



Jerzy Trocha\*

## **Analysis of Polish Police Activity in the Aspect of Security in Railway Areas**

### **[Analiza działań polskiej Policji w aspekcie bezpieczeństwa obszarów kolejowych]**

#### **Abstract**

This publication provides a comprehensive overview of Polish Police activities regarding railway safety from 2016 to 2023.

Railways play a strategic role in the national and European economy, remaining one of the most efficient modes of freight and passenger transport. However, ensuring an optimal level of security in railway areas—which are particularly vulnerable to mass-scale threats—remains a major challenge. Currently, there is no state-run uniformed service specializing in the protection of railway areas (premises) and trains in Poland; therefore, the Police play the most important role in this regard.

The author presents data on the number of crimes and their detection rates, as well as the value of losses incurred in railway areas resulting from criminal acts. Attention is also drawn to the need to take appropriate measures aimed at improving the security of transport and railway areas (premises) in response to growing public demand.

**Keywords:** Police, security, threats, railway areas (premises).

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## **Introduction**

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Security remains one of the most important human needs that enables progress.<sup>1</sup> This is confirmed by historical and cultural analyses of the conditions for civilization growth.<sup>2</sup> The need for an appropriate level of protection

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<sup>1</sup> A. H. Maslow, *Motywacja i osobowość* [Motivation and Personality], transl. Jerzy Radzicki, Warszawa 2006, p. 62.

<sup>2</sup> A. Czupryński, *Bezpieczeństwo w ujęciu teoretycznym* [in:] *Bezpieczeństwo. Teoria – Badania – Praktyka* [Safety: Theory – Research – Practice], A. Czupryński, B. Wiśniewski, J. Zboina (eds.), Centrum Naukowo-Badawcze Ochrony Przeciwpożarowej im. Józefa Tuliszkowskiego, Józefów 2015, p. 9.

applies to various areas of life. Basically, wherever people are, threats are also present, and thus the need to ensure security arises. A customer in a shopping mall, a fan during a match, a concert attendee or a passenger waiting for a train at a railway station are an attractive and relatively easy target not only for petty criminals, but also for modern terrorism.<sup>3</sup> Providing adequate protection is a difficult area that requires significant financial outlays and the involvement of adequate forces and resources.

Security on railway areas plays a key role in ensuring the smooth flow of transport, protecting human life and counteracting various types of threats. The railway, as an important element of transport infrastructure, not only facilitates the movement of people and goods, but also attracts the attention of people violating the law, which requires an appropriate response from law enforcement agencies. In this context, the activities of the Police is fundamental importance for maintaining public order, as well as for effectively counteracting crimes and offenses in railway areas.

The work of the Police in this area covers a wide range of activities, from monitoring public space, through preventing acts of vandalism and theft, to responding to more serious incidents, such as accidents, terrorist attacks or other crisis events. Contemporary challenges, including the growing importance of critical infrastructure and the dynamic development of transport technologies, require the Police to adapt their methods of operation and intensify cooperation with other entities, such as railway protection guards, rail carriers, managers of railway and station infrastructure or emergency services.

The aim of this article is to analyze the activities of the Police in the security area of the railway zone, with particular emphasis on its role in counteracting threats and minimizing their effects. The first part presents the specificity of threats to railway areas as a space for the operation of uniformed services, then discusses the key tasks of the Police, as well as the challenges associated with ensuring security in areas with such a complex structure and function. Finally, an attempt was made to assess the effectiveness of the activities based on data from the Police Headquarters and indicated possible directions for their improvement in the light of current threats and legal requirements. Taking up the topic of Police activity in the security sector of railway areas is particularly important in the context of the increasing number of travelers, intensification of freight transport and increasingly advanced technologies used in railway infrastructure. A comprehensive understanding of this issue

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<sup>3</sup> J. Trocha, R. Wilczek, *Rola środków przymusu bezpośredniego w działaniach podejmowanych na rzecz utrzymania bezpieczeństwa obiektów – na przykładzie dworców kolejowych* [in:] *Środki przymusu bezpośredniego. Zakres i sposoby użycia na przykładzie wybranych podmiotów bezpieczeństwa* [Measures of Direct Coercion: Scope and Methods of Use, Illustrated by Selected Security Entities], T. Kośmider (ed.), Instytut Wymiaru Sprawiedliwości, Warszawa 2020, p. 196.

is important not only for security sciences, but also for the practical functioning of the security system in Poland.

