

Hi-Tech Security sued, owner's property searched

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ST. LOUIS • A man claims in a lawsuit filed Friday that he suffered brain injuries at the hands of an off-duty St. Louis police sergeant who was working for Hi-Tech Security, once a major "secondary employer" of city officers.

The timing of the suit appeared coincidental with a St. Louis police search Thursday of a home that public records show belongs to Hi-Tech's owner, Adam Strauss. The department would not say what it was looking for or what it found at the dwelling in the 4000 block of Laclede Avenue in the Central West End.

Strauss did not respond to a message left at Hi-Tech on Friday.

Daniel Finney Jr., the lawyer who filed the damage suit in St. Louis Circuit Court, said he was unaware of the search and did not believe it was related to his case.

Finney said his client, Andrew Himeless, 28, spent three months in rehabilitation but still cannot move his left arm and has trouble walking.

Himeless is seeking unspecified damages, claiming that his traumatic brain injury occurred outside a nightclub Oct. 2 while he was being handcuffed by Robert Ogilvie.

Ogilvie and Hi-Tech are named as defendants but the Police Department is not.

A department spokesperson confirmed that Ogilvie is a District 5 sergeant, and that internal affairs investigated him for allegedly failing to file an incident report immediately after the event. He received a written reprimand for failing to conduct a proper investigation.

Ogilvie could not be reached for comment.

Euro Inc., doing business as Europe Night Club, and one of its employees, Rasim Džananović, also are named as defendants. The incident at issue occurred outside the club, at 702 North 15th Street in St. Louis.

Ogilvie, in an incident report he ultimately filed, said he saw Himeless and a woman "in a heated argument" outside the club about 2 a.m. He wrote that Himeless appeared to be under the influence of drugs and displayed "aggressive behavior" by clenching his fists and avoiding eye contact.

"Rather than get in a physical altercation with Himeless I elected to secure him in handcuffs and sit him on the ground near a parked vehicle," Ogilvie wrote.

Ogilvie wrote that while he was not looking, Himeless tried to run away but tripped when his pants fell around his ankles and hit his face and shoulder on the sidewalk.

Finney, the lawyer, agrees that Himeless was arguing with the woman but disputes the rest.

"It was a verbal argument - nothing else - on a public street and no assistance was requested by anybody," he said. "My guy was not charged with any crime and he admittedly was handcuffed when he suffered his injury."

After Post-Dispatch stories in 2009 detailed the practices of Hi-Tech and other companies in hiring off-duty officers, the Police Department launched its own investigation into whether some were working private jobs while also on duty. The outcome of that inquiry has not been made public.

The newspaper review found that Strauss and other Hi-Tech employees, including two St. Louis police officers working secondary shift, arrested a father and son after a high-speed chase that the Board of Police Commissioners later ruled was improper. The board unanimously stripped Strauss, who was also a part-time Pevely police officer, of his security license. The other two officers were not disciplined.

Strauss started Hi-Tech in 1991 to help the Central West End address a growing problem with panhandlers and street robberies.

Many credited Strauss with demonstrating that visible patrols could improve safety, and other neighborhoods hired the company to supplement regular police patrols. As recently as 2009, Hi-Tech had contracts with four of the six special business districts in the Central West End.

Today, the once ubiquitous Hi-Tech patrol cars are seen in just one of the neighborhood's business districts - the southeast. The area has turned most of its business over to three other firms - The City's Finest, Securitas and A-1 Investigations - said James Partee, the neighborhood's security chief.

The Central West End - with many blocks gated to discourage through traffic - is better protected by firms using bike and foot patrols, Partee said.

Jeremy Kohler of the Post-Dispatch contributed to this report.