

Repatriation and loss prevention at Armour Security

On his last day of work at Armour Security, Vijay Bhalla wrote his letter of resignation, and drove through the Delhi roads to his office at the safety and security consulting firm. Only three years earlier, Vijay had jumped at the chance to take the assignment as Loss Prevention and Safety Director at Armour Security's operations in Afghanistan. He expected this role would catapult his career. His family too easily accepted the assignment as the American involvement in Afghanistan made Kabul a relatively 'safer' option than the other 'high risk' locations Vijay would be compelled to consider given the nature of Armour Security's business and Vijay's area of expertise in counterterrorism and security protocols. Armour Security had done a very good job of preparing Vijay and his family for the assignment at Kabul. The children had quickly adjusted to the American International School and his wife had enjoyed the stint being involved in the activities of the Indian community there and also being part of the international community of expatriates. Vijay had immediately enjoyed the increased responsibilities and centrality of his new role. As an ex-Indian Army Major, it was gratifying that the counterterrorism and security protocols he developed for the company and its clients were well accepted.

His return to Delhi some six months ago was a different matter. He knew that things would be different at home after the corporate restructuring that occurred a year into his expatriate assignment. His long-time mentor and friend, Harpal Singh had taken a very generous VRS package after an executive power struggle. Several restructuring efforts had relocated many of his old colleagues out of Delhi. During the last part of his assignment in Kabul, Vijay was more and more frustrated as his informal corporate intelligence network dissolved and the role of his liaison was passed around among a series of increasingly junior and, to his mind, clueless executives.

The assignment he was promised by the company president was 'rethought' and when he returned six months ago he spent the better part of a month trying to get an office and understand his new job. Everyone he talked to had a different perspective on what he was being asked to do. He felt claustrophobic and, to make matters worse, the new counterterrorism and security

protocols he had developed and used with great success in Kabul were either systematically ignored or so modified by his supervisors that they were unrecognizable.

In an informal get together with Harpal, he shared his growing frustrations. On the home front, the new house they had purchased upon return – having sold their home at the advice of the HR director at the time of the international assignment – was expensive, hard to heat and placed them in an area where the children were not happy. He had looked at other options of schooling, but either the fees were astronomical or the schools were located too far from their home. Add to this, his salary was not much more than it had been three years ago. His wife had started to complain about the Delhi pollution and climate.

At work, Vijay felt as if he had returned to a totally different world. Harpal asked if Armour Security had started any discussions on his new role and compensation at Delhi, post his return from Kabul. Vijay replied that Armour Security had not. “Well, there it is”, said Harpal. “Let’s do what we have talked about for years. With your technical expertise and my industry contacts, we can work for ourselves – we can be our own bosses and be clear what we are expected to do in our job.”

Source: Fictionalized adaption from Dowling, Festing and Engle (2017). International Human Resource Management (17th edition). CENGAGE Learning.