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CAMACHO DENIES DRUG TIES HE APOLOGIZES TO FANS FOR 'LAPSE' IN BREAK-IN *ROBIN FITZGERALD/THE SUN HERALD*

GULFPORT --- Hector "Macho" Camacho apologized to boxing fans Tuesday for a burglary charge here but denied any involvement with drugs in a Biloxi arrest.

The former world champion, a Gulfport resident, apologized for a Dec. 2 break-in at a computer business while denying that drugs found in a Biloxi hotel room at the time of his arrest belonged to him. Camacho, 42, was visiting a hotel guest, according to his attorney.

His arrest Thursday, five weeks after the incident, made international headlines after attorneys spent several weeks negotiating damages from the break-in. Their negotiations involved an "outrageous" demand for \$500,000 to avoid media exposure, according to Camacho's attorney.

Camacho, in a written statement, apologized for the break-in, which caused nearly \$13,000 in damage and losses at ZDI Computer Center. Camacho had bought a laptop computer from the business but had left it there for work on technical problems. He was trying to retrieve his computer, said his attorney, David Morrison.

The break-in was "a momentary lapse in judgment," said Morrison.

"Camacho readily admitted his poor judgment and was willing to make restitution for the break-in," Morrison said. "But on the drug charge, I find it strange that he was simply a guest in someone else's room, and I find it even more strange that the person who was renting the room wasn't charged."

Biloxi police have declined to discuss the drug charge except to confirm they confiscated 10 pills of Ecstasy from a hotel room at Imperial Palace.

Camacho had no room reservation in his name at that time, a hotel spokesman confirmed.

Gulfport police also have declined to answer questions, such as why they waited to act on a warrant for Camacho's arrest.

"I respect and trust the people of Mississippi and all of my fans and hope that they have not lost respect and faith in me," Camacho said in the written statement.

Morrison said a friend of Camacho's visited the computer business before lawyers became involved and offered owners Solomon and Samantha Wheeler "\$5,000 upfront to start immediate repairs and

more compensation later if it took more than that."

Wayne Woodall, the Wheelers' attorney, said he advised the Wheelers to ask for more money. His starting figure was \$500,000.

Woodall claims Camacho fell through the ceiling, cut himself, urinated inside the office and left with seven laptop computers and about \$5,600 in checks and cash.

"We're looking not only at property damages, but invasion of property, substantial loss of business for a company that had only been open there a short while, and my fees," said **Woodall**.

Morrison said the urine was an accident.

Solomon Wheeler said he was offended by an offer to have his business logo used in Camacho's future fights.

"It doesn't matter how famous he is," Wheeler said.

"If there's implications that he's gotten wrapped up in drugs and bad influences, I wouldn't feel comfortable with that."

A boxing match pitting Camacho against Chris Walsh in Biloxi on Jan. 21 has been postponed, said Lisa Terlizzi, Camacho's manager. A fight was scheduled in December but had to be rescheduled. The January date was never finalized, said Mississippi Coast Coliseum Assistant Director Matt McDonald.