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U.S. Bank Stadium's security company gets sacked over hiring and training irregularities



The view of the stadium from the plaza at the US Bank Stadium Open House on Saturday, July 23, 2016. (Pioneer Press: John Autey)

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PUBLISHED: September 26, 2017 at 12:35 pm | UPDATED: September 27, 2017 at 10:40 am

The security company that has protected U.S. Bank Stadium since its construction was fired Monday following two investigations.

SMG, the group that oversees U.S. Bank Stadium operations, terminated its three-year contract with Monterrey Security, a Chicago-based company, citing a completed independent investigation that revealed some employees weren't subjected to background checks before their hiring, and some employees weren't properly trained.

"Monterrey ignored state requirements," said Mike Vekich, the chair of the Minnesota Sports Facilities Authority, which runs U.S. Bank Stadium in conjunction with SMG.

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After reviewing a report conducted by their independent investigation, Vekich said, "The decision was very clear to terminate that contract."

The security group also has been under investigation by the State of Minnesota Board of Private Detective and Protective Agent Services since May.

“Monterrey Security was selected after being licensed by the Minnesota Board of Private Detective and Protective Agent Services,” said a statement released by SMG and the Minnesota Sports Facilities Authority (MSFA). “While Monterrey failed to comply with established regulations and policies on an administrative basis, independent assessments of security at U.S. Bank Stadium have validated the existing operational security procedures. The safety and security of all guests and employees of U.S. Bank Stadium continues to be our top priority.”

Monterrey was the stadium’s security group since the 14-month-old stadium’s inception. Vekich said the company came to SMG and MSFA with glowing recommendations. Monterrey also provides security for Wrigley Field and Soldier Field in Chicago, homes of MLB’s Cubs and NFL’s Bears, respectively.

“It’s quite disappointing, for sure,” Vekich said. “They went through the process. They were vetted.”

SMG and MSFA announced Tuesday they have hired Whelan Event Services and G4S to replace Monterrey Security. Whelan provided security for the Metrodome, the former home of the Vikings, Twins and Gophers football.

Monterrey was fired by SMG and MSFA on Monday night. By Tuesday, Whelan and G4S had taken over security operations, manning the stadium’s entrances.

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The change in security operations at U.S. Bank Stadium comes less than four months before the stadium hosts Super Bowl LII, though the NFL brings in its own security firm to work with local authorities for that game.

“They were not involved at all in the Super Bowl security process,” Vekich said of Monterrey. “Homeland security deems us to be a national-level, No. 1 event, which means the federal government comes in ... and takes over the security.”

“Both of these service providers have a current workforce that is licensed by the State of Minnesota to perform these duties,” read the statement by SMG and MSFA. “Whelan Event Services and G4S are committed to continue hiring Minnesotans and are hosting several upcoming job fairs at U.S. Bank Stadium.”

SMG and MSFA didn’t say exactly how many people were affected by the switch in security firms, but Vikings gameday operations include a workforce of about 3,000 people including security outside the stadium, ticket-scanners, and in-stadium workers, which includes concessions and ushers.

The new security groups held a job fair Tuesday and plan to hold another Wednesday and three more next week.

Vekich invited all former Monterrey employees “that could stand up to background checks” to apply.

Monterrey Security’s first year with the \$1.1 billion stadium wasn’t without hiccups. During a January Vikings game last season, two protesters rappelled from the scaffolding and hung a banner protesting the Dakota Access oil pipeline. They used game tickets to enter the stadium and smuggled nylon rope, carabiners and the 40-foot vertical banner through security.

Still, Vekich insisted that no one was put in danger despite the offenses that led to Monterrey’s firing.

“This did not lead to any operational security issues,” Vekich said. “But based on reports and what we had come to know, we felt that a change needed to be made even though there weren’t operational security issues.”

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Chad Graff joined the Pioneer Press in April of 2013 -- long enough to cover three straight Wild playoff exits at the hands of the Blackhawks -- after working for the Philadelphia Inquirer and