



The JERSEY JOURNAL

Lying on job application nets 40 arrests

Monday, June 20, 2005

By JOURNAL STAFF AND WIRE REPORTS
Newhouse News Service

Three Jersey City men were among a group of 40 ex-cons arrested after allegedly lying on applications for security jobs.

The arrests, made between May 23 and June 9, included both men and women, convicted of crimes ranging from fraud and theft to selling drugs and manslaughter, Attorney General Peter C. Harvey said.

The 40 convicts claimed on notarized affidavits that their criminal backgrounds were clean, according to the attorney general's office. The majority of those arrested were charged with falsifying public records, a disorderly persons offense, Harvey said.

The Jersey City men arrested were Corey S. Ramsey of Fulton Avenue, Wesley Chambliss of Stegman Street and Gerald E. Bowman of Claremont Avenue. Their previous convictions weren't released by authorities.

The arrests were part of "Operation Sentry," a prelude to the Security Guard Act of 2005. Once this law takes effect in September, police departments will be allowed to charge certain ex-convicts with a disorderly persons offense if they are working as a security guards. Prior to the act these individuals would have just been fired.

"Most people assume when we walk into a dark parking lot, that the security guard is someone of high integrity," Harvey said. "It's disturbing that someone working (as a security guard) has been convicted of a crime."

Harvey said the new law will serve as a deterrent because it brings attention to the cases and may make an ex-convict think twice about applying for a job as a security officer. He also hopes the Security Guard Act will be a wake-up call for the private sector.

"It will raise the question for private-sector companies to find out if their security guards were properly screened," he said.

The final approval stages of the act include training and certification for the security industry. The training involves lessons on homeland security, first aid, ethics and law statutes. Certification requires that criminal background checks must be completed before the person is hired.

Private detective agencies and security firms who hire security guards will have Internet access to a database of certified guards. Inclusion in this list means that a person has met the requirements necessary to be hired as a guard, according to the attorney general's office.

In the past, the State Police notified private detective agencies and security firms when fingerprint checks showed applicants had criminal records.

The 40 convicts had not applied to high-level security jobs, said Paul Loriquet, spokesman for the attorney general's office. And in most cases, the guards would have had "limited power" and no access to guns.

Information on whether any of the 40 had started working at a security job was not available yesterday.

staff writer Chandra M. Hayslett contributed to this report.

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