



The Times

Cops attend funeral for Santiago's in-law

Trip by on-duty officers sparks outrage

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BY KEVIN SHEA

TRENTON -- On-duty Trenton police officers traveled to Newark yesterday morning to attend the funeral of Police Director Joseph Santiago's father-in-law -- a man with no discernible connection to law enforcement.

The presence of Trenton police officers in Newark -- where Santiago spent 33 years as a police officer and then director -- outraged several city officers yesterday, who said it was a misuse of the taxpayers' money and city property for a private citizen.

Police sources said four on-duty officers -- two community detectives and two Metro unit motorcycle officers -- drove marked police vehicles to Newark to participate in the funeral procession for Edward Karbowski, 71, the father of Santiago's wife, Denise.

Karbowski was a retired Teamsters truck driver, a Newark native and lifelong resident of that city's Ironbound neighborhood, according to his obituary.

"It's a ridiculous waste and use of manpower," said one officer, who spoke on condition of anonymity.

The officers' anger was stoked by the fact that Trenton is on a heightened state of alert from a spree of shootings and robberies since late last week, which led police go into "zero tolerance" mode and extend the tours of many officers, issue mandatory overtime and post officers at certain high-crime areas nearly around the clock.

"We've got overtime out the wazoo and they're using manpower in homage to the director," the same officer said.

Santiago could not be reached for comment yesterday. He did not return a telephone message and a text message left on his cell phone.

However, the issue was raised at the city council meeting last night by South Ward Councilman Jim Coston, who questioned patrol commander Capt. Paul Meson on whether there were on-duty city police officers in Newark yesterday.

Meson confirmed to Coston there were on-duty Metro officers in Newark as part of a motorcade, which he said is "regular procedure."

After the meeting, Meson elaborated, saying it is a courtesy city police extend to law enforcement officials and their families, even if the deceased was not a law enforcement official. He said it is a practice done in-state and out-of-state.

"That's a bald-faced lie," another officer said last night, also speaking on condition of anonymity. He said city police do not send on-duty officers to the funerals of non-law enforcement persons, especially in Newark.

"This was all just for Joe Santiago, to make him look good. That's all this is," the officer said. "This is a complete abuse of power."

The officer said the department only sent two on-duty officers to the funeral of slain Newark FBI Agent

Barry Bush last month outside Philadelphia, and another officer said Trenton police sent two officers as well to the funeral Wednesday of Stephen M. Hornyak Sr., a retired Trenton police lieutenant and father of a recently retired city police captain, Stephen Hornyak II.

"When it's a police officer, it's different," the officer said. "With all condolences, this man has no association to the city of Trenton and doesn't warrant the hoopla. When you send in all these police resources to a private citizen's funeral, it's a misuse of public property."

Police spokesman Sgt. Pedro Medina declined to answer questions yesterday.

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