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Friday, June 18, 1999

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**Sheriff Offering a Badge and Gun to Celebrities;**By: TINA DAUNT  
TIMES STAFF WRITER

Jay Leno, Steven Seagal and a host of other celebrities and prominent people may soon join the ranks of the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department as "executive reserves," officials said Thursday.

Sheriff Lee Baca has set up the special reserve program that will allow celebrities, executives, star athletes and a variety of other notables to sign up with the department.

If the new reservists complete 64 hours of training and pass the department's background check, officials say, they will be given a badge and can carry a gun. Those who do not complete the abbreviated academy course can still join the elite corps as "volunteers," but will not be able to carry a concealed weapon with the department's blessing. Sources say Leno and Seagal will probably opt for the latter.

Although the program is designed to involve more high-profile people in various Sheriff's Department events, some department members say they are worried that it will be abused--particularly by those seeking a backdoor way to secure a concealed weapons permit.

"There is something to be said for being able to command a Jay Leno or an Oscar De La Hoya for a grand opening," said Dennis Slocumb, president of the Los Angeles County Professional Peace Officers Assn. "But if it's there to reward campaign supporters, then I have a problem with that . . . and if there is no necessity for them to have a gun, then why do they have it?"

Assistant Sheriff Larry Waldie, however, said the sheriff is merely "trying to get some really prominent members of the community, either business executives or entertainers, to assist us to have better liaisons with the community."

"When you have a big-name star, it will be a great draw," Waldie said.

In addition to Leno and Seagal, officials have asked Lee Iacocca and Utah Jazz player Bryon Russell to join, sources say. Other people being considered for the

program include the grandchildren of former Sheriff Peter Pitchess.

"We're in the process of taking applications," said Capt. Doyle Campbell, who is in charge of the department's reserve program. "We have about 30 people who have expressed an interest. Nobody has signed up completely."

In addition to having to submit to background checks, applicants will also be expected to undergo random drug testing, according to officials.

"We're doing the whole nine yards," Waldie said.

The department has several reserve programs for regular citizens, who are also allowed to carry guns if they complete the proper training. In one of the programs, reservists actually work in radio cars and help deputies patrol the streets. In another program, mountaineers and medical professionals are called on to help with search and rescue operations.

It has been years since the department granted badges to people simply because they are prominent.

Pitchess did away with the practice in the 1960s because he believed it led to a "lack of professionalism," longtime department members said. Also, the county can be held liable for any actions the reservists take while on duty.

Descriptors: BACA, LEE; LOS ANGELES COUNTY SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT; POLICE RESERVES; CELEBRITIES; LENO, JAY; SEAGAL, STEVEN; POLICE TRAINING; VOLUNTEERS;

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Saturday, September 25, 1999

Home Edition

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**Member of Sheriff's Celebrity Reserve Unit Suspended;**

Law enforcement: Volunteer deputy is accused of drawing a gun on a couple outside his home. He calls it a 'non-incident.';

By: TINA DAUNT  
TIMES STAFF WRITER

Less than a month after Los Angeles County Sheriff Lee Baca swore in his first new "celebrity" reserve deputies, one of his recruits--a member of the Zacky Farms chicken dynasty--has been relieved of duty for allegedly drawing a gun during a confrontation outside his Bel-Air home.

According to Los Angeles police, Scott Zacky allegedly mistook a couple out on a date for auto burglars when they were trying to fix a window on their car. A witness told investigators that Zacky, 35, ran out of his house in his boxer shorts, waved a gun and yelled: "Stop! Police!," authorities said.

"He allegedly was pointing the gun at [the couple] as they drove away in fear," said LAPD Det. Paul Bishop. The couple contacted the LAPD, which launched an investigation. No charges have been filed against Zacky, but the city attorney's office will review the matter for potential violations next month.

Meanwhile, sheriff's officials said Zacky--who was sworn in to Baca's elite reserve unit Aug. 29--has been relieved of duty, which is routine in cases of this nature. After the LAPD concludes its investigation, sheriff's officials say they will conduct their own investigation of the incident, which allegedly occurred Aug. 31.

Although the Sheriff's Department issued guns to members of the elite group of reserves, LAPD investigators believe Zacky may have used another weapon during the alleged confrontation. When contacted at his home, Zacky said the incident amounts to nothing more than a misunderstanding. "It's a non-incident," he said.

He said one of his neighbors called to tell him that a man wearing gloves and a ski cap appeared to be breaking into cars. He said he armed himself and went out to investigate. "I was crossing the street and a car came at me," he said. "I spun around and pointed the gun at them and yelled, 'Stop!' "

Zacky said he never yelled "police" and that he was wearing shorts--not boxers. He said the car stopped for a moment, and then sped off.

His attorney, David Ogden, said his client will appear before a hearing officer with the city attorney's office next month to explain his side of the story. City prosecutors will then decide whether to file misdemeanor charges against Zacky.

Ogden said he believes the matter will be resolved once "everyone understands what happened."

"I don't really see this as a crime," he said.

