

Charges Filed in Queens Rappers Murder

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Thursday, 18 November 2004 06:08 -

Murder charges were filed Thursday in the slaying of a Queens rapper known as E-Money Bags. Federal prosecutors probing ties between the worlds of drug dealing and rap music filed the murder charges.

Assistant U.S. Attorney Carolyn Pokorny said defendants Dennis "Divine" Crosby and Nicole Brown could face the death penalty if convicted of the 2001 shooting. Investigators believe the crime was a revenge slaying ordered by Queens drug kingpin Kenneth "Supreme" McGriff, according to documents in the case. Prosecutors believe McGriff laundered hundreds of thousands of dollars in drug money through the rap label Murder Inc., the home of such platinum-selling acts as Ashanti and Ja Rule. The label changed its name to The Inc. earlier this year after executives said the label's image was hurt by court filings alleging links to McGriff.

The bookkeeper for the label was arrested earlier this month and charged with laundering drug proceeds and structuring cash deposits to avoid federal reporting requirements. The laundering charges involve more than \$1 million in drug money, according to the indictment against her. The label has declined to comment on any criminal proceedings. Its founder, Irv "Gotti" Lorenzo, a childhood friend of McGriff's, has said the federal probe is racially motivated and unfounded. E-Money Bags, whose given name was Eric Smith, was shot to death in his Lincoln Navigator in Queens Village in July 2001. An affidavit filed by a detective investigating the case said McGriff has admitted his involvement in the shooting to a confidential informant, though he has not been charged. A confidential informant told the detective that Smith was killed in retaliation for the shooting of McGriff associate Colbert "Black Just" Johnson.

McGriff served 10 years in prison for running a crack-dealing crew responsible for numerous murders. He is currently incarcerated on a gun charge.