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YOU PAY G-MAN'S LEGAL BILLS

[SPORTS FINAL Edition]

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TAXPAYERS ARE footing part of the mounting legal bills for an ex- FBI agent accused of helping a Brooklyn Mafia boss commit four murders, the Daily News has learned.

The Justice Department is helping fund retired agent Lindley DeVecchio's defense, which has cost more than \$450,000 since his indictment last year by the Brooklyn district attorney's office.

"It's an expensive litigation," said DeVecchio's lawyer Douglas Grover, who declined to comment further.

A highly informed source confirmed the Justice Department contributions, saying, "It's on an hourly rate. Not a top New York City rate, more like a federal public defenders' rate."

It could not immediately be determined how much the department is paying.

"There is a process in place by which employees or former [FBI] employees who are the subject of civil litigation or criminal charges can apply for coverage of their legal costs. The recommendation is forwarded to the Department of Justice, where a final determination is made," FBI spokesman John Miller said.

In a case that rocked New York law enforcement, DeVecchio, 66, was indicted last year for providing information on informants and mob rivals to Colombo family boss Gregory Scarpa before the murders.

DeVecchio, who spent 33 years as an agent, is also charged with receiving payoffs from Scarpa totaling more than \$66,000.

Now dead, Scarpa was DeVecchio's top secret informant for more than a decade, beginning in 1982. The murders occurred during the brutal Colombo family wars of the late 1980s and early '90s.

Grover, DeVecchio and numerous agents who worked with him maintain he is innocent of the charges and that the Brooklyn DA's prosecution is baseless and misguided. wsherman@nydailynews.com

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