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Feds: Fake agent sought Brangelina job

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Brad Pitt and Angelina Jolie have been at the center of a tabloid storm since 2004.

LOS ANGELES, California (Reuters) -- A Los Angeles man was arrested Thursday on charges of impersonating a federal agent in what prosecutors say was a bid to get a job providing security for film stars Brad Pitt and Angelina Jolie.

Nelson Mercado, who has worked as a bodyguard and security consultant for Hollywood stars and leading athletes, was taken into custody one day after he was indicted by a federal grand jury, prosecutors say.

Assistant U.S. Attorney Brett Sagel told Reuters it was not yet clear why Mercado, 46, sought to work for Pitt and Jolie, though such a contract could prove lucrative. He declined to name the stars who had hired Mercado in the past.

"Impersonation of a federal agent is serious, no matter what it's for," Sagel said. "In this case you don't know what his motive or rationale was, but obviously it could have serious repercussions."

Sagel said Mercado approached Sunset Protective Services and Investigations, which provides security services for Pitt and Jolie, seeking the Hollywood super couple's contract and falsely claiming to work for the U.S. Department of Homeland Security.

Mercado carried phony Homeland Security Department credentials and drove a Ford Crown Victoria with tinted windows and police-style lighting that was fraudulently registered to the "U.S. Dept. of Homeland Security of America," Sagel said.

Representatives for Pitt, 42, and Jolie, 31, were made aware of the situation, Sagel said, but it was not clear if the actors themselves were told.

Mercado was expected to make his first court appearance Friday and could face up to three years in prison if convicted.

"Ocean's Eleven" star Pitt and Academy Award winner Jolie have been at the center of a tabloid frenzy since they met on the set of "Mr. and Mrs. Smith" in 2004.

In June, a celebrity photographer was arrested on suspicion of trespassing while trying to photograph the celebrity couple's adopted son outside the Malibu school that he attends. Prosecutors declined to file charges in that case.

One month earlier, Jolie gave birth to their daughter, Shiloh Nouvel Jolie-Pitt, in the African nation of Namibia.

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