

Andrew S. Berns Quoted In NJ.com Article, "They called it 'The God Squad.' How a brazen band of cops operated in this N.J. suburb."

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By [Alex Napoliello](#) | NJ Advance Media for [NJ.com](#)

The traffic stop on that late November day in 2017 might have been set in motion months earlier.

A plan was hatched by ambitious police lieutenants and carried out by the newly minted Crime Prevention Unit.

A "points system" for patrol officers was implemented that "essentially created a performance quota," according to a whistleblower lawsuit filed in March by Parsippany Police Sgt. Matthew LaManna. (It's illegal in New Jersey for police departments to administer quotas for arrests or citations.)

It led to a spike in arrests by the Crime Prevention Unit, according to a source within the department. The source requested anonymity to speak candidly about internal police affairs.

"Their job was to go out there and find stuff," the source said. "They were told to stop cars and make arrests."

The stats caught the eye of police brass — and there was an attempt to implement the policy department-wide, the source said.

NJ Advance Media obtained a copy of the memo that introduced the program in July 2017. It attached a point value to each police action. A motor vehicle stop, for example, was worth one point, while an arrest leading to a complaint-warrant earned an officer three points.

Officers had to earn between six and eight points a day depending on the shifts they worked, the memo states. It does not say, however, what would happen if officers did not meet the requirements.

“Sgt. LaManna believed that this system had essentially created a performance quota that incentivized and resulted in officers conducting questionable arrests and illegal searches and seizures,” the lawsuit said.

Elston and Seeger, the two who stopped Wheat, were part of the unit that has come under question.

In the lawsuit, LaManna details years of “breaches of policies and procedures” and “outright violations of the law” in the department.

LaManna, who remains on the force, referred any comment to his attorney, Andrew S. Berns. Berns said the lawsuit speaks for itself.

“The complaint really sets forth what our issues are with the town and how my client has been treated over the years,” he said.

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