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## Police in the Internal Security System In Poland

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The Police is one of the key foundations on which the internal security of the country is based. The main source of law establishing the formation and regulating the tasks, organizational structure, powers and scope of its activities is the Act of 6 April 1990 on the Police.<sup>4</sup> It is the basic, uniformed and armed unit responsible for ensuring security and public order in the country, and consequently also railway stations, trains and other railway areas. To this end, the Police undertakes several activities, including cooperation with local communities, state and local government bodies, various institutions, other services and international law enforcement agencies, striving to fulfill the tasks imposed under the regulations, including:

- ◆ Protection of human health and life and property against unlawful attack.
- ◆ Protection of public safety and order, including ensuring peace in public places, road traffic, water areas dedicated to common use and public transport.
- ◆ Initiating and conducting activities aimed at preventing crimes and offences and criminogenic phenomena in cooperation with public administration and social organizations.
- ◆ Conducting counter-terrorist activities in accordance with the Act of 10 June 2016 on anti-terrorist activities.
- ◆ Detecting crimes and offences and prosecuting their perpetrators.
- ◆ Protection of government facilities of members of the Council of Ministers indicated by the minister responsible for internal affairs (except for the facilities of the Minister of Justice and the Minister of National Defense).
- ◆ Supervision of specialized armed protection formations.
- ◆ Monitoring compliance with order and administrative regulations regarding public activities or applicable in public places.

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<sup>4</sup> Other sources of Polish law related to the activities of the Police can be found in: The Constitution of the Republic of Poland of 2 April 1997, Journal of Laws 1997 no. 78 item 483; The Act of 24 May 2013 on means of direct coercion and firearms, Journal of Laws 2013 item 383; The Act of 6 June 1997 – Code of Criminal Procedure, Journal of Laws 1997 item 37; The Act of 20 May 1971 – Code of Petty Offences, Journal of Laws 2023 item 2119; The Act of 20 March 2009 on the safety of mass events, Journal of Laws 2023 item 616; The Act of 29 July 2005 on counteracting drug addiction, Journal of Laws 2023 item 1939; The Act of June 21, 2002 on a state of emergency, Journal of Laws 2017 item 1928; The Act of April 19, 2002 on a state of natural disaster, Journal of Laws 2017 item 1897; The Act of August 22, 1997 on the protection of persons and property, Journal of Laws 2021 item 1995; The Act of June 10, 2016 on counter-terrorist activities, Journal of Laws 2024 item 92 and other implementing acts (regulations, orders).

- ◆ Cooperation with police services of other countries, international organizations and bodies of the European Union in accordance with concluded international agreements and arrangements.
- ◆ Processing criminal information, including personal data.<sup>5</sup>

The multitude of obligations resulting from binding legal regulations indicate that the Police in the field of public safety is a universal and multi-tasking formation. The tasks include preventive, interventional, and investigative actions aimed at prosecuting perpetrators of crimes and offenses. With the progress of civilization and the emergence of new challenges in the field of security, the role of the Police is becoming increasingly multifaceted and complex. Threats in cyberspace, unconventional actions of organized crime groups or terrorism using modern technologies mean that the formation must adapt its methods and forms of combating new threats while remaining within the limits of the law.

An important aspect of the Police's activities is also taking care of the image by striving to shape the authority and trust in the formation, which allows building a sense of security among the population. This would not be possible if the formation had not been equipped by the legislator with many powers enabling it to effectively fulfill its tasks, including: checking the identity and detaining people, applying direct coercion measures, using firearms, conducting inspections, including personal inspections and searches of premises, vehicles and luggage contents, imposing fines in the form of penalty tickets, submitting applications to the court for punishment, conducting preparatory proceedings or using intervention techniques.

