

# The NYPD Tapes, Part 2

## Bed-Stuy street cops ordered: Turn this place into a ghost town

By Graham Rayman

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C.S. Muncy



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Precinct Commander Steven Mauriello, who urged an aggressive campaign of arrests in the 81st.

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Both of Rhonda Scott's wrists were broken when she was arrested for standing outside her house without ID.

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In the summer of 2008, NYPD officers in Brooklyn's 81st Precinct embarked on an aggressive campaign to reduce crime by arresting citizens for doing no more than standing on certain street corners and building stoops.

This program emerges on the remarkable audio recordings the *Voice* [began making public last week](#). Over a 17-month period ending in October 2009, police officer Adrian Schoolcraft secretly recorded conversations at Bedford-Stuyvesant's 81st Precinct, including 117 roll calls, during which superior officers like precinct commander Steven Mauriello can be heard instructing cops to arrest people for things like "blocking the sidewalk."

Supervisors told officers to make an arrest and "articulate" a charge later, or haul someone in with the intent of voiding the arrest at the end of a shift, or detain people for hours on minor charges like disorderly conduct—all for the purpose of getting citizens off the street. People were arrested for not showing identification, even if they were just a few feet from their homes. Mental health worker Rhonda Scott suffered two broken wrists during a 2008 arrest for not having her ID card while standing on her own stoop.

The precinct's campaign led to a 900 percent increase in stop-and-frisks in the neighborhood, which commanders demanded from officers in order to hit statistical quotas. It also resulted in several dozen gun arrests, hundreds of arrests on other charges, and thousands of summonses for things like disorderly conduct, trespassing, and loitering.

Defense attorneys and civil rights groups say Mauriello's instructions to his troops appear to have strained the limits of probable cause, and raise questions about the legality of the many arrests. The tactics, which are used in many other parts of the city, also caused an undercurrent of resentment among residents.

"The Police Department is using these numbers to portray themselves as being effective," says Marquez Claxton, a retired NYPD detective and the director of the Black Law Enforcement Alliance, which studies police issues. "In



Andre Wade, showing his ticket for an arrest on which an officer has left the charge a blank.

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Alston Storey, 38, sustained injuries during an arrest in 2006 and blames police for not knowing local residents.

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Rap producer Ron Hayes lives at 120 Chauncey, the place Mauriello wanted "blown up."

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portraying that illusion, they have pushed these illegal quotas which force police officers to engage in illegal acts."

And all of it—the questionable arrests, the campaign of aggression—occurred with the added pressure of severe shortages in manpower and patrol cars. The tapes show that the shortages got so bad that some days the most effective way to fight crime was just to pray for rain.

**In the first installment of "[The NYPD Tapes](#),"** the *Voice* [showed](#) that police in this city are under enormous pressure from their superiors to meet quotas for writing tickets and collaring suspects on minor charges—and these pressures seemed to have nothing to do with what was actually happening in the precinct itself.

Bed-Stuy, for example, is a lot better off now than it was in the early- to mid-1990s. In 1995, there were 35 murders in the 81st Precinct. Last year, there were 13.

In recent years, the neighborhood has experienced gentrification and new construction. There are still sectors of the precinct, however, that are prone to shootings, robberies, and other types of street crime.

So precinct commander Mauriello ordered that certain street corners be cleared of people. Officers were told to ask people to move, and if they refused, to arrest them on some minor charge, such as disorderly conduct, hold them in the precinct cells for a few hours, and then release them.

Mauriello would often roam the precinct in his car. When he saw groups on particular corners, he would call in officers to arrest the people on low-level charges. These collars came to be called "Mauriello Specials."

On June 12, 2008, a sergeant tells the precinct's officers to make the arrests even if they have to cancel the charges at the end of their shift. "Guy's on the corner? You gotta leave. Bounce. Get lost," he says. "You'll void it later on in the night so you'll all go home on time."

On July 1, 2008, a sergeant tells his cops: "Be an asshole. They gonna do something, shine a light in their face. Inconvenience them. It saves trouble later on. Some of you with good activity are going to be moving up."

The following day, a precinct supervisor orders cops to make an arrest, when in the past, a dispute might have been talked out.



