

Hero detective who risked life to battle Mafia told to give up his gun by NYPD

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An NYPD detective who risked his life to infiltrate the Mafia has been stripped of the right to carry a firearm because of a line-of-duty injury, the Daily News has learned.

Rick Cowan, a retired first-grade detective, posed as a recycling company exec named Danny Benedetto in the early 1990s to expose mob influence in the carting industry.

His work secretly recording mobsters and corrupt businessmen earned him one of the NYPD's top medals - honorable mention.

But now, with the NYPD refusing to let him carry a weapon for protection, he feels betrayed by the job he loved.

"The nature of the Mafia is these people are very vengeful," said Cowan, 52, who retired in December 2008 after 25 years on the force.

After suffering serious injuries in an on-duty car accident, Cowan had a shunt put in his head - a device that carries a small risk of complications if he suffers a blow to the head.

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Department officials are concerned that if Cowan lost consciousness, he would be unable to safeguard his firearm and consigned him to its "no carry" list.

Cowan's lawyer said the NYPD medical division appears more concerned with liability issues than the safety of the detective and his family.

"He's being deprived of a firearm for no logical reason," said his lawyer, Jeffrey Goldberg of Lake Success. "He did a great job for New York City, and this is no way to treat a hero."

Cowan sued in Manhattan Supreme Court to get off the "no carry" list but a judge recently rejected his appeal.

He's hoping he can persuade the NYPD to at least remove the label so he can apply to carry a firearm in other jurisdictions."