



The Times

'Sleepy' captain pleads guilty

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BY KEVIN SHEA

TRENTON -- Police Capt. Paul Messina has pleaded guilty to one internal police infraction in connection with the photos that surfaced of him earlier this week sleeping while on duty inside police headquarters last month, the department announced yesterday.

Although the internal affairs investigation is not complete and no charges had been filed, the police department said in a statement that Messina agreed to plead guilty to the charge of inattention to duty. The offer was made in a letter Messina sent to the internal affairs bureau Monday -- the day the photos surfaced on the Web site www.captsleepy.com.

Yesterday, the statement said, Police Director Joseph Santiago accepted Messina's offer to plead guilty to the charge and Santiago "imposed a penalty consistent with the penalties ordered in the past for similar infractions involving sleeping on duty."

Police spokesman Peter Page said no further comment would be made about the case or what penalty Messina received. The statement said the department, "in keeping with departmental policy and the New Jersey Attorney General's guidelines on the confidentiality of internal affairs investigations, will not disclose the details of Captain Messina's penalty."

The Web site posted two pictures of Messina sleeping in a chair inside police headquarters on June 24, his hands clasped across his chest and his head straight back. Behind him are two police computers he was apparently monitoring and nearby is a gun belt with a weapon inside, sitting on a cabinet the Web site alleges is Messina's.

Meanwhile, the hits keep coming for Messina, the commander of the patrol bureau and a close Santiago confidant.

Yesterday, on the nj.com Trenton forum, an anonymous letter was posted to the police department's internal affairs office alleging Messina used police resources while working an off-duty security job.

Police spokesman Sgt. Pedro Medina confirmed the department had seen the posting and it would be forwarded to internal affairs. "Appropriate action will be taken," Medina said. He declined further comment.

The letter says while off duty Messina was employed by a private contractor to close a section of North Montgomery Street, and when he realized the contractor didn't have the necessary equipment to properly close the road, he summoned an on-duty Trenton police officer to bring to him barricades, which are towed by a marked police vehicle.

The letter alleges the on-duty officer had to stop performing his police duties for almost an hour to carry out this task and that Messina did not get approval to use the equipment and the officer did not compensate the city of Trenton for their use.

The letter says Messina was paid directly by the contractor for this private employment.

Also this week, a letter surfaced from a city school principal that she sent to Santiago accusing Messina of demeaning and denigrating behavior against her, a school security guard and the police officers present during an incident at the school in May.

In January, a video of Messina sleeping on duty in November 2003 popped up on the Internet site YouTube. During that slumber, Messina was the "docketing lieutenant" responsible for the police's lockup, which includes monitoring the safety of prisoners through closed-circuit television. Santiago dismissed that incident at the time, calling it "ancient history" and said Messina was disciplined shortly after the incident,

but did not say what the punishment was.

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