

Slain Rap Artists Family Seeks 21 Mil

Written by Robert ID1796

Tuesday, 16 August 2005 13:36 -

Lawyers for the family of slain NY hip-hop rap star Notorious BIG are asking the city of Los Angeles for about \$2.1 million in fees and costs stemming from Los Angeles Police Department misconduct in a federal wrongful death lawsuit.

Motions filed in U.S. District Court request that Los Angeles pay about \$1.6 million in attorney's fees and around \$500,000 in costs such as travel and other expenses, attorney Perry Sanders Jr. said Tuesday.

City attorneys in June 2003 said they had supplied the plaintiffs with all internal documents related to the civil case, which accused a corrupt police officer of arranging the chart-topping New York rapper's 1997 killing. New evidence from police files was uncovered a year later and again during the trial in June.

U.S. District Judge Florence-Marie Cooper said a police detective had intentionally concealed the documents and declared a mistrial in July, ordering the city to pay "fees and costs incurred as a result of defendants' misconduct."

To determine that amount, Sanders said, "Conservatively, we only went back to the date where they made their disclosures on the record, saying that they had given us every little thing."

"We didn't really start running any lead that we had down until they said we had what they represented to be the entire case file," he added.

Assistant City Attorney Don Vincent said he had not yet seen the motion, but his immediate reaction was that \$2.1 million seemed excessive.

"They have to really justify it well," he said. "I don't know what their logic is or anything."

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The documents uncovered during trial detail Detective Steven Katz's investigation of a prison informant's claim that corrupt former LAPD officers Rafael Perez and David Mack were involved in killing the 24-year-old rapper, whose real name was Christopher Wallace.

Wallace's family said in their suit that Death Row Records founder Marion "Suge" Knight ordered Mack to kill the rapper, and that Mack's college roommate was the gunman. The link to Perez emerged only after an anonymous tip during trial.

Kenny Boagni, who became friends with Perez in prison, told detectives in 2000 and 2001 that Perez had acknowledged moonlighting in a security role for Death Row on the night Wallace was killed, and had called Mack just before the shooting.

Family members including the rapper's mother, Voletta Wallace, and widow, R&B star Faith Evans, are expected to refile their suit, naming Perez as a defendant and alleging racketeering at the LAPD.

Police never formally named Knight, Mack, Perez or the alleged shooter as suspects in the case and none of them have been arrested in connection with the crime.