

WERE OFF-DUTY COPS BLINDED BY BLING KING?; [SPORTS FINAL Edition]

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OFF-DUTY COPS moonlighting as security guards for Jacob the Jeweler failed to sound the alarm when accused gang members traded bags of dirty cash for gold, platinum and diamond baubles, law enforcement sources told the Daily News.

"Drug gang members were carrying bags of money into the operation. What was so-called security doing?" a law enforcement source said. "It's a case of willful blindness - at best."

The cops, who have not been charged with any crimes, began working for Yakov Arabov several months ago after the King of Bling hired a sergeant from the NYPD gang division to provide security, the sources said.

The people recruited for the job included several retired officers, as well as a captain and a lieutenant who worked while off- duty, sources said.

Arabov, 41, whose diamond-encrusted pieces have been worn by Madonna, Jay-Z and Derek Jeter, has pleaded not guilty to a federal money-laundering charge. He was freed last week on a \$100,000 bond.

Prosecutors say Arabov knowingly helped a Detroit-based gang known as the *Black Mafia Family* hide some of the \$270 million they allegedly earned selling cocaine. Arabov allegedly accepted dirty money - which he knew came from drug dealing - to pay for jewelry as long ago as 1990. He also failed to report the transactions, the feds say.

NYPD detectives working with Drug Enforcement Administration agents discovered that cops were working for Arabov when they checked his employment records, sources said.

The sources said investigators have no information that the cops broke the law.

"If we had any info, we would press a case," a source said. "It's not illegal, just embarrassing."

Deputy Police Commissioner Paul Browne confirmed that the NYPD is investigating whether several of the cops failed to report their off- duty jobs. But Browne said the NYPD had not launched a corruption probe.

Arabov lawyer Benjamin Brafman said the presence of the cops at the Manhattan jewelry operation bolstered his client's insistence that he is innocent.

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