The Chief Commander of the Police, who is the central government administration body in the field of protecting public safety, is responsible for the formation's activities. He is appointed by the Prime Minister at the request of the minister responsible for internal affairs.<sup>6</sup> In order for the Chief Commander of the Police to implement statutory tasks, the formation's structures include the National Police Headquarters consisting of the Office of the Chief Commander of the Police, the Police Headquarters, the Labor Protection Audit Department, the Internal Audit Team and 15 offices responsible for a number of different areas of the Police's operation (including the Criminal Bureau, the Control Bureau, the Road Traffic Bureau, the Prevention Bureau, the Bureau for Combating Economic Crime).<sup>7</sup> The Commander of the Police Chief is responsible for the Commander of the Central Bureau of Investigation of the Police, the Commander of

<sup>5</sup> The Act of 6 April 1990 on the Police, Journal of Laws 2024, item 145, Article 1, paragraph 2.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, Article 5, paragraphs 1 and 3.

<sup>7</sup> Annex to Order No. 7 of the Police Commander-in-Chief of 14 February 2024 amending the order on the regulations of the Police Headquarters.

the Internal Affairs Bureau of the Police, the Commander of the Central Counter-Terrorist Unit of the Police “BOA”, the Commander of the Central Bureau for Combating Cybercrime and the Director of the Central Forensic Laboratory of the Police.

The further structure of the formation is in accordance with the levels of public administration. At the provincial level, there are 16 commands headed by provincial commanders appointed by the minister responsible for internal affairs at the request of the Police Chief Commander.<sup>8</sup> Excluded from the territorial scope of the Provincial Commander Police in Radom responsible for the Masovian Voivodeship is the area of the capital city of Warsaw and the counties of Grodzisk, Legionowo, Mińsk, Nowy Dwór, Otwock, Piaseczno, Pruszków, Warsaw West and Wołomin.<sup>9</sup> The Capital Police Commander with headquarters in Warsaw is responsible for this region, carrying out tasks and competences appropriate to the provincial commander.<sup>10</sup>

At the next administrative level are the county (municipal) commanders or district commanders (in the area of the capital city of Warsaw), who are subordinate to the relevant provincial commander or the Capital Police Commander. Their area of activity includes ensuring public safety and order at the level of the county or larger cities by, among others, conducting investigations, preventive actions or coordinating patrols of officers.

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## **Polish Police Activities in Railway Areas**

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A very important competence of provincial police commanders is the establishment of specialist police stations in a specific field, e.g. railway, water, aviation or other specializations. This is done in agreement with the Chief Commander of the Police, while the commander of the specialist police station reports to the territorially competent provincial or capital police

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<sup>8</sup> The following commanders are responsible for coordinating the activities of the Police in the individual provinces: Provincial Police Commander in Białystok (podlaskie), Provincial Police Commander in Bydgoszcz (kujawsko-pomorskie), Provincial Police Commander in Gdańsk (pomorskie), Provincial Police Commander in Gorzów Wielkopolski (lubuskie), Provincial Police Commander in Katowice (śląskie), Provincial Police Commander in Kielce (świętokrzyskie), Provincial Police Commander in Kraków (małopolskie), Provincial Police Commander in Lublin (lubelskie), Provincial Police Commander in Łódź (łódzkie), Provincial Police Commander in Olsztyn (warmińsko-mazurskie), Provincial Police Commander in Opole (opolskie), Provincial Police Commander in Poznań (wielkopolskie), Provincial Police Commander in Radom (mazowieckie outside the area referred to in Article 6 paragraph 3 of the Act of 6 April 1990 on the Police), the Provincial Police Commander in Rzeszów (podkarpackie), the Provincial Police Commander in Szczecin (zachodnio-pomorskie), the Provincial Police Commander in Wrocław (dolnośląskie).

<sup>9</sup> The Act of 6 April 1990 on the Police..., Article 6, paragraph 4.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*

commander.<sup>11</sup> The role of specialist police stations is to take action for the protection and public order in a specific field. For this purpose, with the mission of strengthening the security of railway stations, trains and other railway areas, there are 2 railway police stations:

- ◆ Railway Police Station in Warsaw;
- ◆ Railway Police Station in Wrocław.

