



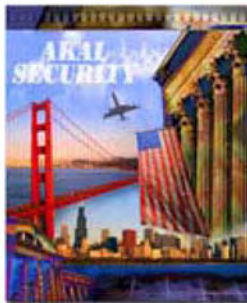
Sikh Approach to Modern Security Needs Means Big Business in Small New Mexican Town

By Renee Blake
Albuquerque, New Mexico
17 March 2005

[Blake Report-Download MP3 2,498 KB](#)

[Blake Report-Download RealAudio 826 KB](#)

[Listen to Blake Report](#)



Akal Security poster reflects the agency's coast-to-coast reach from San Francisco's Bay Bridge to the East coast skyscrapers.

The village of Espanola, New Mexico carries on its rich Hispanic traditions that began when Spaniards first settled in the small mountain town in 1598. But today's Espanola is also home to a Sikh community that founded one of the largest and fastest growing security companies in the United States.

Pass the Dream Catcher Movie Theater and look across the street from El Sombrillo Elementary School, and you'll see a gold and white gate in a white adobe wall. Inside is a gold-domed temple and some trailers that house offices - including the headquarters for Daya Singh Khalsa, senior vice president and co-founder of [AkAl Security](#).

The name has great meaning for Sikhs. "AkAl means undying, deathless," says Mr. Khalsa. "AkAl was the cry of the Sikh warriors entering battle. They would chant akals to mean 'death cannot conquer us.'"

One of the missions of Akal Security is to blend the ancient Sikh principles of the soldier-saint with the modern security needs of the United States and other countries. "If peace is impossible," Mr. Khalsa says, "then you fight to defend the defenseless. It's not a belief in turning the other cheek. It's not a belief in aggression. It's what you call a soldier-saint tradition, which is not unique to the Sikh religion. But it's a tradition that everyone should be a soldier and a saint."

This idea has been a successful one for Akal Security. Since its founding in 1980, the company has grown to become one of the five largest security agencies in the United States. Akal now has about 12,000 employees -- only about 50 of whom are Sikhs -- who work in 47 of the 50 U.S. states and 15 other countries.

In fact, you'll find Akal Security guards at U.S. Army bases, federal buildings, courthouses and airports. Government security is Akal's specialty, and the U.S. government is the Sikh company's largest client.

But Akal Security doesn't limit itself to government contracts. For example, Akal provides security - and more - for the [National Hispanic Cultural Center](#) in Albuquerque, New Mexico.

"What we deal with at this facility is both multicultural and multilingual," says Center Deputy Director Gene Henley. "So the ability to understand what a custom that may be considered normal here but could be offensive somewhere else or vice versa, that awareness is helpful to us."

Mr. Henley says the guards at the Center are there "to enhance as well as protect." For example, the guards in the art galleries know as much about the art as some staff members. "So when a patron is in the galleries and there's a question," he says, "oftentimes the guards can at least give them some assistance or some nugget or tidbit of information that is not commonly available."



Daya Singh Khalsa, senior vice president and co-founder of AkAl Security in customary sikh turban and tunic




Michael Redman, Akal Security's regional manager for New Mexico and Texas

This special kind of service is a hallmark of Akal Security, according to Michael Redman, the company's regional manager for New Mexico and Texas. Mr. Redman explains that Akal emphasizes its relationships with clients. "We can adapt to our business partners...and each one has its own unique security needs," he says. "So once we give the training director the preliminaries of what the client needs, he's able to adapt a solid training program to where we can go in and train our officers and give the customer satisfaction."

This approach also draws on the teachings of the late Sikh spiritual leader Yogi Bhajan, who founded the Sikh community in Espanola. Akal Security co-founder Daya Singh Khalsa says Yogi Bhajan taught his followers to build businesses as an extension of the basic principles of the Sikh way of life.

"A Sikh earns a living righteously and shares with others," Mr. Khalsa says. "The basic concept of forming business entities went right along with that. Yogi Bhajan never himself formed businesses, but he encouraged others to do so. He suggested to them that contributing the ownership of their business to the non-profit corporation would be a way to serve the community...to provide for a long-term success for the business...to take it out of an individual wealth-generating concept and put it into a community or a service of humanity concept."

That vision continues to serve the Sikh religion as well as the world beyond. Among those now benefiting from the high standards of Akal Security are the U.S. Army and the U.S. Department of Homeland Security...and newly naturalized citizens of the United States, who are assisted by Akal's

participation in the Court Security Officer program in nine judicial districts  [E-mail This](#)

[Article](#)



[Print Version](#)

[FAQs](#) | [Terms of Use & Privacy Notice](#) | [Broadcasting Board of Governors](#) | [Site Map](#) | [Contact Us](#)
| [Link to Us](#)