



United States Office of Personnel Management

Office of Merit Systems Oversight and Effectiveness
Digest of Significant Classification Decisions and Opinions
April 1986
No. 08-05

Standards: [Police Series, GS-0083](#) (August 1974)
[Guard Series, GS-0085](#) (June 1968)

Factor: Series selection

Issue: Intended use of Police Series, GS-0083, vs. Guard Series, GS-0085

Identification of the Classification Issue

This issue arose in a position classification appeal decided by Office of Personnel Management. The appellant worked for an agency that had determined that his position was properly placed in the Guard Series, GS-0085, because his primary function was to protect Government property. The appellant had arrest authority consistent with that of a private citizen and he was not considered a "peace officer." However, he received specialized training relating to both law enforcement and to security topics. The appellant's position was located at a large installation which led to the performance of police-type duties in connection with the safeguard of government materials.

Resolution

The Office of Personnel Management recognized that the distinction between guard and police work is sometimes difficult to make. Both guards and police officers wear uniforms, display badges of authority, and carry sidearms. Both are organized along military lines. Both may serve in stationary posts or patrol either on foot or in a vehicle.

Despite the similarities, there are four indicators which can be used to determine the proper series. The first indicator is the *basic mission* of the organization. Guard organizations are established primarily to protect Government property, and secondarily, to protect persons in and around the property. Police organizations primarily exist to enforce law and order, preserve peace, and protect life and civil rights; and secondarily, to protect property.

The second indicator is the *arrest authority*. Police officers are designated by public law, statute, or other official act, as agency or local enforcement officers. They enforce a wide variety of Federal, State, county, or local laws. Guards, however, usually have arrest authority consistent with that of a private citizen. In some cases, they may have the same power as sheriffs and constables.

The third indicator is *training*. The primary emphasis of police training is the techniques, methods, and principles of law enforcement work. Stress is placed on preservation of law and order, protection of human life and civil rights, court procedures, crowd control, accident investigation, and arrest procedures. The primary emphasis for guard training is on the principles, methods, and techniques involved in protecting Government property. Stress may be placed on methods for detecting efforts to breach a security system and means for preventing espionage and sabotage. Guards who exercise police-type authority may receive advanced training in arrest procedures, investigation procedures, crowd control or riot procedures, rights of suspects, and any other specialized training related to their assignments.

The fourth indicator is *patterns of work*. Essentially, guards are oriented toward protection of property; police officers are oriented toward maintaining law and order. However, the orientation of guard positions located at large installations tends to broaden to encompass and include a law enforcement emphasis. This is particularly true in those situations in which the guard organization is not only responsible for protection of valuable property, but also for control of large acreage containing various facilities. Typically, such an installation is populated by large numbers of persons and vehicles necessitating a law enforcement effort to some degree.

Generally, positions are classifiable to the police occupation when the four indicators reflect a definite and positive police orientation in all of the posts to which the employee is regularly assigned. In this particular case, although the employee performed a mixture of guard and police-type duties, and received training for both, this combination is typical for guard positions at large installations. The basic mission of the appellant's organization was to protect Government property. The arrest authority did not match that of police officers. The Office of Personnel Management concluded that the position was properly classified in the GS-0085 Guard series because a definite and positive police orientation did not exist in the four indicators.