Registrul de stat date cu privire la desemnarea noului administrator - Suhodol Serghei.

La data de 15.06.2009 au fost înregistrate modificările operate în documentele de constituire ale întreprinderii privind componența asociaților și părților sociale, după cum urmează: 1. S.C. "SIG-VEST GRUP" S.R.L. (IDNO 1002600036428) – 100%. Întreprinderea înregistrează statutul în redacție nouă.

În prezent AGENȚIA DE SECURITATE "JUSTAR" S.R.L. figurează înregistrată cu numărul unic de identificare și codul fiscal (IDNO) 1002600037470 (numărul de înregistrare precedent 105012993, codul fiscal anterior 130712).

Sediu – str. Russo Alecu 1, ap.(of.) 504, mun. Chișinău.

Administrator – Suhodol Serghei.

Asociat: 1. S.C. "SIG-VEST GRUP" S.R.L. – 100%.

Capitalul social: 5400 lei.

Genurile de activitate: 1. Activitatea particulară de detectiv sau de pază.

Sef secție

Petru Busuncian