On a recent evening, a lone patrol officer watches over a notorious corner in the 81st Precinct.

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For street cops, "doing more with less" usually meant giving up on days off.

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The "heavy" streets of Bed-Stuy: Will there be any patrol cars available for the next shift?

Details:

***[The first installment of "The NYPD Tapes" series is here.](#)***

***[Follow continuing coverage of the NYPD Tapes here at our Runnin' Scared blog.](#)***

*The Voice presents excerpts from "The NYPD Tapes: Inside Bed-Stuy's 81st Precinct," from precinct roll calls between June 1, 2008 and Oct. 31, 2009.*

**OCTOBER 31, 2008**

**"I Want Them Herded In Here Like New Year's Eve."**

"The days of mediating between a perp and a store owner are over," a sergeant says on July 2, 2008. "If the guy is in the back with five sticks of deodorant, you gotta collar him," the sergeant says. "There's no more mediating."

By that July, Mauriello was a fixture in the roll calls at the start of the evening tour. "They wise off, they fucking push you, I expect them handcuffed, all right?" he says in a July 15, 2008, roll call, adding later, "Anybody gets stopped and it's a summonsable offense, I want them handcuffed and brought into the precinct. . . . zero tolerance."

Mauriello tells them that day that he wants block parties shut down after 8:30 p.m. "After 8:30, it's all on me and my officers, and we're undermanned," he says. "The good people go inside. The others stay outside."

Mauriello also targeted certain troubled buildings, such as 120 Chauncey Street, which he repeatedly said he wanted "blown up."

"I'm getting rocked today," Mauriello says on another day. "Since the midnight [shift], I've got five fucking robberies already and burglary assaults. So the game plan tonight is Operation Zero Tolerance. If they fuckin' break the law on the corner, I'm scooping them all up, putting them in the cells."

In the roll call on Halloween night 2008, Mauriello ordered the troops to pay special attention to 120 Chauncey.

"Everybody goes. I don't care. You're on 120 Chauncey and they're popping champagne? Yoke 'em. Put them through the system. They got bandannas on, arrest them. Everybody goes tonight. They're underage? Fuck it."

He added: "You're on a foot post, fuck it. Take the first guy you got and lock them all up from 120 Chauncey. Boom. Bring 'em in. Lodge them. You're going to go back out and process it later on."

Later in the roll call, a lieutenant adds, "Jump out, ground-and-pound, 'cuff 'em up, and hand 'em off to somebody."

As the campaign went on into the winter of 2008, Mauriello seemed to be aware that there was some resentment in the community, but he justified the campaign by saying the "good people" were supportive.

"Fuck 'em, I don't give a shit," he says on November 8, 2008. "They are going to come to a community council meeting, yell at me, whatever, I know the good people over

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**NOVEMBER 8, 2008**  
**"We Own the Streets Here"**

[View Media](#)

**NOVEMBER 23, 2008**  
**"Make Them Move. They Don't Wanna Move, Lock Them Up."**

[View Media](#)

**DECEMBER 8, 2008**  
**"Anybody Walking Around, Stop Them, Shake Them up"**

[View Media](#)

**FEBRUARY 27, 2009**  
**"I Know You Don't Want To Take These Shitty Collars, But . . ."**

[View Media](#)

**MARCH 13, 2009**  
**"The Less People on The Street, The Easier Our Job Will Be"**

[View Media](#)

**APRIL 29, 2009**  
**"If They're Acting Like Assholes on the Street, Why Should I Rush Them Out of Here. . ."**

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there are happy we have officers there."

A lieutenant follows up, telling the cops to be more aggressive. "If they don't move, they are going to get out of control and think that they own the block. They don't own the block. We own the block. They might live there, but we own the block. We own the streets here."

A similar order was given by a sergeant on November 23, 2008: "If they're on a corner, make 'em move. If they don't want to move, lock 'em up. Done deal. You can always articulate [a charge] later."

On December 9, 2008, Mauriello orders the officers to focus on a pizzeria. "No one hangs out there. Nobody. I want a ghost town. I want to hear the echo from one end of the street to the other. . . . That's your mission."