The Railway Police Station in Warsaw is located at the PKP Warszawa Centralna station, employing 87 officers, while the Railway Police Station in Wrocław is located at the PKP Wrocław Główny station, with a staff of 31 police officers.<sup>12</sup> Until 1 November 2012, the Railway Police Station in Poznań also operated. It was dissolved by decision of the then provincial commander. The liquidation was the result of the low number of cases, covering an estimated 180 per year, mainly concerning thefts, with a staff of around 37 officers. The initial plan for the Poznań Railway Station assumed its closure in April 2011. However, considering the upcoming European Football Championship in 2012, during which one of the arenas of football competition was the stadium in Poznań, and the use of rail transport to move fans around the country, it was decided to extend its operation.

The operation of the Railway Police Stations covers specific challenges and threats occurring in the railway area, which are related to the high traffic of passengers, including terrorist threats, accidents involving rail vehicles and common crimes or misdemeanours. The accumulation of a significant number of people in one place in a relatively small area such as a station, platform or train increases the risk of threats, which is why the functioning of police stations specializing in railway areas is extremely important. This affects the increased level of security in the area of railway and station infrastructure, more efficient response to crisis situations and increased protection of critical railway infrastructure.

Data on crimes in railway areas, like all other crimes, are recorded in the National Police Information System (KSIP). However, it should be noted that the modus operandi values are not mandatory when registering in KSIP, and therefore the number of actual crimes committed on railway premises may be higher. In addition, the data collected by the Police do not include registration from preparatory proceedings conducted by the prosecutor's office on its own. Chart 1 presents statistics of crimes detected by the Police on railway premises covering the years 2016–2023. In these statistics, this concerns crimes committed on passenger and freight trains, railway stations, railway stops, railway lines and other railway areas.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, Article 8, paragraph 1.

<sup>12</sup> Data of the National Police Headquarters as of October 9, 2024.

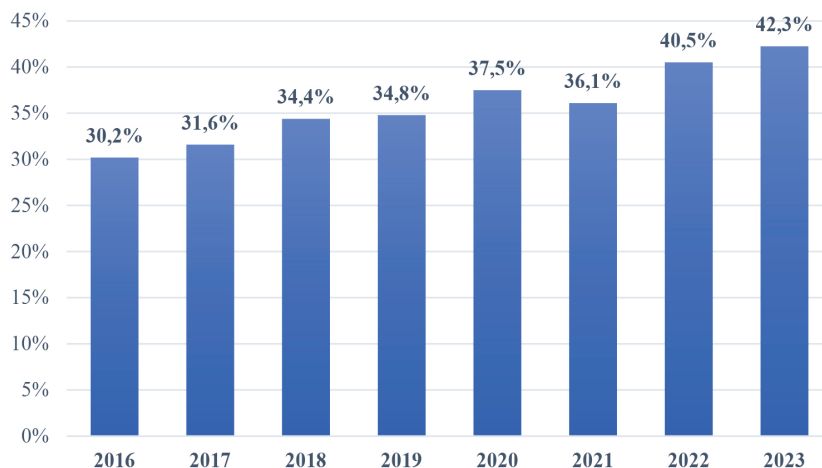
Chart 1. Crimes detected on railway areas (premises) in 2016–2023



Source: Own study based on data from the National Police Headquarters.

The presented list shows that in the period 2016–2020 there was a constant downward trend in crimes committed in the railway area. Their number in 2020 (2887) fell by as much as 1937 incidents compared to 2016 (4824). In the years 2021–2022 a gradual increase in the scale of crimes was noted, while in 2023 there was another decrease to the level of 3720 incidents per year, which is still a number significantly lower than in 2016. The number of crimes decreased by 1104. One of the most important elements subject to crimes was railway equipment, i.e. devices for controlling railway traffic, track elements or railway traction. This is significant from the point of view of train traffic safety. Nevertheless, in the case of railway stations, crimes primarily related to theft, robberies, assaults and burglaries.

