

Officer's work on celeb burglary film scrutinized



By ANTHONY McCARTNEY | Associated Press – Fri, Jul 20, 2012

LOS ANGELES (AP) — A judge will consider Friday whether a police officer's moonlighting on a movie about his signature case warrants the dismissal of charges against a defendant who is still facing trial.

An attorney for Roy Lopez Jr., who is charged with burglarizing Paris Hilton's home, contends the officer's paid consultation on an upcoming Sofia Coppola movie about the case has irreparably tainted his testimony and credibility.

Los Angeles Police Officer Brett Goodkin interrogated many of the defendants and helped build the case against the so-called "Bling Ring" that stole more than \$3 million in clothes, jewelry and art from the homes of stars such as Hilton, Lindsay Lohan, Orlando Bloom and Megan Fox and Brian Austin Green.

Records show Goodkin was issued \$12,500 in checks for working as a consultant on Coppola's film "The Bling Ring," which stars Emma Watson and is currently being edited by the Oscar-winning writer-director. He also filmed a scene in which he arrests Watson's character, according to the Los Angeles Times, which first reported Goodkin's involvement in the film.

"To portray himself for the film and recreating his interaction with the defendants is extremely inappropriate and crushes the due process rights of the remaining defendants," Lopez's attorney David Diamond wrote in a motion seeking a dismissal of the case. The filing states Goodkin initially claimed he only received \$6,000 for his work on the film, but the actual amount was more than double that figure.

Prosecutors contend Goodkin did not engage in conduct so outrageous that it violates Lopez's ability to receive a fair trial. Deputy District Attorney Christine Kee wrote in a filing this week that Goodkin did not commit a crime or encourage Lopez to commit one, two key factors that might warrant a dismissal if they occurred.

The motion will be heard by Superior Court Judge Larry P. Fidler, who at a previous hearing said there were parallels between the current case and a California Supreme Court ruling in a case involving a prosecutor consulting on a film before trial. The case involved the murder trial of Jesse James

Hollywood, whose case was the basis for the movie Alpha Dog." A Santa Barbara County prosecutor consulted on the film in an attempt to locate Hollywood, who was a fugitive at the time.

Hollywood's attorneys argued after his capture that the prosecutor's conduct required his removal from the case, but the state's high court disagreed and ruled that any issues could be resolved during jury questioning. The prosecutor, who was not paid for his work on the film, was later replaced on the case and Hollywood was convicted.

Diamond's motion notes that the only cases involving similar issues involve prosecutors, not police officers collaborating and working on films based on an active case.

It is the second time in the case that Goodkin's credibility has been questioned. Diana Tamayo, who is accused of breaking into Lohan's home, claimed she was coerced to confess after officers threatened her family with deportation and failed to properly administer a warning that she could remain silent. Fidler rejected a motion to dismiss charges against her.

Lopez, Tamayo and Courtney Leigh Ames have all pleaded not guilty to having any role in the break-ins.

Three other defendants have resolved their cases through plea deals and the group's alleged ringleader, Nicholas Prugo, has agreed to testify against Lopez and the remaining defendants.

Diamond said between Goodkin and Prugo, the prosecution is left with two witnesses who have severe credibility problems and that will benefit Lopez if the case proceeds to trial.

"There's not a shred of evidence against him and now we have the outrageous and egregious behavior of the officer assigned to supervise the case," Diamond said.

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