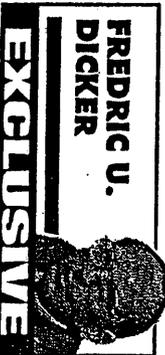


Ordered police to track GOP foe's movements

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EXCLUSIVE

ALBANY — Gov. Spitzer targeted state Senate Majority Leader Joseph Bruno for an unprecedented State Police surveillance program that led to allegations Bruno improperly used a state helicopter for political purposes, an investigation by The Post has found.

No other state official, including Spitzer and Lt. Gov. David Paterson, was singled out for the type of detailed recording kept by the State Police maintained on Bruno, the state's most powerful Republican, official records show.

Part of the Spitzer administration's justification for homing in on Bruno — the governor's leading political adversary — is a claim that state Conservative Party leader Michael Long raised objections to Bruno's use of the State Police.

Spitzer spokesman Darren Dopp told The Post that the records on Bruno began to be as-

sembled because "there was an incident late last year in which Mike Long called to complain about Joe bringing armed troops to [Long's] fund-raising event."

"Long thought it was highly inappropriate and it probably was. Recalling that incident, the [State Police] made some changes ... and, yes, keeping basic records, i.e. logs," Dopp said.

But Long insisted yesterday that he never complained about Bruno and the State Police, and that no such incident had occurred.

"That is a bald-faced lie," said Long, who has been at odds with Bruno in recent years.

"I never made a complaint to the State Police or the governor's office and if Bruno had shown up with armed troops I probably wouldn't have thought anything of it."

A senior state official familiar with the surveillance program told The Post that he believed the governor and his aides had sought to "set up" Bruno by having the State Police keep track of his travels.

"Why else would they do it if not to set up Bruno, by getting on him something they thought

was incriminating, when they weren't doing it to anyone else?" said the official.

Bruno himself said "it appears" Spitzer and his staff used the State Police to try to obtain negative information on him in an effort to "set up an office holder" with whom the governor disagrees.

"I would like not to believe that the governor and the people who work for him would purposely set up an office holder of the opposing party, but it certainly appears that way," said Bruno.

"This is like something you'd expect in a Third World country where some dictator has his enemies followed to see how they could either do something to them or disgrace them.

"This is dangerous in a free country."

A Bruno aide contended Spitzer's actions "are reminiscent of Richard Nixon with his 'enemies list.'"

The State Police, which are under the control of the governor, routinely chauffeur Spitzer and Paterson, who they also protect, during their travels throughout the state, Bruno has regularly requested, and received State Police drivers dur-

ing his visits to New York City because, he said, he has been the subject of numerous death threats.

Earlier this week, Spitzer said he would forward State Police records of Bruno's travels in New York City to at least two investigative agencies after published reports suggested Bruno, who lives in upstate Rensselaer County, improperly flew on a state-owned helicopter from Albany to the city for political events.

The records — of State Police escort runs around the city — were kept because of Long's complaint and a desire to avoid the misuse of state personnel, said Dopp.

But Dopp also said the record-keeping only started in early April, around the time that Spitzer, a freshman governor, began having major disputes with Bruno.

The Post filed a Freedom of Information Act request seeking all State Police driving records for Bruno, Spitzer, Paterson and other senior officials.

Dopp responded with State Police "transportation assignment" records detailing Bruno's travels during several recent trips to the city.

The records contain such entries as, "May 3, 7 p.m., dinner at Italian restaurant on Eastside (unknown name, located between 1st Ave. and 2nd Ave. in upper 40s.)"

And on May 4, "7 a.m. transported all subjects from Sheraton to Aqueduct Racetrack La Guardia Airport."

Dopp said no such detailed start-and-stop records were kept for Spitzer and Paterson because, he insisted, both officials make available their official schedules in advance of their travels.

But those schedules do not contain such detailed information as hour-by-hour stops and the restaurants and hotels that are used.

Bruno has repeatedly insisted that all his trips on the state helicopter involve official business.

An Associated Press report yesterday quoted business leaders as saying they had met with Bruno to discuss state issues on the dates of the flights.

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