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Archive for Saturday, November 12, 2005

## Private security works to shed antisocial image

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By Sophia Maines & Brooke Wehner  
November 12, 2005

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Some private security guards can bench press more than 400 pounds. They work out regularly, then stand guard at Lawrence hot spots, instilling fear in some patrons.

"Once you see them, you have less confidence in yourself," said Trey Sanchez, a Kansas University sophomore. "You're like half their size."

They can be intimidating.

"They're just huge guys," said Jacob Mitchell, a KU senior. "I'm kind of glad I've never had to talk to them."

But it's not always easy being a private security

guard.

"We are very, very misunderstood and misinterpreted," said Zac Marrs, owner of Mil-Spec Security Group in Lawrence.

Such security personnel do everything from guard bars to patrol apartment complexes. Some may think they're thugs or party-wreckers, but they're just doing their jobs, Marrs said.

"I think they've got the worst possible job actually," said Dennis Steffes, owner of Coyotes and Last Call nightclubs. "They not only get blamed for everything by us, but they get blamed for everything by everybody else."

Two decades ago, there were no security firms in Lawrence, said Sgt. Dan Ward, spokesman for the Lawrence Police Department. Today there are several in the region, including Mil-Spec.

The companies can help keep peace and help when, some say, the Lawrence Police Department is understaffed.

"We don't have enough officers on the street to provide the level of presence that some individuals would like to have," Ward said. "They are an extra set of eyes for the police department."

Zac Marrs said his security officers have a relationship of necessity with police.

"They have their agenda, of course, and we have ours," he said. "We usually try to find a common ground."

Security officers must call the police if they detain someone who breaks the law. They never throw punches, but can restrain people through joint manipulation and pressure points.



Photo by Scott McClurg

Mil-Spec security Group officer Sam Byers makes his rounds in one of the company's cars. The company handles after-hours security at businesses, apartment complexes and other sites in and around Lawrence.

The goal is to gain control of a situation without hurting anyone.

"You want them to go away and to go away quietly," said Matt Marrs, Mil-Spec's general manager and brother of Zac Marrs. "The reason why we're there is to keep things quiet."



6News video: Security companies offer extra protection in Lawrence (11-11-05)



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It can be a thankless job. For \$7 to \$13 per hour, Mil-Spec's employees often work late hours protecting places such as bars, apartment buildings, warehouses, sports venues and other sites.

"We usually don't get compliments," Matt Marrs said.

Mil-Spec has about 25 employees.

"There are certain individuals who are just geared for this kind of work," Zac Marrs said. "They're not too aggressive, and they're not too mild-mannered."

Some people understand the role of a security guard, he said. Others don't.

He recalled working in Olathe and being asked why he carried a pistol. The person told him that he was in Johnson County and that no one carries a gun in Johnson County.

A few months later, he witnessed a shooting while on duty.

"I think the people who don't understand why we're there are either naive or they've lived in a sheltered environment," he said.



Photo by Scott McClurg

Mil-Spec security officers, from left, Sam Byers, Zac Marrs, Matt Marrs and Brock Moody, visit before a night of duty at the dance club Liquid, 806 W. 24th St.

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## Comments



**Hong\_Kong\_Phooey** 7 years, 8 months ago

Dost mine eyes deceive me, or did the article say that Mil-Spec "never throws punches"?? Uh huh. If you believe that, I've got a nice bridge that I'm looking to get rid of...

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**hurlehey** 7 years, 8 months ago

Mostly it's the criminal records and dishonorable discharges these guys have that keeps them from being real cops.

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**topflight** 7 years, 8 months ago

They try to say these guys dont throw punches. HA, why else would the muscle heads (and i use that loosely, because not all of them are that damn big and musclely) join Milspec? They figure they can be were all the fights happen and then jump in and get some free punches in without going to jail. RENT-A-COPS. Wait, they dont even deserve that much, how about, RENT-A-IDIOT. Heard last year that some of the members in milspec were wanted on some serious drug charges. But hey lawrence liberal world, lets make these guys look like regular hard working folk.

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