On March 13, 2009, a sergeant says, "Make 'em move. If they won't move, call me up, and lock them up, discon [disorderly conduct], no big deal. Leave them out there all night and come get them. The less people on the street, the easier our job will be."

On April 27, 2009, Mauriello tells officers to make the arrest, drop suspects at the precinct, go back out, and then come back later to process the arrests. "You bring 'em in here, leave 'em in the cells for a little while, go back out, do your job, and come back and release them outta there," he says. "If they're acting like assholes on the street, why should I rush them out of here?"

On July 21, 2009, Mauriello once again talks about destroying a troubled building: "I'm gonna burn that motherfucking place down. . . . Listen, let them shoot each other and we'll go clean up."

Judging by what superior officers say on the tapes, the rank-and-file cops weren't entirely happy with the policy of mass arrests.

"I know you don't want to take these shitty collars, but you can't let the CO [commanding officer] go over the air and no one answers the radio," a lieutenant tells the officers on February 27, 2009. "It's disrespectful and also could be a safety factor. . . . Unfortunately, he likes to work the majority of our tour because it's the busiest so you gotta do what you gotta do."

On March 28, 2009, a day after five robberies, a sergeant reminds officers that if Mauriello calls, they have to go to

**OCTOBER 19, 2009**  
**"He Doesn't Live in the Real World."**

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**OCTOBER 27, 2009**  
**"Where Is Everybody? This is Going To Be a Bad Month."**

[View Media](#)

the scene and arrest people. "If you don't want the collar, too bad," a sergeant says. "If he calls for a car, somebody's gotta go. That's the way it is."

One problem with the "Mauriello Specials" was that the officers were at times being ordered to make arrests for misconduct that they hadn't actually witnessed—legally, a questionable practice.

In an October 14, 2009, roll call, a police union delegate warns officers about this: "Make sure you don't sign anything that says you witnessed the arrest if you didn't," he says. "There's been a lot of cases overturned, and officers now being brought up on perjury charges."

In another roll call from October 31, 2009, an officer warns other officers: "The D.A.'s Office is watching supporting depositions. They have one cop up on, like, eight counts of forging."

The larger problem with the precinct's strategy, however, was that it seemed to stretch the legal definition of the "probable cause" standard. Police officers need to witness illegal conduct to justify placing someone in handcuffs and detaining them for hours. An arrest without a clear justification under the penal code is illegal.

Grabbing someone for "blocking the sidewalk," for example, requires that the person actually block the sidewalk—not just stand on it.

Instead, officers were being asked to arrest citizens after having witnessed them doing nothing more than standing around, just to let them go a few hours later with no charges filed.

Defense attorneys question the legality of that strategy.

"Some of those statements are very damning," says Dino Lombardi, a defense attorney and former prosecutor. "I don't know how any commanding officer explains that in any way that passes muster. It's just 'Arrest them and we'll sort it out later.'"

"No police expert or prosecutor is going to say it's permissible to arrest someone without a clearly articulated basis, and then articulate it later on," Lombardi adds. "It's absolutely a violation of criminal procedure law."

Donna Lieberman, executive director of the New York Civil Liberties Union, says officers can ask pedestrians their name, but they can't pat them down without suspicion of a crime, nor can they haul them into the precinct just to clear a corner.

"Standing on the corner doesn't become wrong because of which corner you're on and the color of your skin," she says. "And locking a guy up just to get him off the street is a flagrant violation of constitutional rights. Turning a community of color into a ghost town is not a law enforcement objective. The department opens itself up to massive civil rights lawsuits when it engages in this type of abusive policing."

Now two weeks into this series, the *Voice* still awaits a response from the NYPD.

**A key tactic in the 81st Precinct's** aggressive campaign was the stop-and-frisk, known to cops as a "UF-250," for the title of the form officers use to record them.

The "250" has become a ubiquitous tool used by police in New York City. More New Yorkers have been stopped and frisked each of the past three years—rising from 468,000 in 2007 to 575,000 last year.

The department justifies those numbers by saying stopping and frisking people is an effective way to fight crime. Officers are sent to do stop-and-frisks in troubled areas to respond to a rash of street crime.

However, close to 90 percent of those stopped are black or Hispanic, and a very small percentage of arrests—only 6 percent in 2009—result from them.

