

Wone conspiracy trial could wrap up this week

BY EMILY BABAY | JUNE 21, 2010 AT 2:00 AM

The trial concerning the bizarre death of Robert Wone will likely end this week without the three men charged with covering up his murder ever speaking in court.

Defense attorneys' in-court projections of upcoming witnesses do not appear to include Joseph Price, 39, Dylan Ward, 40, and Victor Zaborsky, 44. It is unlikely, said some legal experts, for the defendants to take the stand in such a case.

The three men are charged with conspiracy and obstruction of justice in connection with Wone's Aug. 2, 2006, death in their Dupont Circle town house. Ward and Zaborsky were acquitted of tampering with evidence Thursday, but that charge still stands against Price.

The defense began presenting its case Thursday and will call its final witnesses this week. The defense could rest on Tuesday, David Schertler, who represents Ward, said in court Friday. He said defense attorneys would call about six more witnesses.

David Benowitz, a D.C. criminal defense lawyer unaffiliated with the case, said he doesn't expect the defendants to be among those witnesses.

Putting the three defendants on the stand would give the government an opportunity to elicit statements that differ from what the defendants told police, he said. Taped interviews were shown in court.

"There's no reason I could see where you'd want to get up and have them give a different version than they gave in the video," he said.

Benowitz added that because the interrogations were shown in court, the judge has already heard from the defendants themselves -- the morning after Wone's death, before they had obtained lawyers.

"I would think the judge would prefer the unadulterated version," he said.

Price could face 38 years in prison if convicted on all charges. Ward and Zaborsky could face sentences of up to 35 years in prison if convicted on the remaining charges against them.

Two defense witnesses testified last week, after the prosecution spent 3 1/2 weeks pressing its case.

Prosecutors focused on proving that the knife found near Wone's body was planted and debunking the defense's theory that an intruder broke into the house at 1509 Swann St. NW and stabbed Wone.

Last week, the defense began its case by trying to discredit the claim of a planted knife and showing that the defendants didn't have time to plan a coverup.

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