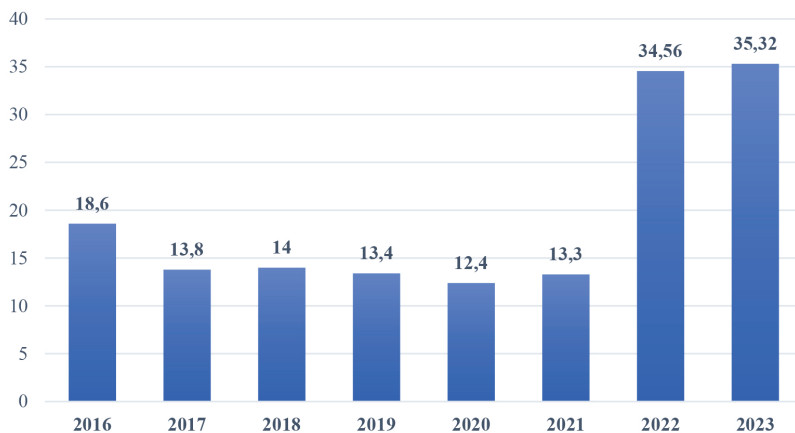
Crimes on railway premises require the Police to take appropriate action aimed at detecting the perpetrators or arresting them. Chart 2 presents data on the detection of crimes identified on railway premises in the years 2016–2023.

**Chart 2. Detection rate of crimes detected on railway areas (premises) in 2016–2023**

Source: Own study based on data from the National Police Headquarters.

Police statistics show a gradually increasing level of crime detection on the railway. In 2016, the indicator remained at a level of just over 30%, while over the years of the period under review, an almost constant increase was recorded (with the exception of 2021). In 2023, crime detection was 42.3%, which was a significant increase in the effectiveness of the Police by over 12% compared to 2016.

Another element included in the reports of the Police Headquarters in the field of railway areas are the recorded losses resulting from crimes, which are presented in chart 3.

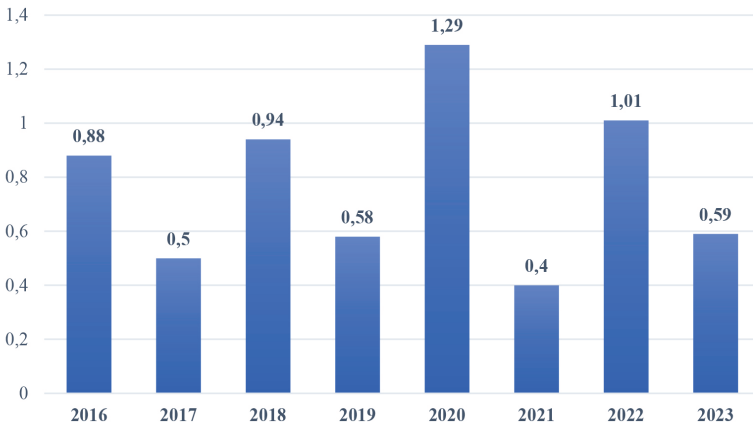
**Chart 3. Losses in millions of zlotys (PLN) recorded in railway areas (premises) in 2016–2023**

Source: Own study based on data from the National Police Headquarters.

In the period under review, losses with a total value of PLN 156.38 million were recorded. The recorded property damage on the railway referred to the property of railway and station infrastructure managers, rail carriers, but also losses incurred by passengers at stations and other railway areas and on trains. The data show that in the years 2017–2021 the value of recorded losses remained at a constant level of PLN 12.4 million to PLN 14 million, which translated into an average of PLN 13.38 million per year. A significant increase in recorded damage on the railway area and on trains occurred in 2022 – PLN 34.56 million and 2023 – PLN 35.32 million. This is an increase in losses incurred by over 160% compared to the average for the years 2017–2021. Due to the fact that the number of crimes recorded on railway premises (graph 20) in the same period was quite similar, the reasons for such a significant increase in damage in the period covering the years 2022–2023 should be sought in criminal activity focused on property of greater value than before (2016–2021).

Losses incurred as a result of criminal activity on railway premises and on trains are painful for the injured parties, regardless of whether they are natural or legal persons. Therefore, it is very important for the Police to strive to detect the perpetrator and return the lost property to the injured parties. Chart 4 shows the value of property recovered by the Police on the railway in the years 2016–2023.

Chart 4. Value of recovered property in millions of zlotys (PLN) recorded in railway areas (premises) in 2016-2023



Source: Own study based on data from the National Police Headquarters.

