

Hip-Hop Rap Moguls Win Separate Trials

Written by Robert ID1795

Tuesday, 16 August 2005 11:51 -

Hip-hop, rap and R&B record mogul Irving Lorenzo, aka "Irv Gotti," and his brother Christopher Lorenzo, aka "Chris Gotti" won a round Tuesday in their fight against a federal money laundering indictment when a judge said they would be tried separately from other defendants charged with drug trafficking.

U.S. District Judge Edward Korman of Brooklyn rejected an effort by prosecutors to have the record mogul brothers tried with accused drug dealer Kenneth McGriff. Defense attorneys have maintained that any attempt to try the Lorenzo brothers at the same time as McGriff would bring in evidence of drug dealing that could prejudice the case.

U.S. District Judge Edward Korman set Oct. 17 as the start of jury selection for the Lorenzo brothers' trial.

McGriff, 45, who is facing drug trafficking and murder charges, will be tried at a later date.

Assistant U.S. Attorney Carolyn Pokorny told U.S. District Judge Edward Korman that his decision was forcing prosecutors to try the money-laundering case twice -- once against the Lorenzo brothers and once against McGriff.

"I think you are being unreasonable," U.S. District Judge Edward Korman shot back.

In a telephone conference with U.S. District Judge Edward Korman Tuesday, defense attorneys and prosecutors with the Brooklyn U.S. Attorneys Office discussed the use of a written stipulation that would essentially admit that the government had massive amounts of evidence about McGriff's drug dealing. Judge Korman left the attorneys to hash that out before the October trial.

Gerald Lefcourt, who is defending Irving Lorenzo aka "Irv Gotti" 35, said his client wasn't going to contest any evidence the government has that McGriff was involved in drugs. But Lorenzo denied knowingly laundering any drug cash, Lefcourt said.

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"There is no allegation any of the defendants participated in any drug trafficking," Gerald Shargel, who is representing Christopher Lorenzo, aka "Chris Gotti" 28, said of the brothers. "They are charged with laundering money and deny it."

The Lorenzo brothers, who are known in the record industry by the sobriquet "Gotti," built up the hip-hop, rap and R&B music label formerly known as "Murder Inc.," now known as "The Inc." They were charged in January with laundering money from the drug empire of McGriff, a convicted narcotics trafficker.

McGriff could face the death penalty in the new case. Officials said Tuesday that no decision has been made about whether the death penalty will be sought against him.