

# Standing guard for rich and famous

By Billy Baker, Globe Correspondent

## **Bodyguard.**

**T**he term triggers flashbulb images of starlets and rap moguls rolling into nightclubs in New York or LA surrounded by men built like NFL tackles. But Boston, with its old money and big business, has a thriving bodyguard scene, too.

If you've never noticed it, that's the way they like it. "We try to be chameleon-like and fit in with our surroundings," says **Gerard Boniello**, a managing partner of **Corporate Resources Group**, a local firm that specializes in high-end bodyguard work known as "executive protection."

"We don't like to use the term 'bodyguard,'" **Boniello** said. "It's an antiquated term and you have a picture of a muscle-bound guy in an ill-fitting suit who is sort of lumbering in the background. We have a term for those types: We call them 'bullet catchers.' They're just there to look intimidating. We're trying to dispel that myth. Our guys blend in."

Boston has more than a half-dozen companies that specialize in executive protection, whose agents operate more like the Secret Service than the paparazzi-shovers who surround celebrities like Britney Spears and Paris Hilton.

For a company to offer executive protection in Massachusetts, it must be licensed as a private investigator by the State Police, according to **Boniello**. Training requirements for a company's individual agents, who do not need licensing, are at the discretion of the employer, he said.

Executive protection focuses on avoiding conflict, not instigating it, according to Peter Brenker of the American Institute of Executive Protection, a New Jersey-based company that specializes in training agents.

Clients usually fall into two categories -- high-profile and high net worth -- and include children of the ultra-wealthy who attend prestigious universities and private schools in the Boston area. There's also a good business protecting wealthy clients, often from the Middle East, who come to Boston to take advantage of its hospital facilities, the operators say.

Executive protection does not come cheap. Short-term contracts can run up to \$100 an hour for an agent from a high-end firm, according to **Boniello**, while those who require long-term, 24-hour protection -- which is rare, though not unheard of, in Boston -- usually pay \$50 an hour. For a year, that adds up to \$438,000 for a single person. Protection that involves an armored vehicle is even more expensive, in the neighborhood of \$1,500 a day.

One of the fastest-growing areas of the business is in CEO protection. Many insurance companies require kidnap and ransom protection for high-level executives. And with growing concern over disgruntled employees, companies are choosing to bolster their own security forces with private details, especially when a company is in the midst of staff cuts.

Local agencies also do a thriving business with visiting celebrities and dignitaries, and are often contracted to add their knowledge of the area to the VIP's existing security detail.

**Billy Baker** ■

© Copyright 2007 Globe Newspaper Company

---

---