The 81st Precinct's stop-and-frisks more than quintupled from 774 in 2004 to 4,088 in 2006, and then doubled again to 8,108 in 2009—an 800 percent increase in six years.

Stops were used to move loiterers off corners and away from troubled buildings, the tapes indicate, but they were also done for the sake of getting the numbers, pleasing the bosses, and avoiding "negative attention."

In an October 12 roll call, a sergeant tells her troops: "If y'all try to do a canvass, try to get at least a couple of 250s and put robbery down just to say that we was out there. You stop somebody, get a 250. Go over, let them see y'all doing something about it or whatever. OK?"

She makes another reference to 250s in the roll call: "Just stop a couple of people, you know that," she says.

"Anybody walking around, shake them up, stop them, 250 them, no matter what the explanation is," a sergeant says in a December 8, 2008, roll call. "If they're walking, it doesn't matter."

Another sergeant on March 13, 2009: "How hard is a 250? I'm not saying make it up, but you can always articulate robbery, burglary, whatever the case may be. . . . It's still a number. It keeps the hounds off."

In another roll call, the officers are told that if they don't write more summonses and 250s, they will be moved. They are also told that when they do 250s, they should write a "C summons"—a citation for an actual crime—in order to justify the stop.

"When you do a 250, you should do C's and knock out both of those columns in your activity reports," a sergeant can be heard saying at a roll call. "Is that understood?"

The pressure for 250s was so great, Schoolcraft says, he witnessed officers in a patrol van at the end of the month simply filling in 250 forms just to hit the quota. He says officers would write that a person refused to give his name to avoid inventing a name. These were known in the precinct as "Ghost 250s." (A Bronx officer was once caught filing false 250s using names from gravestones in a cemetery near his precinct.)

In a July 2, 2008, roll call, a lieutenant is heard redressing officers for filing too many 250s without names. "We had ninety-six 250s, all refused," he says. "We can get some people refusing, but it can't be every 250 that you do."

Lieberman, the NYCLU's executive director, points out that as the number of stop-and-frisks has increased, the arrest rate from those stops has dropped. "When you demand a high stop rate, you get high stop rates, but the price is that hundreds of thousands of innocent New Yorkers are subjected to police interactions. This is an unfortunate example of what happens when you go for the data and not for the results.

"The police have no business stopping people to 'shake them up,' " she adds. "I believe that is unlawful. That's not policing in a democratic society."

A former high-ranking NYPD official says that an officer's number of 250s should not be taken as a measure of his activity.

"If that's going on, that's stupid," he says. "You should be stopping people when you have reasonable suspicion. You should not be making out as many of those reports as you can, or getting credit for doing more of them."

But he also cautions that block parties do get out of control, and people congregating to drink or play dice can be a flashpoint for violence.

"Cops don't like to do quality-of-life enforcement," he says. "They want to make the sexy arrest. But the lower-level stuff is very important because if you let it go, it will lead to more violent crime."

At the same time, supervisors have to be careful about what they say to officers. "You have to show you're in control of the streets, but you also have to constantly remind the officers to do it the right way, so that they're not being asked to stretch the law," he says.

City Councilman Peter Vallone has asked Commissioner Kelly to stop keeping a database of the people stopped on privacy grounds.

The 81st Precinct's aggressive campaign resulted in 3,882 total arrests in 2008, and 4,189 arrests in 2009, state figures show.

But if overall arrests went up, arrests for serious crimes—felonies—were actually down. Felony arrests in the precinct dropped from 1,428 in 2007 to 1,373 in 2009. (Misdemeanor arrests climbed by 22 percent—from 2,308 in 2007 to 2,816 in 2009.)

Not surprisingly, the campaign also led to an increase in complaints against police officers. The Civilian Complaint Review Board reports that complaints in the 81st jumped 60 percent, from 80 in 2005 to 127 in 2009.

**Mental health worker Rhonda Scott**, 39, of Chauncey Street, says that on one day in 2008, she had just come back from returning a plate she'd borrowed from a neighbor, and was stopped and challenged by officers. Her ensuing arrest left her with two broken wrists, which put her out of work for seven months.

