

THE STORY OF A . . .

Executive Protection Specialist

When VIPs come to town, **THOMAS STUTLER**, 45, is ready to keep an eye on their every move. **Interview by Mike Boslet**

Executive protection speaks a little better to all the stuff I do. I'm not just bodyguarding, I'm providing a service. . . . So several of the client's needs are taken care of: Protection, transportation, medical, getting them from Point A to Point B. I don't use the term "bodyguard," and I don't know anyone in the industry who does.

It's never anything like Kevin Costner [in the 1992 movie *The Bodyguard*], where you jump in front of a would-be assailant.

The price of executive protection ranges from \$75 to \$90 an hour, plus expenses, with a minimum of four to 10 hours. No, I don't get tips.

The people you're assigned to protect are in the "bubble." The question is always "Who's in the bubble?" when there's an entourage. The security bubble is around the principal, but it's always interesting to me how many people want to be inside the "bubble."

You always give your client the option of us being armed or unarmed, and I would say it's 50-50. We have other, less lethal weapons we carry—a retractable baton and pepper spray, for instance. On the job, we wear a Level 3 ballistic vest with Taser resistance under our suits.

If a new [hip-hop] singer comes to town and wants to hit all the clubs, I would like for us to be armed to err on the side of safety because they [bar patrons] are armed.

I'm 6-foot-6 and 250 pounds. When I approach somebody and get in their face,

I think that comes in handy. But you never want to escalate a situation.

[As an FBI agent, Stutler worked in the San Francisco field office during the Clinton presidency, often providing security for Chelsea Clinton while she attended Stanford University. He also was assigned to security details when President Clinton, Vice President Al Gore or U.S. Attorney General Janet Reno visited the Bay Area.]

If you drew a weapon on my principal in close quarters, I'd want to regain the tactical advantage. FBI agents are trained to immediately grab for the gun. The law of action vs. reaction favors law enforcement. The reality is if I grab your hand and the gun in a split second, the gun can't discharge, and you're going to the ground in a lot of pain when I twist your wrist. But if you were two or three paces away, it would probably be better for me to protect the principal.

Casey Anthony needs protection because a lot of people have followed her situation and they don't feel the verdict was the right verdict. I think there are people out there who, if they came into contact with her, would try to hurt her. If asked, I would provide her my services.

I just published a spy-thriller in February, *The Consulate*. It's based on the "hypothetical" that a Chinese diplomat would use his diplomatic access to compromise a U.S. government program. It's based in San Francisco. I know that would never happen [breaking out in laughter]. It's going to be a series.



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