Nevertheless, the incident has renewed criticism of Baca's reserve unit. When the sheriff proposed the plan several months ago, department members expressed concern over the wisdom of issuing badges and guns to civilians who are provided with 64 hours of training.

"My understanding is that they were not hired to perform line law enforcement functions," said Dennis Slocumb, president of the Professional Peace Officers Assn. "This just provides an example of what can go wrong when you put such a strong symbol of authority and a gun in the hands of someone who had 64 hours of training. It requires more training to do manicures in the state of California."

Sheriff's officials set up the unit in an effort to get high-profile members of the community involved in department events, such as helping with anti-drug programs or the youth activity league. Those who complete the training are issued a department uniform, along with the gun and badge.

Department leaders had asked Jay Leno and Steven Seagal to join the elite corps. Although the men said they would be interested in assisting the department, they declined to sign up for the unit, officials said.

In all, 20 people were sworn in at a ceremony last month. In addition to Zacky, the group includes a number of business executives and two grandchildren of the late Sheriff Peter Pitchess.

Sheriff's Capt. Doyle Campbell, who oversees the reserve program, said the unit was formed to "bring influential people in the community together to benefit the department in a number of different ways."

"They're very interested in giving back to the community," he said.

He also defended the decision to issue uniforms, guns and badges to the executive reserves, saying that sheriff's officials decided to treat the elite group as they would any other reserve unit in the department.

"They weren't just given guns," Campbell said. "They went through 24 hours of training with the guns and had to qualify for the right to carry them."

Thursday, December 2, 1999  
Orange County Edition  
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**L.A. Sheriff's Unit Suffers a 2nd Arrest;**

An ex-reserve deputy and an Anaheim man are indicted by a federal grand jury on charges of laundering \$225,000.;

By: From a Times Staff Writer

A former member of Los Angeles County Sheriff Lee Baca's special celebrity reserve unit and an associate from Anaheim were indicted by a federal grand jury in Santa Ana on Wednesday on suspicion of laundering about \$225,000, the U.S. attorney announced.

Elie Abdalnoun, 36, of San Dimas, a wealthy Baca supporter who owns Cypress Jewelry Mart Inc., was sworn in in June and given a badge and a gun by the department. He is the second member of the celebrity reserve unit arrested this year. As a result of the arrests, the program was suspended last month.

Abdalnoun and Jirair Tatarian, 29, co-owner of an Orange County strip club, are accused of laundering money they allegedly believed came from proceeds from counterfeit clothing.

Undercover Anaheim police officers initiated the investigation, telling Abdalnoun and Tatarian they had access to increasingly large amounts from the sale of counterfeit apparel. Abdalnoun was introduced to the undercover investigators as the money launderer by Tatarian, authorities said.

"Using banking contacts that Abdalnoun maintained in Beirut, Lebanon, Abdalnoun and Tatarian agreed to launder money for undercover investigators," according to a statement by the U.S. attorney. "During an eight-month period, Abdalnoun and Tatarian laundered approximately \$225,000, receiving a 10% commission for their services."

Three months ago, Los Angeles sheriff's officials suspended celebrity Reserve Deputy Scott Zacky, whose family owns Zacky Farms, after he was accused of brandishing a weapon at two people outside his Bel-Air home.

Baca set up the program in June for celebrities, executives, athletes and other notable community members to serve as his "kitchen cabinet." As it turned out, no well-known celebrities wanted to join. The unit included 20 or so little-known but influential individuals with an interest in law enforcement.

Tatarian and another man, Lionel Rodriguez, were also indicted Wednesday on suspicion of attempting to smuggle guns onto planes at Los Angeles International Airport. Rodriguez, 29, of Diamond Bar, worked as a loss-prevention agent at a duty-free shop at LAX.

Assistant U.S. Attorney Jean A. Kawahara said the men thought they had successfully arranged to have guns placed on flights to Ireland for a fee of \$900 per firearm. But the money was paid to undercover police officers operating a sting, she said.

On Oct. 22, five guns were brought into LAX, taken past security and delivered to an undercover agent, who was supposed to carry the weapons onto a plane, Kawahara said.

On Nov. 17, another five guns were delivered to Rodriguez, who was arrested after allegedly smuggling them through security by using his security pass and knowledge of procedures at the airport.

Type of Material: Regional version of a story in Home Edition

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Postscript:

Obviously, something really ugly happened here. But I'm not sure we can fully trust the LA Times to accurately report some of it...their biases towards anything gun-related is just legendary.

Scott Zacky dropped me Email at one point, saying that they got his role in all this very wrong. It's a sorry commentary on the LA Times (aka: "Pravda West") when I say that I have no idea who to believe, them or Mr. Zacky.

In any case, this was most definitely a case of "elite issuance" gone horribly wrong, and part of a pattern. But it also stands alone as the only documented case of a Sheriff selling full-tilt **official** law enforcement authority to go with their CCW permits.

"Unofficial" law enforcement status for armed cronies has been identified in Sacramento County (see also Colafrancesco Papers), Contra Costa County (the "Sheriff's Posse") and is suspected elsewhere.

This garbage is simply intolerable.

Jim March  
Equal Rights for CCW Home Page  
<http://www.equalccw.com>