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## Secret Service Arrests Man Seeking Job as Bodyguard to Brad Pitt, Anglina Jolie

The applicant who aspired to protect the celebrity couple falsely claimed to be a Homeland Security agent, prosecutors say.

By Joe Mozingo, Times Staff Writer  
September 15, 2006

Tracking terrorists by day and protecting Brad Pitt and Angelina Jolie at night — that's the way Nelson Mercado, a 46-year-old bodyguard from Torrance, tried to sell himself to the security firm that provides protection for the celebrity couple, prosecutors allege.

Driving up in a Ford Crown Victoria with tinted windows and police lights, Mercado claimed to be a special agent with the Department of Homeland Security seeking to moonlight for the celebrities when they returned from Africa, authorities say.

But an agent he was not.



On Thursday he was arrested by the U.S. Secret Service on one count of impersonating a federal officer.

According to the indictment, he had registered his Crown Vic — considered the preferred ride of G-men and hit men alike — to the "U.S. Dept. of Homeland Security of America." He also carried bogus credentials saying he was an agent.

Mercado has worked as a bodyguard for celebrities, said Thom Mrozek, a spokesman for the U.S. attorney's office in Los Angeles, declining to specify which ones.

"Apparently among people who do this kind of work — it's not a large group — word on the street was that Brad Pitt and Angelina Jolie were looking for extra security because they were planning to come back from Africa," said Mrozek.

He said the defendant assumed the couple would pay well, given their stature; so he applied to Sunset Protective Services and Investigations, which has them as clients.

The security firm "just thought something was a little strange," said Mrozek.

They notified authorities, and the U.S. Secret Service investigated Mercado. If he is convicted, he faces a maximum of three years in prison.

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