

## FBI Discards Theory-Biggie Probe Ends

Written by Robert ID992

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The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) has closed an investigation into the 1997 slaying of NY rap star Notorious B.I.G., abandoning a controversial theory pursued by its lead agent on the case.

The bureau spent 18 months investigating the possibility that a rogue Los Angeles police officer and hip-hop rap mogul Marion "Suge" Knight orchestrated the killing of B.I.G., whose real name was Christopher Wallace.

FBI officials conducted a review of the investigation — and shut it down in January — after learning that Agent Philip J. Carson had discussions with lawyers for Wallace's mother and had been subpoenaed to testify in her wrongful-death lawsuit against the city.

The FBI has informed Wallace's lawyers that Carson will not testify in the case. Officials also ordered Carson to have no further contact with the lawyers and to refer any inquiries from them to the FBI legal department.

Voletta Wallace, whose suit accuses the Los Angeles Police Department of covering up police involvement in her son's killing, is seeking unspecified monetary damages. The case is scheduled to go to trial April 12 in federal court in Los Angeles.

It is unclear what testimony her lawyers intend to elicit from Carson.

Louis J. Caprino Jr., acting head of the criminal division of the FBI's Los Angeles field office, said this week that Carson's investigation was closed because federal prosecutors reviewed the evidence he had gathered and "determined that there was no basis for prosecution."

FBI officials acknowledged that they discussed with Carson his dealings with the Wallace lawyers. But they said that had no bearing on the decision to halt the investigation.

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Caprino said the discussion was part of a "standard administrative review" conducted whenever an agent is subpoenaed to testify. He said the bureau found no improper conduct on Carson's part.

Perry Sanders, an attorney for Voletta Wallace, took issue with the FBI's explanation for why the probe was discontinued.

Sanders said the LAPD "exerted political pressure on the FBI to lay off the case." He said he learned this from "a reliable confidential source" whom he would not identify.

Assistant FBI Director Richard T. Garcia, head of the Los Angeles office, rejected the allegation.

"No one at the FBI was asked or directed to stop anything," Garcia said in an interview. "This investigation was reviewed diligently by Phil's boss on a regular basis and the results were submitted to the U.S. attorney's office. They determined that the evidence was insufficient for prosecution. So we dropped it."

Christopher Wallace, then 24, was gunned down March 9, 1997, in front of hundreds of fans after a music industry party at the Petersen Automotive Museum in the mid-Wilshire district.

LAPD detectives have pursued various theories in their efforts to solve the crime. One is that the killing, like that of rap icon Tupac Shakur six months earlier, stemmed from a feud between rap and hip-hop figures in New York and Los Angeles.

Tupac Shakur was the brightest star of Suge Knight's Death Row Records in Los Angeles. Wallace was associated with Bad Boy Records in New York. The two rap artist and their associates had exchanged insults and threats on stage and in recordings.

In 1998, LAPD investigators began to suspect that a disgraced former officer, David A. Mack, may have been involved. By then, Mack was in prison for robbing a bank. He had been on the

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police force at the time of Wallace's killing.

Detectives learned that Mack owned a black Chevrolet Impala similar to one seen speeding from the murder scene. A witness said he saw Mack outside the automotive museum several hours before the shooting.

Then-Det. Russell Poole advanced the idea that Mack planned the killing at Knight's behest and arranged for a friend, Amir Muhammad, to ambush Wallace.

Other information gathered by investigators did not support the theory, however, and detectives turned their attention elsewhere. Knight, Mack and Muhammad, a Southland mortgage broker, have all denied any role in the killing.

Since resigning from the LAPD in 1999, Poole has continued to promote his theory in books and through appearances in documentaries and on TV shows. Voletta Wallace's lawsuit incorporates Poole's arguments, and he is listed as an expert witness for the plaintiffs.

Carson, the FBI agent, began his investigation after watching Poole on a TV special in the summer of 2003, court documents show.

Carson contacted Poole and interviewed other detectives, witnesses and informants around the country at the suggestion of Wallace family attorneys, records show.

In December 2003, Carson and other agents conducted surveillance of Muhammad and wired an informant in an attempt to illicit incriminating statements from him. The effort yielded nothing.

In February 2004, Carson visited Mack at a federal prison in Alabama. Mack has said Carson offered to seek a reduction in his 14-year sentence for the bank robbery if he cooperated in the Wallace investigation.

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In a court filing, Mack said he rejected the offer in no uncertain terms.

"I advised Carson that he had to be either the most inept or laziest agent I had ever met," Mack wrote. "It was obvious that he ... was only regurgitating the allegations contained in the Wallace civil complaint verbatim."

This week, FBI officials disputed Mack's account, contending that Carson never offered to seek a reduction in his sentence, which they said would have violated FBI policy.

In September, FBI officials say, they asked Carson to attend a meeting to discuss why his name was on a plaintiff's list of potential witnesses. During the meeting, Carson's bosses also discussed his conduct of the investigation and explored his dealings with the plaintiff's attorneys, sources said.

FBI officials were concerned that Carson might have been influenced by the Wallace lawyers and that his contacts with them could embarrass the bureau, the sources said.

FBI agents are permitted to contact civil attorneys to see if they have information relevant to a criminal investigation. But bureau policy bars agents from sharing investigative information with them.

Carson and his FBI superiors said he never shared information with Wallace's lawyers.

[Source](#)