

## **Undocumented immigrants have licenses to carry weapons**

### **Area security guards licensed by state, but in country illegally**

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By **SERGIO CHAPA / Al Día**

The arrests of two undocumented immigrants working as security guards with permits to carry firearms shows the state's limited resources to review more than 165,000 licenses for security guards and several other occupations, officials said Thursday.

Authorities arrested Orlando Umana-Ayala and Hemiliano Hernandez-Tapia on Dec. 1 under illegal immigration and federal unlawful possession of firearms charges.

A probable cause affidavit revealed that Umana-Ayala was working as armed security under the false name "Walter Cuellar" at the Orienteña Night Club off Knight Street in Dallas when officials with the Private Security Bureau of the Texas Department of Public Safety (DPS) reviewed his credential during a routine inspection.

The officers ran his information through a federal database and discovered that "Walter Cuellar" was really Umana-Ayala, an El Salvadoran immigrant who was originally deported from the United States in 1986.

Federal court records also revealed that Hernandez-Tapia was working as an armed security guard at an apartment complex off Webb Chapel Road in northwest Dallas when officials performed a similar inspection.

The Mexican immigrant was deported in 2002 through Laredo but returned to the United States where he used a fake I-551 residency card to get a job as a security guard.

The two remain in custody under federal charges but state records revealed that Umana-Ayala received a license from the DPS' Private Security Bureau to carry a firearm in Dec. 2001 and that Hernandez-Tapia received a similar license in Feb. 2003.

The same records also revealed that the two undocumented immigrants received training to use those firearms in 2005 and 2006.

DPS spokeswoman Tela Manage told WFAA that her agency is always trying to increase the number of officials who review the firearms licenses as well as the 165,000 people who are licensed by the Bureau of Private Security as security guards, locksmiths and other occupations.

"We started with five agents three years ago and now we have 22," she said in an interview. "The legislature has noted it, but in the meantime we're doing the best we can."

Sgt. Doug Whitworth with the DPS' Bureau of Private Security office in McKinney said he only has 11 officers to review the security guard licenses in an area that extends from El Paso to Texarkana and from Midland to Amarillo.

Whitworth said his officers review the licenses and credentials of security guards in surprise operations and that they also review the documents of the companies that employ them.

“Our officers work every day...day and night,” he said.

The sergeant added that it is “routine” for officers to arrest security guards working without licenses and that his men even find some of them carrying weapons even though the guards outstanding arrests warrants for crimes allegedly committed after they received their license.

According to DPS information, a person who wants to become a security guard must submit to a security background check and fingerprints.

State records show that Umana-Ayala and Hernandez-Tapia made it through the background check without officials realizing they were undocumented immigrants.

Whitworth said the arrests of Umana-Ayala and Hernandez-Tapia are the first cases to his knowledge in which his officers have arrested undocumented immigrants working as security guards.

Roger Umanzor, the owner of the Orienteña Night Club, said he contracted Umana-Ayala through Houston Harris Division Patrol to watch and guard his bar, which opened three years ago.

Umanzor said he used the services of the Houston company because they have contracts with several other local businesses including Fiesta supermarkets, La Michoacana meat markets and Bank of America.

The bar owner said Umana-Ayala came to the club four months ago and he never questioned the security guard's immigration status because he thought the company took care of that.

Umanzor said his club has suffered a fall in business since Umana-Ayala's arrest because his immigrant clientele are afraid that immigration officials will return to the spot.

“I'm the victim here,” Umanzor said.

State records show that Hernandez-Tapia was also an employee of Houston Harris Division Patrol at the time of his arrest.

The company owner Mauricio Garcia declined to comment but said Umana-Ayala was actually an employee with Metro Security Patrol Corporation in Irving at the time of his arrest.

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