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Leonard Levitt

Adrian Schoolcraft: So Who's Crazy Now?

August 23, 2010

In a bizarre attempt at damage control, police department officials offered whistleblower cop Adrian Schoolcraft a sweetheart deal if he rejoined the NYPD fold.

The offer — conveyed through such unlikely intermediaries as a reporter at the cop-critical Village Voice and a Bronx captain without sufficient job to guarantee such a deal — featured a cushy job in the canine unit for the animal-loving Schoolcraft.

It also allowed Schoolcraft to testify against two bosses: Inspector Steven Mauriello, whom Schoolcraft accused of fudging crime statistics, and Deputy Chief Michael Marino, who allegedly directed a police posse to bring Schoolcraft to Jamaica Hospital's psychiatric ward, where he was kept against his will for six days.

According to Schoolcraft's lawyer, Jon Norinsberg, the offer was presented to him by Captain Brandon del Pozo, the commanding officer of the 50th precinct in the Bronx.

According to Norinsberg, del Pozo told him the offer had the approval of Deputy Commissioner Julie Schwartz, the Department Advocate, and of "people in the office of Deputy Commissioner for Strategic Initiatives, Michael Farrell."

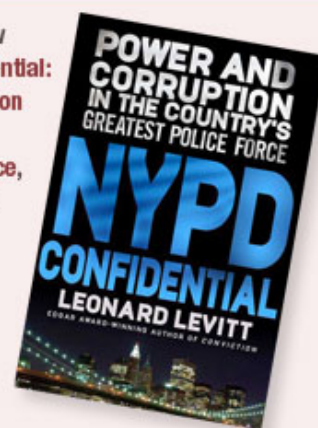
Farrell and del Pozo did not return calls. Schwartz was said to be on vacation.

A July 26th email from del Pozo to Norinsberg (see below), advises him to contact Schwartz directly.

The email also says that Internal Affairs Group I — the unit that investigates high-ranking officers — is investigating Schoolcraft's claims that the department retaliated against him for reporting corruption.

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"Why are you, as the commanding officer of the 50th precinct, getting involved?" Norinsberg said he asked del Pozo.

"He said it was because he was the only person in the department that Schoolcraft trusted, the only person in the NYPD that he would speak to."

Whether that is true remains unclear.

What is true is that, last year, Larry Schoolcraft contacted retired police sergeant David Durk, who reached out to del Pozo, who was then in Internal Affairs.

Durk, a singular figure in the NYPD, had played a key role 40 years ago in bringing Frank Serpico to the New York Times after the police department had rebuffed Serpico's attempts to report corruption in his Bronx plainclothes unit.

The publication of Serpico's charges led to the Knapp Commission on Police Corruption, which found pervasive and systemic payoffs to officers at every level of the department, even in the office of the police commissioner.

Like Durk, del Pozo is an exceptional figure in the NYPD. As is Durk, who attended Amherst College, del Pozo is an Ivy League graduate. He served in the

From: BRANDON.DELPOZO@nypd.org
 To: norinsberg@aol.com
 Sent: 7/26/2010 12:47:17 P.M. Eastern Daylight Time
 Subj: DC Julie Schwartz, Department Advocate

Dear Mr. Norinsberg,

Please feel free to give Deputy Commissioner Julie Schwartz a call. She is the NYPD's Advocate. These numbers will reach her: 646-610-5140 / 5144.

Also, I was able to ascertain a few additional facts I'd like to pass along or reiterate. PO Schoolcraft's allegations of retaliation, etc. are indeed open cases, being investigated by IAB Group 1, commanded by Deputy Inspector David Grossi.

The case against PO Schoolcraft for being AWOL is being handled by the Brooklyn North Investigations Unit, a borough-based unit that often accounts to IAB but is a part of the Patrol Services Bureau.

So, for this reason, DI Grossi will be able to treat PO Schoolcraft solely as a complainant and not as the subject of an investigation, and vice-versa. Also, it stands to reason that Deputy Commissioner Schwartz will not have the same attorney who is working on the AWOL case also handle the retaliation case on behalf of the department.

Beyond this, it is probably best to clear things up attorney to attorney. Deputy Commissioner Schwartz would prefer to speak with you directly, rather than working with the particular advocates assigned to PO Schoolcraft's cases.

