

Suspect in Thanksgiving killings wants evidence withheld from public



Paul Michael Merhige is accused of killing his twin sisters, an aunt and a 6-year-old child and wounding two others.

By SUSAN SPENCER-WENDEL

Palm Beach Post

A defense attorney for Paul Michael Merhige, the man who is accused of gunning down family members in Jupiter on Thanksgiving Day, is asking that evidence in the case against Merhige be withheld from the public.

Guarding his right to a fair trial, Merhige's attorney is objecting to the release of information that would normally be public record under Florida law: a witness list, autopsy reports, domestic violence injunction records, gun-purchase records and an inventory of items discovered in the Key West motel room where U.S. marshals captured Merhige in January after a nationwide manhunt.

Public defender Carey Haughwout is also asking that video and photographs from a gun shop visited by Merhige and the tragic scene at the Jupiter home where the shootings took place not be released to the public.

“The foregoing list includes items that are graphically incriminating or which might not be admissible at trial,” Haughwout wrote in her request before Circuit Judge John Hoy. “This case has involved prior prejudicial publicity, disclosure could further aggravate the prejudicial publicity.”

Attorneys for The Palm Beach Post are expected to argue for disclosure of the items. In a brief hearing Thursday morning, Hoy set a hearing for April 6.

Haughwout is objecting to the release of about 100 of more than 1,800 pages of evidence documents amassed in the case against Merhige. Prosecutors are seeking the death penalty against him.

He is accused of opening fire on family members after the Thanksgiving meal, killing four -- his twin sisters, an aunt and a 6-year-old child -- and wounding two others.

Read more: <http://www.miamiherald.com/2010/04/01/1558522/suspect-in-thanksgiving-killings.html#ixzz0mVHedUhk>