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[City Council Members Shocked by "The NYPD Tapes"](#)

By [Graham Rayman](#), Wednesday, May. 19 2010 @ 3:03PM



Two city council members told the *Voice* this week that orders given by precinct supervisors in Bedford-Stuyvesant's 81st Precinct appeared to encourage officers to violate the civil rights of local residents.

Meanwhile, a civil rights organization called on the city to investigate how NYPD quotas have driven the increase in stop and frisks.

The *Voice* article, [the second in our series, "The NYPD Tapes,"](#) reported that in a campaign to clear corners and building stoops in the neighborhood, precinct supervisors ordered officers to make arrests with the intent of coming up with a charge later, to round people up on low level charges like "blocking the sidewalk" or not having identification and hold them for hours, and stop and frisk people just for the purpose of making statistical targets. The article also reported on the NYPD's staffing crisis.

Peter Vallone, the head of the City Council's Public Safety Committee, says some of the comments were "clearly" telling officers to commit "illegal conduct."

"You can't tell a police officer to stop them no matter what," Vallone says. "Some of it was clearly over the line."

However, Vallone added that other comments, "read like good commanders struggling to win the war against crime without enough officers."

Meanwhile, Councilman Al Vann, who represents parts of the 81st Precinct, says he was "shocked" at some of the comments captured in the recordings.

Some of the statements uttered by precinct supervisors "went beyond the normal procedure of what we would expect from a police force," Vann says. He says he intends

to meet this week with the commanders of Patrol Borough Brooklyn North to discuss the issues raised in the *Voice* article.

"The pressure that comes from police headquarters is there, and I would venture to say the 81st Precinct is probably not the only one to take on such aggressive acts," he says.

As for the precinct commander, Deputy Inspector Steven Mauriello, Vann said he has respect for him, but he was troubled by the statements attributed to him in the *Voice*.

"I was really shocked at what appeared in the *Voice*," he says. "It would seem to be two deputy inspectors: one that I know, who is very responsive to the community, and one who is I believe, in responding to his superiors, has become overly aggressive in trying to make the statistics look good in the district."

Councilman Peter Vallone says the *Voice* article for the first time put into cold relief the crisis in staffing faced by the NYPD. On a typical day tour in the 81st Precinct, there were just 3 to 9 officers to cover the whole precinct.

The explanation for that involves attrition, retirements and budget cuts. But it also involves patrol cops being constantly pulled out of their core duties to man parades and special events.

"The number one priority should be to return us to the number of officers prescribed in the Safe Streets, Safe City program of 38,200," he says. "The *Voice* article is a clear example of what is happening right now."

The Bloomberg administration recently decided not to cut 800 officers in the current budget, a move that Vallone applauds. But the administration it still plans to reduce the already stretched ranks by 400 officers, and replace those jobs with civilians. Vallone opposes that move.

"My precinct constantly loses cops to cover Mets games, for example," he says. "We just don't have enough cops. It's amazing to me that the local precincts can still get to the more serious incidents in record times. But anything that isn't immediate can take hours: like car accidents and past burglaries."

Meanwhile, an attorney for the Center for Constitutional Rights, which is suing the NYPD over its stop-and-frisk policies, called on the city to investigate how quotas drive questionable stops.

"This important *Village Voice* investigative reporting brings to light one explanation for the alarmingly high rate of stop-and-frisk activity in New York," Sunita Patel says. "Rather than good policing based on reasonable suspicion or probable cause, police officers are pressured by their superiors to ignore the Constitution."