Respectfully,
 Brandon del Pozo
 Captain
 Police Department, City of New York
 Commanding Officer, 50th Precinct

If true, that's the first indication that Mauriello and Marino may be under investigation for their dealings with Schoolcraft.

Schoolcraft has produced audio tapes he secretly made of roll call meetings at the 81st precinct, which Mauriello headed, to back up his allegations that officers were ordered to downgrade felonies to misdemeanors, and to refuse to take victims' complaints, in an effort to drive down the crime rate.

Under pressure from Brooklyn politicians after those tape-recordings became public, Police Commissioner Ray Kelly transferred Mauriello to a Bronx transit unit over the July 4th weekend.

At the time, Deputy Commissioner for Public Information Paul Browne said the transfer was unrelated to Schoolcraft's allegations.

military, is reportedly studying for his Ph.D. in philosophy, and has written articles on such controversial subjects as the torture of prisoners and the racially charged confrontation between a black Harvard professor and a white Cambridge, Mass. police sergeant.

Deputy Commissioner for Intelligence David Cohen dispatched him in 2005 to Amman, Jordan as one of the department's elite overseas detectives. Cohen also sent him to Mumbai, India after the terrorist attack there in 2008.

Last October, Kelly appointed him commanding officer of the 50th precinct, making him, at age 35, one of the youngest captains in the department.

So does it make sense that a smart, ambitious guy like del Pozo would risk his stellar career by acting on his own to convey an offer to Schoolcraft?

More likely, who among the brass came up with this harebrained scheme, and did it have the imprimatur of Commissioner Kelly? Since no decision — no matter how small — occurs without the commissioner's knowledge, one might be tempted to think so.

In addition, does this backroom approach to Schoolcraft reflect department concerns that his allegations, like Serpico's 40 years before, may reach beyond a single unit?

Just as payoffs, back then, covered virtually every police precinct, it is an open secret within the department that low-balling crime statistics occurs in many, if not most, precincts throughout the city.

Norinsberg has established a website — www.schoolcraftjustice.com — and says he is receiving calls from officers all across town reporting low-balling of crime reports.

Yet Kelly has been successful in blocking outside agencies from investigating these allegations, which first surfaced in 2005 when the patrolmen's and sergeants' unions stated publicly that the practice of downgrading crimes was city-wide.

Kelly refused to turn over documents on this issue requested by Mark Pomerantz, chairman of the Mayor's Commission to Combat Police Corruption, which lacks subpoena power. Bloomberg supported Kelly by remaining silent, prompting Pomerantz to resign.

Since then, not one of the city's district attorneys has had the guts to begin an investigation into the union claims.

After Schoolcraft made his initial allegations about the 81st precinct, Larry Schoolcraft wrote to Pomerantz, now in private practice. Pomerantz wrote back: "I would refer you to the Commission to Combat Police Corruption, but in candor I do not think they have the ability to do anything for you."

However, Norinsberg said del Pozo told him the opposite — and called Mauriello's new assignment a "dead end job."

In his \$50 million lawsuit against the department filed earlier this month, Schoolcraft claims that his forced hospitalization, with no medical justification, was the NYPD's way of retaliating against him for exposing corruption.

So, if the NYPD thought Schoolcraft was crazy, why would they want him back on the force?

Equally bizarre is the way the NYPD conveyed its olive branch to Schoolcraft: del Pozo last month called Village Voice reporter Graham Rayman, who had recently written a series of articles about Schoolcraft.

Rayman contacted Norinsberg, who pronounced the offer of a deal "ridiculous." Rayman declined to comment.

WHERE WAS PAUL? Last Friday, this reporter visited the office of Public Information [DCPI] on the 13th floor of Police Plaza to ask Deputy Commissioner for Public Information Paul Browne — for the third time— whether, as Schoolcraft has charged in his lawsuit, Browne accompanied Chief Marino and the officers who dragged Schoolcraft from his Queens home off to Jamaica Hospital, where he was kept in a psychiatric ward for six days.

If Browne was in fact there, shouldn't he, along with Mauriello and Marino, be investigated for retaliating against Schoolcraft?

DCPI's chief factotum, Lieut. Gene Whyte, said that Browne was out. Asked whether Browne's deputy, Inspector Kim Royster was in, Whyte busied himself in her office, made a phone call, then returned to say that she, too, was out.

Shortly afterwards, a sergeant in charge of building security informed Your Humble Servant that, unless he had a formal appointment, he could no longer visit the 13th floor.

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