

Chief's lawyer's latest: Stack is like Saddam

By Michaelangelo Conte
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Union City- The public feud between Mayor Brian Stack and Police Chief Charles Everett has found its way into Hudson County Superior Court.

“This is an incredibly power-hungry person,” Everett’s lawyer, Timothy Smith, said of Stack yesterday.

“He is not happy with his role as mayor, public safety director and assemblyman. Like Saddam Hussein, he wants to take over the Police Department and make it his own palace guard.”

Stack’s lawyer, Christopher Vaz, said allegations of a grab for power are untrue.

“The public safety director is the person who the chief of police is directly responsible to, and this chief of police has a hard time understanding that,” Vaz said. “The chief has an irrational fear he will be suspended so he’s trying to stop something that isn’t reasonably going to happen.”

The behind-the-scenes struggle moved to center stage earlier this month when Smith compared Stack to the Taliban on a local cable show.

In retaliation, Stack sent a letter to residents saying he was disappointed with Everett’s ability to run an effective police department, and also claimed Everett said he’d retire only if he received a 350,000 pay -out from the city.

Smith said Everett never offered to retire, and never made such a demand.

The letter also claims that, under Everett’s watch, crime had increased, morale has dropped, overtime has skyrocketed and that Everett has canceled policies introduced by the mayor.

The letter is in contrast to a political flyer distributed by Stack prior to the May election. In the flyer, Stack claimed crime was down 10 percent and said the police department was cracking down on quality-of-life concerns and that the city was “winning the war on crime.”

Stack also has issued a number of changes to city regulations governing the Police Department- even barring Everett from entering the police department if he’s on vacation or on sick leave. He also took away Everett’s right to speak to the media without Stack’s prior approval. Smith said Stack also has filed numerous disciplinary charges against the chief.

In response, Everett filed a complaint with the court, seeking a ruling that the new regulations are illegal, Smith said.

The two parties are expected to file briefs with the court prior to Sept. 25 hearing.