

City Is Slow To Discipline Worker Who Breached Airport Security

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CHICAGO—A city worker caught committing a serious breach of airport security was never properly disciplined and, in fact, was basically rewarded.

A joint investigation by [CBS 2 Chicago](#) and the Better Government Association found that the case of Arthur Rodriguez cost the taxpayers thousands of dollars—and it raises serious questions about the city's disciplinary system.

Rodriguez was a \$78,000-a-year Streets and Sanitation Department worker assigned to lay cable at Midway Airport in 2008. That's when he used his security badge to help two friends who were late for a flight.

City and federal officials confirm Rodriguez used his security badge to let the friends go through a door for employees only, bypassing the time-consuming lines, body and baggage scanners all passengers must endure.

The TSA discovered the breach after their flight took off. The friends of Rodriguez finally were searched when the connecting flight landed in California before resuming their trip to Honolulu.

That day, the city of Chicago's Aviation Department seized Rodriguez's security badge and issued a citation charging him with a "badging violation" for which he ultimately was fined \$75. He was transferred away from the airport, and the Streets and Sanitation Department put him on a nine-month, paid leave pending its investigation.

Rodriguez, confronted by Zekman, said the security breach was "taken care of" and declined to answer questions at length. He denied he was placed on administrative leave.

But city officials say he was. Based on figures supplied by the city, Rodriguez actually made \$60,000 during those nine months for no work. He went back to work for Streets and Sanitation, apparently with no disciplinary action taken.

Andy Shaw, executive director of the Better Government Association, finds several problems here.

"This is a failure of accountability," he says. "It's a failure of supervision. It's the kind of thing that infuriates taxpayers."

Rodriguez was laid off at Streets and Sanitation, along with other employees caught up in budget cutbacks in December 2008. Officials say the layoff had nothing to do with the Midway incident. A month later, he wound up getting hired as an electrical mechanic for the city's Water Department making \$84,000 a year.

"It's consistent with mistakes that were made every step of the way," Shaw says of Rodriguez's good fortune. "It's adding insult to injury to give someone who breaches security in an airport a job in an equally sensitive area: water."

CBS 2 pressed the city about why no additional disciplinary action was taken against Rodriguez. Eventually, officials said they would initiate a process to have him fired.

They say they've also ended the practice of placing employees on a paid leave while they are under investigation for misconduct.