The incident took place on August 2, 2008, on Chauncey, east of Howard Avenue, records show. It was a warm night. There were a lot of people socializing on their stoops and on the sidewalks. Police were already on the block, evidently trying to move people from a stoop across the street.

She crossed the street to return the plate, but was stopped by an officer who she says told her to "be quiet."

She returned to her home and asked her boyfriend to obtain the officer's name and shield number. By the time the boyfriend returned, many more officers had arrived on the block.

Scott went outside and stood behind the gate on her property to watch what was happening. Two police cars had stopped in front of the house.

They asked for her ID, which she didn't have with her. She says the officers demanded that she show them ID or they would arrest her. She told the officers that she lived there, and asked a friend to check her car, parked across the street, for her driver's license.

Scott says the police didn't believe her, and as she stepped onto the sidewalk to help her friend find the ID card, one of the officers told her, "I'm locking your ass up."

Three officers twisted her wrists behind her back, cuffed her, and put her in the back seat. But she wasn't all the way inside, so an officer grabbed her by the hair and pulled her all the way in. She denies that she struggled with the officers.

She repeatedly asked to be taken to the hospital. She instead was taken to central booking after about 14 hours in a precinct cell. She finally saw a doctor on her own two days later.

"I've lived here my whole life, and I'm a part owner of this building," Scott says. "Yes, there are problems in the neighborhood, but they're treating us all like criminals, and we're not all criminals."

Scott's criminal case was closed with an "adjournment in contemplation of dismissal," which is a provision to dismiss charges if a suspect is not rearrested in the following six months (which she was not). Her civilian complaint was closed, with the Civilian Complaint Review Board siding with the officers.

Scott adds that her boyfriend recently got a ticket for blocking the sidewalk after he was stopped on his way to the corner store.

"If you're walking to the store, and you run into two friends and you're talking on the sidewalk, they'll stop you, put you in handcuffs, and take you to the precinct," she says.

Her brother-in-law, Alston Storey, blames police for not working harder to develop relationships with the precinct's residents. "You can't find a cop who has a relationship with people in this community," he says. "They figure if you live on this block, you're a bad person. But you got hardworking people out here. [The police] come through on an eight-hour shift to dig in people's pockets. They live on Long Island or wherever. You've got to know people."

Walking through the precinct, it isn't hard to find residents with opinions about the rash of arrests.

Robert Jones, 19, of Chauncey Street, says he has been stopped 14 times since the beginning of the year. "This is home for me, but you're trying to go inside or walking to the store, and they ask if you live there, what you're doing, and you get a ticket for blocking the sidewalk," he says. "You can't stand on the sidewalk and talk or sit on someone's stoop."

A young woman named Monique, who lives one block west at Chauncey and Ralph, says she has been stopped and questioned so many times that she has lost count. "Something like 22 times in a month," she says. "They harass you for sitting on your own stoop, and they take you if you don't

have your ID."

Kim Carter, a manager of the Unisex Barber Shop on Howard Avenue, showed the *Voice* a summons she received for having too much cut hair on the floor just after Thanksgiving last year.

"I'm still going to court for it," says Carter, who has worked in the shop for 10 years. "I think it was wrong, and I think it was total harassment. They mess with the people who are working in the neighborhood."

And a little ways west, along Malcolm X Boulevard, there's Henry Rebaza, a 57-year-old security guard, who says he was given a ticket for riding his bicycle on the sidewalk for less than half a block. He says he was on his way to work.

Business owner Butch Johnson, 51, however, says Mauriello has been a help. "His tactics are unorthodox, but it gets the job done," he says. "I don't have a problem getting searched if I did nothing wrong. I don't mind him bending the rules some, because it's a hot zone."

On the west side of the Brevoort Houses, the *Voice* spoke with several people at 120 Chauncey, a development named for Jackie Robinson. This is the complex the precinct wanted "blown up."

Once known as a home for middle-class families, the complex has sharply deteriorated in recent years. For at least the past two years, it has been targeted as a troubled location by the police, who routinely place a stationary post outside in the evenings.

Since January 1, 2009, the complex owners have been slapped with 39 building complaints and two dozen violations. The elevators break down constantly, and the complex is listed as one of the city's worst elevator offenders. On a recent visit, the odor of marijuana was strong in the hallway, and someone had spilled a beer in the elevator.

