

in investigating the Rap-A-Lot organization, is that correct?

Mr. Stephens.

Mr. Stephens. That's correct.

Mr. Chaison. That's correct.

Mr. Allen. That's correct.

Mr. Shays. At the first meeting of the joint task force, did Special Agent Ernie Howard make comments about how the task force was not going to be affected by political influence like others have been? And I would like to know, what did he say?

Mr. Stephens.

Mr. Stephens. It's my recollection that he gave us his full support. He wanted the case investigated in the manner that if there was something there to be done, to do it; if there was not, to let him know. He was our biggest support during the period that we investigated the case.

Mr. Shays. Mr. Chaison.

Mr. Chaison. Yes, it was my understanding from Mr. Howard that he would assist us in anything that we needed. He was 100 percent behind us and that if there was anything there he wanted it uncovered; if not, accept that.

Mr. Allen. To my knowledge, it was the same thing that Mr. Chaison said. It started out where we had all the resources we needed up until the time it was stopped.

Mr. Shays. Mr. Stephens, you worked out of the Houston office of DEA in October 1998.

Mr. Stephens. We actually moved over there I believe in December 1998. My squad relocated to the DEA office, yes, sir.

Mr. Shays. I would like to ask each of you, was this the only time that you worked on a joint task force for the DEA in Houston?

Mr. Stephens. No, sir.

Mr. Chaison. No.

Mr. Allen. No.

Mr. Shays. Did all of you work under the DEA Special Agent in Charge Earnest Howard? Mr. Stephens.

Mr. Stephens. We are assigned to the Houston Police Department, sir. The ultimate person we worked for would be our chief. But, yes, during that task force, he was our supervisor.

Mr. Shays. And for all three.

Mr. Chaison. That's correct.

Mr. Allen. That's correct.

Mr. Shays. In January 1999 the task force made a significant arrest in the case. Could you please explain what happened at that time? And I would open it to up to Mr. Stephens. And if any of you, Mr. Chaison or Mr. Allen, want to add to it you can join in afterwards. Mr. Stephens.

Mr. Stephens. It was January 7, 1999. It was a reversal operation—

Mr. Burton. May I interrupt real quickly here? Just to clarify this was the arrest of McCarter, Ballard, Russell, et al, and McCarter was the No. 3 in the Rap-A-Lot organization and the arrest involved 6 kilos of cocaine, correct?

Mr. Stephens. Yes, sir.

Mr. Burton. Thank you.

Mr. Shays. Can you add to that?

Mr. Stephens. It was actually Steven McCarter, Edward Russell, William Ballard and Eric Bradley, in a reversal operation that took place on January 7 where Mr. McCarter and Mr. Russell, Mr. Bradley and Mr. Ballard came to a hotel in Houston, TX, and took 6 kilos of cocaine and the \$90,000.

Mr. Shays. Anything that you gentlemen would add?

OK. Note that for the record.

Mr. Schumacher. In August 1999 our colleague, Congresswoman Maxine Waters, wrote a letter to Attorney General Janet Reno concerning the Prince investigation or what I call the Rap-A-Lot investigation by the DEA. The letter alleged that Prince was the subject of racial harassment by the DEA. The DEA's Office of Professional Responsibility launched an investigation into the actions of its agent. Did you all know about this letter, Mr. Schumacher?

Mr. Schumacher. Yes, sir.

Mr. Shays. Mr. Stephens.

Mr. Stephens. Yes.

Mr. Shays. First off, I would like to know when you knew, Mr. Schumacher. This was August 1999, that the letter was written.

Mr. Schumacher. The latter part of August.

Mr. Stephens. The same.

Mr. Shays. Mr. Chaison, did you know of the letter?

Mr. Chaison. Yes, the same.