

Lieutenant testifies at Stoughton chief's trial

Blount says Cachopa blocked his effort to bring allegations to district attorney's office

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[GateHouse News Service](#)

Posted Jan 21, 2009 @ 06:52 AM

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DEDHAM — A former Stoughton police internal affairs investigator testified in Superior Court on Tuesday that Police Chief Manuel Cachopa refused to let him bring allegations against a police officer to an assistant district attorney in 2003.

"He said, 'No, no way, no way,'" Lt. Michael Blount testified on the seventh day of Cachopa's criminal trial in Norfolk Superior Court.

Blount said he was assigned by Cachopa to investigate a complaint of misconduct brought against former Sgt. David Cohen by former Stoughton businessman Timothy Hills in May 2002.

"He (Cachopa) said, 'This is nothing. Get rid of it,'" Blount testified under questioning by special prosecutor Andrew DiCarlo Berman.

"What did you understand that to mean?" Berman asked.

"I understood that to mean that Mr. Hills' complaint was much ado about nothing," Blount said.

Hills, 44, testified last week that when he could not repay a \$10,000 business investment to Peter Marinelli of Stoughton, Cohen, a friend, came to his aid as a lawyer.

On April 30, 2002, Cohen went to Hills' office in uniform and demanded repayment. The two argued, and Cohen placed him in handcuffs. He later forced Hills to sign a statement promising to repay Marinelli. Cohen had Hills arrested three days later when he failed to repay the money.

On July 31, 2007, Cohen, 42, was convicted by a Norfolk Superior Court jury of attempted extortion, making a false written police report and witness intimidation and was sentenced to 2 1/2 years in prison. The prosecution contends Cachopa, 57, had full knowledge of Cohen's actions and tried to prevent the investigation from going beyond the department.

Prosecutors say Cachopa became an accessory after the fact to attempted extortion when he tried to cover up for Cohen. Cachopa is also accused of trying to coerce Hills into dropping his complaint against Cohen in exchange for getting Marinelli to drop a civil claim against Hills.

Retired Stoughton Police Lt. David Chamberlin testified last week that Cachopa initially assigned him to the Cohen investigation and he had also been told by the chief to "get rid of it."

Blount testified Tuesday he found inconsistencies in Cohen's report of the April 2002 incident. The report was sent to the Attorney General's Office and the state Board of Bar Overseers. Blount said he told Cachopa of his investigation on six occasions.

"I had said that I thought that David Cohen had lied on the BBO report. I said if he had lied on his police report there were potential crimes in the picture," Blount said. "I wanted to make sure I protected Sgt. Cohen's rights, how best to proceed."

He said that in January 2003 he asked Cachopa for his permission to obtain a subpoena for Cohen's personal telephone records and to go to the assistant district attorney seeking advice. He said Cachopa denied the request.

Blount said later that day, Cachopa told him to interview Cohen the next day.

During that Jan. 10, 2003, meeting Cohen allegedly told Blount that "the chief told him he had nothing to worry about." Lt. Francis Wohlgemuth, a prosecution witness, was at that meeting as a witness, Blount said.

As the meeting proceeded, Blount said Cohen continued making contradictory statements "and I called him on it."

Later, Blount met with the chief in his office to talk about the interview.

"I said to Chief Cachopa that Sgt. Cohen had made things worse," Blount said.

"How did Mr. Cachopa respond?" Berman asked.

"He did not," Blount said.

Blount, under questioning by Cachopa's attorney, Robert George, testified that he was unaware that on March 12, 2003, Cachopa brought Blount's case file to the district attorney's office for review and possible action.

"Does that sound like covering up to you?" George asked Blount.

Blount also testified that he did not know of Cachopa's involvement in appointing an independent investigator to the case.

"Does that sound like covering up to you?" George said.

The prosecution rested Tuesday.

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Robert George as your attorney?? REALLY??? Has he ever won a case? He may not be the last nail in the coffin but he's in the vicinity.

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