

A\$AP ALLEGATIONS ADDRESSED

A\$AP ROCKY LAWYER SAYS 'JEALOUS' A\$AP RELI FABRICATED SHOOTING IN 'ATTEMPT AT EXTORTION'

"Rocky didn't shoot him by any stretch," defense lawyer Joe Tacopina tells *Rolling Stone*

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A\$AP Rocky is the victim of a failed shakedown and fabricated shooting accusation orchestrated by his “jealous” former friend A\$AP Relli, the rapper’s defense lawyer Joe Tacopina tells *Rolling Stone*.

Shedding new light on the disputed incident that led to criminal charges and a civil lawsuit against his client, Tacopina is adamant that Rocky, born Rakim Mayers, didn’t shoot anyone during the confrontation on a Hollywood street last November.

“Rocky didn’t shoot him by any stretch,” Tacopina says, referring to Relli and calling the firearm assault allegation a “false scenario” at the heart of “a plain and blatant classic attempt at extortion.”

The lawyer claims Relli, whose real name is Terell Ephron, had been badgering Mayers for money before he allegedly initiated a physical altercation at a face-to-face meeting and then tried to spin the confrontation into a shooting claim.

“He’s a failed associate – ex-associate – of Rocky’s, and he’s jealous,” the lawyer said of Ephron. “He was trying to get money from Rocky. He wanted Rocky to support him. He made it clear. There were repeated attempts where he tried to ask for money in lieu of not causing problems for Rocky. That’s what he said. We have all this memorialized in text messages and otherwise, so it’s an extortion.”

According to Tacopina, Ephron was the aggressor last November: “He tried to attack Rocky, and some other guy got involved, and he punched some other guy in the face and knocked his teeth out, and of course now, according to him, he’s a victim.”

Ephron’s civil lawyers Jamal Tooson and Brian Hurwitz responded to the extortion allegation in a statement sent to *Rolling Stone* Friday: “The merits of the present case against A\$AP Rocky [have] been thoroughly investigated by both law enforcement and the Los Angeles District Attorney prior to the decision to not only arrest A\$AP Rocky but charge him.”

They also said “this reckless type of violent behavior” exemplifies the scourge of gun violence causing Los Angeles residents to feel “nervous and afraid.”

Mayers, 33, pleaded not guilty last month to **two counts of using a semiautomatic firearm to assault Ephron**. He remains free on a \$550,000 bond and could face up to nine years in prison if convicted as charged.

The rapper and his lawyers, including Tacopina, answered Ephron's Aug. 10 civil complaint late Thursday, denying the allegations of assault, battery, and intentional infliction of emotional distress using boilerplate language.

According to Ephron's complaint, Mayers asked him to meet at a location in Hollywood on Nov. 6, 2021, and "initiated a verbal altercation."

"During this altercation and while in close physical proximity to the plaintiff, the defendant pulled out a handgun and purposefully pointed it in the direction of the plaintiff and fired multiple shots," the lawsuit states. Ephron purportedly "was struck by bullet projectile/fragments" in his left hand and had to seek medical attention.

"Unbeknownst to Mr. Ephron, A\$AP Rocky was not just planning for a conversation and came armed with a semi-automatic handgun," Tooson and his co-counsel Brian Hurwitz said in a prior statement to *Rolling Stone*. "After arriving at the location, a conversation ensued whereby without provocation, warning, or any justification, A\$AP Rocky produced the handgun and intentionally fired multiple shots at Mr. Ephron."

Though the shooting happened in November, it wasn't until Mayers' **surprise arrest in April** that the rapper was connected to the incident. Mayers was returning from a trip to Barbados with a heavily pregnant Rihanna when he was taken into custody shortly after landing at LAX Airport on a day that also saw investigators raid his Los Angeles home.

Tacopina says the raid was a bust for law enforcement.

"They got a bunch of surveillance videos and phone records. Nothing that would shed any light onto this case," he tells *Rolling Stone*.

"Hopefully, when their eyes are wide open to all the evidence I have, they're going to reconsider [the criminal charges]. If not, I can't wait to see them at trial," he says.

Mayers quickly posted bond after his arrest and was out of custody when **he and Rihanna welcomed their first child** together in May.