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Port security guards charged with faking payroll records

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Waterfront police have arrested 11 port security guards at the Global Terminal in Jersey City and accused them of filing false payroll records for hours they didn't work, authorities said.

The guards would leave work early and shut down the gates where they were posted, while co-workers at other entrances covered for them, said Tom DeMaria, executive director of the Waterfront Commission of New York Harbor.

The 11 security guards, who were arrested Tuesday morning, were charged with conspiracy and theft by deception, according to a police report.

Federal authorities and elected officials have made port security a priority since 9/11, amid concerns terrorists might try to sneak weapons or bombs into the country through the cargo containers delivered from overseas to U.S. terminals.

But DeMaria said the case did not have homeland security implications.

"No one left a gate unattended or anything like that," he said.

Global is among the five largest terminals in New York Harbor.

So far, the investigation has focused on March 2007 when, authorities say, the guards collected \$10,000 for work they did not perform. Other months are now being looked at, DeMaria said.

The guards, like all dock workers, must undergo background checks by the Waterfront Commission before being hired.

-- Joe Malinconico

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