

2 police officers fired for lying about incident

By Christina Leonard
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The Phoenix Police Department has fired two officers after an investigation showed they lied about an incident caught on undercover police videotape where a man was tossed down some stairs outside a central city nightclub.

A lengthy internal investigation found that Officers Timothy Norton, 35, and James Contreras, 36, gave misleading accounts about a March 8 arrest of two patrons at Fiesta Latina, 2030 W. McDowell Road.

The pair apparently were working off-duty at the club. Officers taped Contreras pulling a man who was being escorted out of the club and throwing him down a flight of stairs. Contreras wrote in a report that the man was not injured by police and had lost his footing.

Contreras also was accused of writing incorrectly that

Zeferino Duran resisted arrest.

Police officials on Thursday would say only that the actions were serious enough to require termination, and would not comment further. Norton had said he didn't see the push, but the tape indicated he did.

Police had sought criminal charges, saying both officers told stories that contradicted the videotape. The Maricopa County Attorney's Office declined to press charges, but city prosecutors charged Norton with providing false information and Contreras with two counts of providing false information and one count of assault. Both men have court dates this month.

Statewide from 1985 to 1999, 188 officers faced discipline for dishonesty, ranging from lying to theft to fraud, from the Arizona Peace Officer Standards and Training Board, which certifies officers.