



MEDIA RELEASE

Department of Public Safety

Ohio Department of Public Safety • John Born, Director
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TOLEDO MAN FOUND GUILTY OF WORKING UNLICENSED AS ARMED SECURITY GUARD

COLUMBUS - A Toledo man was found guilty Thursday of a felony charge of working unlicensed as an armed security guard at local bars and after-hours clubs.

Providing unlicensed security is typically a misdemeanor offense, but he was charged with a felony because of repeated violations.

Franklin L. Harris, 46, pleaded no contest and was found guilty of one count of engaging in the security business without a license, a 5th-degree felony punishable by up to a year in prison. Mr. Harris is scheduled for sentencing on Oct. 11, 2016 at 1:30 p.m. in Lucas County Common Pleas Court.

Harris continued working without a license as an armed security guard, despite two prior misdemeanor convictions in 14 months for working unlicensed. The Ohio Department of Public Safety (ODPS) also issued a cease-and-desist order. Harris had been working during two fatal shootings, fights and other disturbances at Toledo bars.

"Unlicensed security guards are a serious threat to public safety, especially when they are carrying firearms," said Geoff Dutton, Executive Director of ODPS' Private Investigator Security Guard Services. "They haven't undergone a criminal background check. They don't have insurance. They haven't completed required training. Businesses and organizations should always verify their security guard provider is licensed"

In investigating Harris, PISGS partnered with the Toledo Police Department and the Ohio Investigative Unit.

Unlicensed security guards enable other illegal activity, as well, including after-hours clubs that illegally sell alcohol and drugs. ODPS, which licenses and regulates security guards, first investigated Harris in 2014 after receiving complaints about him working at bars where there had been fatal shootings. He declined opportunities to apply for a license. Meanwhile, Harris continued to work at other bars and after-hours clubs targeted by police for illegal activity and for being neighborhood nuisances.

On March 18, 2015, Harris pleaded guilty to attempting to engage in security guard services. On February 11, 2016, after continuing to work without a license, he pleaded guilty to providing security services without a license. ODPS issued a cease-and-desist order on April 21, 2016. Still, Harris continued to work and was charged May 18, 2016, with the two charges elevated to felonies. One of the felonies was dismissed yesterday and he pleaded no contest to the other one

Businesses and organizations that contract with security guards can verify online that they are properly licensed:

<https://ext.dps.state.oh.us/PISGS/Pages/Public/providersearch.aspx>

Anyone who sees a security guard can text the guard's location to 614-705-2TIP (-2847) and PISGS will verify the guard's credentials.

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