In addition, residents have filed 55 complaints for no heat, no hot water, leaks, cracked ceilings, mold, roaches, and flies in the past year. City inspectors have issued 52 violations on the complex since 2003, including leaks, cracks, mice, bugs, garbage in the hallways, and broken door locks.

A resident named Andre Wade reached into his pocket and pulled out a summons for an arrest outside the complex on April 20, 2010. The officer hadn't even written a specific charge on the ticket.

"They pulled up on the sidewalk, and took four of us down to the precinct for nothing," Wade says. "They say you have a warrant, but when you get to the precinct, there's no warrant."

Another resident, E. Jackson, says he recalls one occasion when a precinct supervisor sang "Danny Boy" as his officers cuffed eight young men for standing outside 120 Chauncey Street.

Ron Hayes, 32, a basketball star at Boys and Girls High School who went to SUNY Farmingdale and played overseas, opted to return to 120 Chauncey with his wife and kids. He runs a small rap recording label called Chauncity Music Group.

Hayes says the police campaign has been too aggressive, and has failed to discern between gangbangers and folks just trying to live their lives: "A lot of these kids end up with criminal backgrounds for no reason," he says. "You take a good kid who ends up getting caught up in a sweep, and that's going to show up in a background check when he goes for a summer job or

something else."

The aggressive policing strategy should be coupled with an effort to connect with the community, he says. There aren't a lot of outlets for young people.

"They come here and write tickets all day," he says. "Why not have Community Affairs come and work with the kids?—maybe that will change things."

Even after two years of the aggressive campaign, crime has risen so far this year by 11 percent compared to 2008. There have been eight murders in the precinct so far this year, compared to four at this point last year. Moreover, on several recent nights, the corners were still not clear of people.

Given the increase in killings, Hayes wonders whether the campaign is working.

"Don't you think it's time to change the tactics?" he asks.

**The sheer number of arrests** in the precinct's street-clearing campaign is all the more remarkable when you take into account just how shorthanded the 81st was.

Overall, the NYPD is down 6,000 officers since 2001. By one estimate, there are only half as many officers assigned to patrol than there were in 2001.

The decline has been caused by retirements and other attrition, and by shrinking budgets. But what also makes it tough to put cops on the street are the numerous work rules, special units, and special assignments and details, which draw officers away from their core duty of patrolling the precinct.

In 1999, the 81st Precinct had 201 uniformed officers. Last summer, that number was down to 171. But 47 of those officers were assigned to special units and 10 were executive staff, leaving 114 officers on patrol. Divided into three shifts, that leaves about 38 officers to work the streets at any one time.

But even that number is illusory. On any given shift, a third of the officers have the day off. Others have time off for other purposes, are on vacation, or are ill.

Plus, officers are constantly pulled away from their patrol duties to man parades, to work security at police headquarters, to write tickets for a special effort—like getting motorists to stop talking on their cell phones—and for many other reasons.

And they are pulled away to process arrests, transfer prisoners to central booking, meet with the district attorney, and babysit injured or sick prisoners at the hospital.

As a result, a typical day in the 81st Precinct had only *three to nine* officers patrolling the streets in an area of more than 60,000 people.

"Where is everybody?" a lieutenant wonders in an October 27 roll call. "This is going to be a bad month."

The tiny number of officers, the sergeant complains, means that they don't have enough people to spare two cops for the mobile surveillance tower known as Skywatch, compromising its law enforcement value. "We'd like to have two people assigned there," he says. "We don't have the luxury to do that. Today, once again, we have one, so the effectiveness of the Skywatch is not there."

And take October 19, 2009, for example, when a sergeant expresses his annoyance after his boss demands he send a cop to guard a vehicle where a gun had been found.

"He said, 'Put a body on it,' " the sergeant says. "He doesn't live in the real world. I didn't have any extra people to have them sit on a car."

In the same roll call, the sergeant says the precinct is so short-staffed that officers can't put in for time-off requests. "We don't have enough people, so it has to be," he says.

