

# Law Enforcers Puzzle Over 'Mafia Cops'

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By MICHAEL WEISSENSTEIN Associated Press Writer

NEW YORK (AP) -- One was fat, flashy and liked by fellow cops, a rough-and-tumble detective with a storied career despite having relatives in the Mob. The other was skinnier and quieter, and had spent years in the nerve center of Mafia murder investigations.

Together, Louis Eppolito and Stephen Caracappa are accused of some of the most stunning violations in the history of New York law enforcement.

**Prosecutors charge that they moonlighted for more than a decade as Mafia hit men who kidnapped, killed and engineered the slayings of at least eight rival gangsters for a vicious underboss in the Luchese crime family, Anthony "Gaspipe" Casso. The government says they were paid thousands of dollars a month.**

They were arrested Wednesday at a restaurant in Las Vegas, where they both retired, and were being held without bail.

**Law-enforcement veterans puzzled over the lives and careers of men who won medals, fame and respect** while carrying out what prosecutors called a sickening betrayal of public trust.

Eppolito, 56, is the greater enigma. The son, grandson and nephew of Gambino crime family members entered the police department in 1969 and quickly developed a reputation as a cops' cop, a tough guy with a knack for knocking heads and solving difficult crimes.

"He was a hard charger and he made lots of arrests," said one retired detective, who spoke on condition of anonymity because of the ongoing investigation. "He was a rough-and-tumble, roll-on-the-ground kind of street cop."

In his 1992 book "Mafia Cop: The Story of an Honest Cop Whose Family Was the Mob," Eppolito described himself as the department's 11th most-decorated officer.

At a bail hearing Friday in Las Vegas, where the former partners both retired in the early 1990s, Eppolito's lawyer offered a list of awards, medals and citations won by the former detective first-grade, one of the department's most coveted ranks.

Some investigators believe Eppolito built his impressive record by using Mafia connections to gather inside information on crimes.

"He was getting heads-up information that would make him look good," said Brooklyn District Attorney Charles J. Hynes. **"I've been involved in a lot of police corruption investigations over the years and I've never heard anything like this. It reaches a level of utter disbelief."**

But others familiar with the case say Eppolito's Mob ties cannot explain his long history of tough investigations and arrests in some of Brooklyn's grittiest neighborhoods.

"He was really perceived as a great street cop," said another investigator familiar with the case, also speaking on condition of anonymity. "I've seen him put together cases that were fairly complex and highly circumstantial."

Caracappa, 63, cut a lower profile than Eppolito. But the skinny detective known as "The Stick" had access to reams of confidential information as a founding member of the Organized Crime Homicide Unit in the department's Major Case Squad.

"He knew what the FBI was doing, he knew what the DEA was doing," the second investigator said. "Everything was funneled through there."

**Casso paid \$65,000 in 1990 for the two detectives to pull over Gambino captain Eddie Lino in their unmarked car with flashing lights and kill him for a suspected attempt on Casso's life, prosecutors charge.**

They grabbed another mob associate from a meeting in a park, stuffed him in their trunk and delivered him to Casso for torture, interrogation and execution, according to court documents and interviews with investigators.

Eppolito and Caracappa are each charged with eight murders, two attempted murders, murder conspiracy, obstruction of justice, drug distribution and money laundering, and could be sentenced to life in prison if convicted.

## Ex-FBI agent indicted on murder charges

**NEW YORK (AP)** — A retired FBI agent whose reputation was considered unimpeachable by colleagues was indicted yesterday on murder charges for allegedly providing tips to a mob figure who then ordered the killings.

R. Lindley DeVecchio cooperated with Colombo crime family captain Gregory Scarpa Jr. between 1987 and 1992, said Brooklyn District Attorney Charles J. Hynes.

Among the alleged victims was the daughter of a former top-ranking Colombo member,

authorities said. Others included a suspected mob informant, a mobster targeted during a battle for control of the family, and a Colombo soldier considered a problem after he became a born-again Christian, Hynes said.

DeVecchio, 65, was expected to be arraigned later yesterday at state Supreme Court on four counts of second-degree murder.

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