

De Blasio Moves to End Stop-and-Frisk Appeal

By Ivan Pentchoukov
Epoch Times Staff

NEW YORK—Mayor Bill de Blasio fulfilled a major campaign promise Thursday and moved to end a yearslong legal dispute concerning the police department's stop-question-and-frisk practice.

De Blasio announced that the city is prepared to drop its appeal against a federal judge's ruling in *Floyd v. City of New York*, a landmark stop-and-frisk case, pend-

ing a District Court's approval of a modification of the judge's orders. The city's modification seeks to limit the term of the court-appointed monitor to three years, contingent on the city being in full compliance with the judge's decrees by that time.

At the announcement at the Brownsville Recreation Center in Brooklyn, Police Commissioner Bill Bratton said that upon the completion of the three-year term, the responsibilities of the monitor will be shifted to the independent police inspec-

tor general. The position of the inspector general was created through a separate legislative effort to reform the stop-and-frisk practice by City Council.

De Blasio's move to dismiss the city's appeal comes a month after his landslide victory in the mayoral race, which he won on a message of ending inequalities in the city. Critics of the stop-and-frisk practice said that it disproportionately affects young black and Latino men. The mayor campaigned on a promise to end the overuse of stop and frisk and supported both of the City Council bills aimed at reforming the practice.

"Neither the police commissioner nor I believe it is acceptable when 90 percent of people stopped and frisked are innocent of any crime. So we are taking significant corrective action to fix what is broken," de Blasio said in Brooklyn Thursday.

Though the police department has not yet taken concrete measures to reform its stop-and-frisk practices, de Blasio's move to dismiss the appeal marks the beginning of a significant shift for the city's police department. So far precincts have only received messages to conduct routine stops respectfully, pending the development of a set of guidelines by Bratton, the court ordered monitor, the independent inspector general, and the newly appointed Deputy Police Commissioner for Training Benjamin Tucker. According to Bratton, when the appeal is dropped, developing that set of guidelines will be the police department's first priority.

"Right now we're in no man's land," Bratton said, adding that he aims to come to a point when he can tell his officers "how to police constitutionally, how to police respectfully, and how to police compassionately."



Mayor Bill de Blasio speaks at a press conference at a recreation center in Brownsville, Brooklyn, Jan. 30.

Floyd v. City of New York

Floyd v. City of New York was filed against the city and its police department in 2008. The plaintiffs charged that the stops were unconstitutional with the majority taking place in communities of color.

In 2013, Judge Shira Scheindlin ruled that the police department violated the Constitution and ordered four sweeping remedies, including the appointment of a court monitor, Peter Zimroth, immediate reforms to stop-and-frisk practices, and a pilot program, which would have police officers equipped with body-worn cameras.

The city appealed Scheindlin's ruling and she was later removed from the case by a three-judge appellate panel. The panel ruled that Scheindlin ran afoul of the

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Mayor Bill de Blasio

judicial code of conduct by granting interviews to the media while the case was still in progress. The panel also ruled that Scheindlin's decisions be put on hold pending

the outcome of the city's appeal.

The city's appeal came during the last months of a 12-year tenure of former Mayor Michael Bloomberg and former Police Commissioner Ray Kelly. Both defended the police department's use of stop and frisk adamantly. Bloomberg and Kelly ended their terms one month ago as the murder rate in the city dropped to a historic low—down to 333 murders from 661 when Bloomberg and Kelly took office in 2001.

But Bloomberg's tenure also coincided with several years of record-high numbers of stop and frisks, peaking at more than 685,000 stops in 2011, according to data from the NYPD. The number of stops have been reduced since, with less than 179,000 stops through the first three quarters of 2013.



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AP PHOTO

New York Attorney General Eric Schneiderman (L) looks on as New York City Police Department Chief of Department Philip Banks describes a chart at a news conference in New York, Jan. 30.

Members of Sex-Drug Ring Arrested Ahead of Super Bowl

By Jane Gray
Epoch Times Staff

NEW YORK—The attorney general's office announced early Thursday the arrests of 18 members of a criminal ring that was offering prostitutes and cocaine to high-end clientele heading to the New York area for the Super Bowl.

The arrests are the result of a yearlong undercover investigation by Attorney General Eric Schneiderman's Organized Crime Task Force and the NYPD.

Schneiderman said that the leader of the ring, Hyun Ok Yoon, 41, also known as "Beige" was a major player in the prostitution and illegal drug industry. "This is someone who we've heard of from other criminals, really sort of admiring the scope of her enterprise," Schneiderman said.

Hyun Ok Yoon was arrested early Thursday morning at her home on Long Island. Other suspects were arrested late Wednesday night and early Thursday

morning in Manhattan, some near Sixth Avenue, a spokesman at Attorney General Eric Schneiderman's office said.

Police arrested a total of 18 members of the ring on various charges including narcotic sales, promotion of prostitution, and money laundering.

The ring reportedly promoted its prostitution services with advertisements on public access television, on the Internet, and via text messages. Intercepted conversations found they not only offered prostitution services to clients but that the prostitutes would bring cocaine to offer to the clients who made a special order. They referred to this as service as a "party pack."

Intercepted conversations also show that the ring used several code names for cocaine, such as "jewelry," "party," and "soojaebi," a Korean noodle and vegetable soup.

Investigators found the ring aggressively pushed its marketing efforts to out-of-town clientele coming for Super Bowl as recently as last week.

"Really a huge increase in their

text messages to people coming in from out of town, saying, 'We've updated our girls, new and sexy and beautiful girls are in town waiting for you,'" Schneiderman said.

While 18 members of the ring were arrested, an undisclosed number of women who were working as prostitutes but not part of the management of the ring have been taken to Sanctuary for Families, an organization that helps sex-trafficking victims.

Lori Cohen, director of Sanctuary for Families said, "Instead of being branded as criminals, the women were offered help and treated with respect and compassion. Sex trafficking is a \$32 billion a year industry fueled by the demand by commercial sex."

"These criminals utilized apartments in residential buildings as a way of carrying out their illicit activities," said Police Commissioner William Bratton. "They disregarded the safety and well-being of every member in those communities by providing a 'one-stop shopping' drug and prostitution ring."