

Louding testimony complicates other cases

BY JOE GYAN JR.

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East Baton Rouge Parish District Attorney Hillar Moore III said Saturday his office will examine Michael "Marlo Mike" Louding's about-face testimony at the murder-for-hire trial of rapper Torence "Lil Boosie" Hatch to see how it affects additional murder cases involving Louding and a half-dozen other defendants.

Hatch, 29, of Baton Rouge, was acquitted Friday, four days after Louding - the prosecution's star witness - testified at Hatch's first-degree murder trial that he and Hatch had nothing to do with the Oct. 21, 2009, slaying of Terry Boyd on Vermillion Drive. Louding also denied being involved in any other killings.

Louding, 19, of Baton Rouge, had told police in May 2010 that Hatch paid him \$2,800 to kill Boyd. Louding also told police he was involved in the killing of five other people between February 2009 and April 2010.

Louding testified before an East Baton Rouge Parish grand jury on June 3, 2010, and a day later, murder indictments were returned against Louding and five other Baton Rouge men - Adrian Pittman, Jared Williams, Ryan "Sneaks" Carroll, Kendrick Johnson and Johnathan Rogers. Hatch was indicted two weeks later, as was Reginald Youngblood, also of Baton Rouge.

Moore said Saturday that his office was relying on Louding's "cooperation and testimony" in all of the murder cases, that is until May 4 - the day the Hatch jury was seated - when Louding indicated he wanted to testify at Hatch's trial but would do so as if he was a defense witness.

Because of Louding's May 7 testimony in which he denied that he and Hatch were involved in Boyd's murder, Moore indicated Saturday that his office's deal with Louding is dead.

Louding had agreed to cooperate with prosecutors and testify truthfully in exchange for a sentence of less than life in prison.

Jason Williams, one of Hatch's attorneys, contended Friday in his closing argument to the jury that Louding did tell the truth at Hatch's trial.

"He lied somewhere," Louding's attorney, Margaret Lagattuta, said Saturday.

"I'm assuming there's no deal and they're going to prosecute him."

Lagattuta said prosecutors could find themselves in a "trick bag" with Louding.

"You cannot convict someone on their statement alone, particularly in a homicide," she said. "The law is clear."

Moore agreed with Lagattuta's assessment of the law but said his office is "moving forward" with the prosecution of Louding and Pittman, the alleged getaway driver, in Boyd's slaying.

The district attorney said Pittman's police statement corroborated Louding's statement.

"Our goal is to stop the violence," he said.

Pittman and Louding are due in state District Judge Mike Erwin's courtroom June 13 and July 10, respectively, for status conferences in the Boyd case.

Louding, who is not eligible for the death penalty because of his age at the time of the killings, is charged with first degree murder in the deaths of local up-and-coming rapper Chris "Nussie" Jackson on Feb. 9, 2009; Marcus Thomas on April 25, 2009; Boyd on Oct. 21, 2009; and Charles Matthews and Darryl "Bleek" Milton on April 1, 2010. He also is charged with second-degree murder in the killing of Michael Smith on Dec. 18, 2009.

Louding has status conferences May 14 in the Thomas case before state District Judge Richard Anderson; May 16 in the Jackson case before state District Judge Don Johnson; May 31 in the Matthews-Milton case before state District Judge Trudy White; and July 10 in the Smith case before Erwin. He is scheduled to stand trial June 25 in the Jackson case.

Pittman, 38, is charged with first-degree murder in Boyd's slaying. His next court date is a June 13 status hearing before Erwin.

Williams, 22, is charged with first-degree murder in Thomas' death. He is scheduled to stand trial July 16 in Anderson's court.

Carroll, 18, Johnson, 21, and Rogers, 19, and Youngblood, 34, are charged with first-degree murder in the Matthews-Milton double-murder. They are due in White's courtroom July 26 for a status hearing. James Manasseh, one of Johnson's attorneys, said Saturday his office intends to subpoena the Hatch trial record, particularly Louding's testimony.

"I'm very confident they have the wrong person," he said. "I'm very confident Kendrick Johnson is innocent."

Carroll's attorney, Ben Gibson, has said previously that Louding sent Gibson a letter in September 2010 stating that Carroll and Rogers had nothing to do with the murder of Matthews and Milton.

A sheriff's detective testified last year that Carroll confessed to making two attempts on Matthews' life in 2010 before Matthews was shot to death.

Matthews, 37, and Milton, 25, were fatally shot and found in a parked Cadillac on Monte Sano Avenue. Thomas, 20, was shot while driving his sport utility vehicle on West McKinley Street. Smith, 19, was found shot behind a residence on Wisteria Street. Jackson, 33, was fatally shot at a house on America Street.

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