Taking into account the recorded amount of losses resulting from crimes on railway premises, the value of recovered property is significantly lower. In the period under review, total damage amounted to PLN 156.38 million, while

property recovered had a total value of PLN 6.19 million. This constituted only less than 4% of the total size of losses incurred on railway premises and in trains from 2016–2023. It should be emphasized that it is not always possible to recover lost property even despite the detention of the perpetrator. This results from the type of damage suffered, which may be caused by deliberate destruction of infrastructure or an object that is no longer recoverable by the Police. Only stolen property has a chance of being returned to the injured party, if it has not been damaged.

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## Conclusion

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The Police's activities in the security area of railway zones constitute an extremely important element of the protection of critical infrastructure and public order. Railway areas, a key component of the transport system, are exposed to various threats that require a multi-faceted approach and inter-institutional cooperation. The Police, as the primary body responsible for ensuring security, plays a key role in this context, combining preventive, operational and intervention functions.

The analysis conducted in this article shows that the effectiveness of Police activities in this area depends on several fundamental factors. Firstly, the appropriate organization of Police structures is important, which allows for a quick and effective response to threats. The specialization of officers, especially in the area of counteracting crimes on railway areas, is becoming crucial in the face of contemporary challenges. Secondly, cooperation with other entities responsible for the security of railway areas, such as the Railway Protection Guard, rail carriers, railway and station infrastructure managers or emergency services, is essential for coordinating actions in crisis situations and for preventing threats.

Technological development, although it brings new possibilities for monitoring and protecting railway areas, poses new challenges to the Police. The implementation of modern monitoring systems, data analysis and prediction of potential threats can significantly improve the effectiveness of preventive actions. At the same time, the development of technology requires constant improvement of officers' competences and provision of appropriate financial resources for the modernization of infrastructure and equipment.

Education is also important. It is the most effective and at the same time the cheapest form of preventing threats.<sup>13</sup> Therefore, it is necessary to strive

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<sup>13</sup> J. Trocha, *Propedeutyka ochrony ludności w Polsce. Problemy. Możliwości. Perspektywy* [An Introduction to Civil Protection in Poland: Challenges – Opportunities – Prospects], Akademia Sztuki Wojennej, Warszawa 2020, p. 153.

to intensify educational activities of the Police in the area of railway zones security. This plays an important role in shaping responsible attitudes among passengers and rail transport personnel. Information campaigns, training and cooperation with local communities can contribute to reducing the number of incidents resulting from improper human behavior, such as intrusions into the track or acts of vandalism.

To sum up, the activities of the Police in the area of railway zones security require a flexible and multidimensional approach. The threats that officers face are complex and dynamic, which requires continuous improvement of methods of action, including adaptation to changing conditions and challenges. In the context of the growing number of passengers, the intensification of freight transport and technological progress, the role of the Police in ensuring safety on railway premises is becoming even more significant. Further research in this area should focus on assessing the effectiveness of the actions taken and on identifying best practices in managing safety in the railway environment. It is particularly important to seek innovative technological solutions and develop international cooperation in the area of protecting railway and station infrastructure. The conclusions drawn from this research can contribute to increasing safety not only at the local level, but also on a systemic scale, which is of key importance for the functioning of rail transport in Poland and worldwide.

### **Abstrakt**

W publikacji dokonano obszernego przeglądu aktywności polskiej Policji w aspekcie bezpieczeństwa obszarów kolejowych w latach 2016–2023.

Kolej pełni strategiczną rolę w gospodarce krajowej i europejskiej, pozostając jednym z najefektywniejszych środków transportu towarowego oraz osobowego. Dużym wyzwaniem pozostaje jednak zapewnienie optymalnego poziomu bezpieczeństwa na obszarze kolejowym, który jest szczególnie podatny na zagrożenia o charakterze masowym. Obecnie nie ma państwowej formacji mundurowej specjalizującej się w ochronie terenów kolejowych oraz pociągów w Polsce, dlatego też najważniejszą funkcję pełni tutaj Policja.

Autor przedstawił dane związane z liczbą przestępstw i ich wykrywalnością oraz wartością strat poniesionych na terenach kolejowych wynikających z czynów zabronionych. Zwrócono również uwagę na konieczność podjęcia stosownych działań ukierunkowanych na poprawę ochrony transportu i obszarów kolejowych w związku z rosnącym zapotrzebowaniem społecznym.

**Słowa kluczowe:** Policja, bezpieczeństwo, zagrożenia, obszary kolejowe.

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