

Late Rap Artist Biggie Lawsuit Put on Hold

Written by Robert ID1597

Monday, 27 June 2005 12:02 -

U.S. District Judge Florence-Marie Cooper ordered a halt to the trial of the wrongful death lawsuit of late hip-hop rap artist Notorious B.I.G. to give both sides time to review some 'new' documents. Testimony in the B.I.G. trial is scheduled to resume Thursday.

Corrupt former police officer Rafael Perez acknowledged working security for Suge Knights legendary Death Row Records on the night Notorious B.I.G. was killed, according to a prison informant quoted in documents revealed Monday in federal court.

If true, the purported admission would link the central figure in the Los Angeles Police Department's Rampart scandal with the record label whose founder has long figured in theories about the 1997 slaying of the New York rap star also known as Biggie Smalls.

Perez's one-time cellmate Kenny Boagni said Perez and fellow rogue officer David Mack "were involved in Death Row Records. ... They went to all their parties and stuff," Assistant City Attorney Don Vincent told the judge presiding over a wrongful death lawsuit against the city.

Boagni also said in the November 2000 declaration to a police detective that "Perez told him he was at the award show when Biggie Smalls was killed" and called Mack on a cell phone before the slaying to say the rapper was in his SUV, Vincent said.

Monday's revelation came after an attorney for B.I.G.'s family received an anonymous tip last week that Perez and the B.I.G. killing were mentioned during an LAPD disciplinary hearing held in a jail basement in December 2000. Boagni was a witness at the hearing for a now-deceased officer.

Attorneys for the city confirmed the account Monday, and outside the presence of the nine-member jury read from the declaration and hearing transcripts and the judge put the trial on hold until Thursday to give each side time to go over the documents.

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B.I.G., born Christopher Wallace, was 24 when he was gunned down outside an award show after-party on March 9, 1997. The case remains officially unsolved.

His family claims the city and LAPD allowed officers to moonlight as guards for Death Row and covered up Mack's alleged involvement in Wallace's killing. Their circumstantial case has relied heavily on prison informants, some of whom have changed their stories in later interviews.

Family attorney Perry Sanders Jr. called the newly revealed documents "huge."

"There is apparently a witness on tape saying Mack and Perez worked security for Death Row Records, which absolutely goes to the heart of this case," he told the judge.

Vincent argued that the documents were peripheral to the case and stem from an untrustworthy source with an interest in reduced prison time.

"The whole thing is tainted from the beginning," he said.

But Cooper said she generally agreed with the family attorneys, calling the transcripts and declarations "vitally important evidence."

According to the theory advanced by Wallace's family, Mack arranged for a college roommate to kill Wallace at the behest of Death Row founder Marion "Suge" Knight. The family's suit doesn't name Knight, Mack, Perez or the alleged shooter, and none of them have ever been formally named suspects in the case or arrested in connection with the crime.

There are two theories about Knight's alleged motives. One is that Knight had Wallace killed because he blamed him for the slaying of his star artist, Tupac Shakur, six months earlier in Las Vegas. The other is that Knight had Shakur killed because Shakur wanted to leave Death Row, then had Wallace killed to make both slayings appear part of an East Coast-West Coast rap war.

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Both Shakur and Wallace, discovered and groomed by Sean "P. Diddy" Combs, were in rap's elite when they were killed. Wallace's posthumously released "Life After Death" double album debuted at No. 1 on music charts.

Perez, who had been mentioned only peripherally in the Wallace case until Monday, was a member of an anti-gang unit in the Police Department's Rampart division when he was discovered to have stolen a large amount of cocaine from a police evidence room.

Seeking leniency, he cooperated in the investigation of what became known as the Rampart scandal. Many of his accusations against other officers were not proved, but the claims of officers lying under oath and planting evidence led to dismissals of more than 100 cases.

Perez served prison time related to the drug theft and civil rights violations and was freed. Mack is serving a prison term for a 1997 bank robbery.