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KING 2-14

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GARDEN CITY, N.Y. (UPI) -- THE TOP LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICIAL IN MEMPHIS, TENN., REMOVED A DETECTIVE ASSIGNED TO PROTECT MARTIN LUTHER KING HOURS BEFORE THE CIVIL RIGHTS LEADER WAS ASSASSINATED IN 1968, NEWSDAY REPORTED SATURDAY.

IN A COPYRIGHTED STORY IN ITS SUNDAY EDITION, THE LONG ISLAND NEWSPAPER SAID ED REDDITT, THE CITY DETECTIVE GUARDING KING, WAS PULLED FROM HIS POST AND TOLD THERE WAS A PLOT TO KILL HIM.

THE MEMPHIS PUBLIC SAFETY DIRECTOR DID NOT REPLACE REDDITT AFTER TAKING HIM OFF THE ASSIGNMENT, AND ALLOWED THE DETECTIVE TO RETURN TO WORK THREE DAYS AFTER KING WAS SHOT TO DEATH AT THE LORRAINE HOTEL, NEWSDAY SAID.

IT ALSO SAID REDDITT "HAD PREPARED A CONTINGENCY PLAN TO ENABLE THE POLICE DEPARTMENT TO APPREHEND AN ASSASSIN SHOULD AN ATTEMPT BE MADE ON KING'S LIFE."

"AFTER REDDITT WAS REMOVED FROM DUTY, HE WAS TOLD AT A MEETING IN POLICE HEADQUARTERS THAT THE U.S. SECRET SERVICE HAD LEARNED OF A 'CONTRACT' ON HIS LIFE," NEWSDAY SAID.

"REDDITT PROTESTED, SAYING HE WANTED TO RETURN TO HIS POST, BUT THE CITY'S THEN PUBLIC SAFETY DIRECTOR, FRANK HOLLOWAY, INSISTED ON THE OFFICER'S REMOVAL," THE NEWSPAPER SAID.

"EN ROUTE HOME WITH HIS POLICE GUARD, REDDITT HEARD OVER THE RADIO THAT KING HAD BEEN SHOT BY AN ASSASSIN," THE STORY SAID.

"THREE DAYS LATER, THE ROUND THE CLOCK GUARD WATCHING REDDITT WAS REMOVED AND HE WAS ALLOWED TO RETURN TO WORK. THE POLICE DEPARTMENT NEVER OFFERED ANY FURTHER EXPLANATION OF THE 'CONTRACT' ON HIS LIFE," NEWSDAY SAID.

THE STORY ALSO SAID HOLLOWAY ACKNOWLEDGED THE REPORT OF A THREAT ON REDDITT'S LIFE, BUT REFUSED TO SAY WHO HAD MADE THE THREAT.

"REDDITT'S ASSASSINATION CONTINGENCY PLAN, ACCORDING TO SOURCES, CALLED FOR THE ENTIRE FOUR BLOCK AREA AROUND KING'S HOTEL TO BE SEALED OFF BY PATROL CARS," THE ARTICLE SAID.

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