One way to deal with the shortage of bodies: pray for rain. "Hopefully, it will rain until 4 o'clock today," a sergeant is heard saying at one roll call. "That would be a big help to us, especially due to our limited manpower."

The shortage forced the precinct commanders to send out cops alone to staff some of the more dangerous corners in the precinct. During a recent visit to the precinct, the *Voice* observed a lone officer standing outside a bodega at Chauncey and Howard, considered one of the most dangerous intersections in the precinct. He stood there, looking uncomfortable, not saying a word to the people entering and leaving the bodega.

How do the sergeants counter the shortages? Usually, they just make do, and hope that nothing really bad happens. But they also pull bodies out of the plainclothes units, leave areas unpatrolled, issue blanket denials of time-off requests, and force officers to work overtime, the tapes show.

On October 13, 2009, a sergeant notes the lack of officers, and then says, "Don't bring bags of shit into the stationhouse. Does everybody understand that?"

A "bag of shit," in NYPD lingo, has a couple of definitions, but in this context, it means a minor arrest that takes a cop off the street for the rest of his shift. If the suspect is a drug addict in withdrawal or has a medical condition, that's even worse, because those require hospital visits, taking officers out of the rotation for more than one shift—again, straining patrol strength.

"If the guy murdered somebody, then that's a different story," the sergeant says. "If the guy is smoking a joint and his name is James Johnson, then you know what to do. I can't tell you not to write him a summons or don't collar him, but . . . that makes my freaking head explode."

He then adds: "Listen, don't bring Mr. Medicine into the stationhouse, because he's going to get free medical care from us that we all pay for, OK, and plus then he gets a nice police escort the whole time that he's there."

The shortages led to forced overtime, a practice that is lucrative but, over the long haul, exhausts officers. Police officers can easily earn close to \$100,000 a year by working a lot of overtime, but all those hours take a toll.

On August 3, 2009, a lieutenant tells the cops that they have to give up one of their weekend days to work overtime. He shows them a sign-up list he has made. "What that means is as you are putting your name down, I cross your name off my list," he says. "That means you worked overtime. If your name is not crossed off the list, and there's an opening that day and you're off, you're working it. Whether you can or can't, you'll be here."

The shortages extend to cars. The precinct is constantly short of patrol cars, and at times, there may only be one or two cars patrolling the entire precinct.

Then, on October 25, there were none. "I brought it to the lieutenant's attention because we don't have no cars for the day tour," a sergeant says during the roll call. "It's just really, really bad. . . . So honestly, I'm going to call the borough [command]."

One reason that cars are short: The precinct always loses a car to Commissioner Ray Kelly's "Critical Response" program. Those entail a line of cop cars that drive around Manhattan with their lights flashing.

**The Voice** asked professors **John Eterno** of Molloy College and Eli Silverman of John Jay College about the effect of the staffing problems combined with the pressures of the job. They said that demanding increased arrests with fewer officers is a recipe for disaster.

"The public has been led to believe that the NYPD can 'do more with less,' " Silverman says. "But the public has been sold a bill of goods. By trying to do the same things with so many fewer officers, the department is in the midst of an enormous balancing act. Something's got to give. I don't think they can keep it up without additional funding."

They believe the increase in stop-and-frisks is driven by the department's obsession with its statistics program, CompStat. "The more 250s he has at those locations will help him get through those meetings," Eterno says. "Should they be focused on the numbers? It should be based on reasonable suspicion."

Silverman adds, "Supporters of the practice assert they are targeted, but the vast majority are for furtive movements. That hardly seems to be a targeted approach."

The precinct commander, they said, is likely repeating the message he got at CompStat meetings with bosses. "He's probably not being treated that well at CompStat, and he's probably treating his officers the same way. This is a culture of policing that has developed."

The commander is emulating a culture attempting to motivate its people through fear, rather than rewards, Eterno says. "This management by fear seems to be cultivated at CompStat, and it emanates throughout the department," he says.

*In the next installment of "The NYPD Tapes," we'll examine the story of Officer Adrian Schoolcraft, his career, what led him to begin carrying a digital recorder, how he tried to report questionable activities in the precinct, and how his career effectively ended on the word of a deputy chief who was sitting on Schoolcraft's bed. The first installment of this [series is here](#).*

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