

# Quote infuriates cops, but Rotkin cries foul

*Mayors*

Santa Cruz Mayor Michael Rotkin is in hot water with the city police force over a quote in the Los Angeles Times, but the mayor says it's a bum rap.

Rotkin was quoted last week as saying the Santa Cruz Police Department is like any other police force in its composition.

"A third are bums, a third are wonderful and a third are waiting to see which way the wind blows," the Times article quotes the mayor.

The article had some officers so angry they were quietly discussing bringing a court suit against the mayor.

However, a source in the department, who asked to remain anonymous, said that idea has been dropped. Still, he said, the damage from the remark has been done.

"It lowered the morale again to think that members of the City Council, and more importantly the mayor himself, have made a remark like this . . . It indicates the mayor and council have no faith in us and even a certain amount of disrespect," he said.

"Everybody, from the supervisors on down the line,

was appalled by it (the remark)," the source said. "It made everyone wonder which third the public thinks they belonged to."

Rotkin said he went to a member of the police force to explain "that I was quoted out of context — and it makes a difference."

He said the Times reporter had asked him if the local force wasn't "pretty terrible" since the district attorney has charged six of its members with police brutality.

Rotkin said he told the reporter, "They're like any other group of people," and then went on to divide them in thirds.

The police obtained the Times article from the mayor after he complained to them that he had received a threat as a result of the story.

Rotkin's bringing the article to the police station nearly led to further threats, according to Sentinel sources.

A police source said the remark was taken as a "slap in the face — it's a tough pill to swallow."

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requested.

## Rotkin

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He said, "The council overlooks the work that's being done."

The source conceded the department has had a lot of "problems in the past year to a year and a half," but he added, "A lot of guys here have been responsible for the investigation (into alleged police brutality) and a lot have been subpoenaed to testify. At this point, we need a pat on the back."

Several officers have been working extra duty since the short-handed department placed three policemen on administrative leave pending the investigation. Those officers working overtime, said the source, are asking themselves what they are doing.

Morale had been rising at the department until the remark hit the press, said the source. Now, morale has dipped once again, he said.

Rotkin said "it's unfortunate that the article happened now. It's at a time when police morale is low.

"I think they're a commendable group of people and maybe unique in this nation. I don't think there's another police force in the country where officers would turn in other officers for police brutality," the mayor said.

"They did here, and it shows a real integrity."

Sentinel Staff Writers Paul Beatty and Jamie Marks contributed to this report.