

Ill. governor tied to Rezko extortion case

by UPI

CHICAGO -- A federal judge in Chicago linked Illinois' governor to a case involving real estate developer Tony Rezko that could reach into the presidential race. U.S. District Judge Amy St. Eve identified Illinois Gov. Rod Blagojevich Monday as the elusive Public Official A who received a \$1.5 million campaign contribution brokered by Rezko, the Chicago Tribune reported Tuesday. Rezko faces charges of extortion, money laundering and fraud in a case that reaches deep into Illinois politics. Prosecutors allege Blagojevich told "a former political operative" he could get them some big contracts in exchange for the contributions. His spokeswoman, Abby Ottenhoff, denied the charges, saying Blagojevich "was never involved." Blagojevich isn't charged in the case. Monday's ruling also alleged Rezko arranged a \$50,000 donation to Blagojevich's campaign in exchange for a promise to put the brother of a business partner, Joseph Cacciatore, on the Illinois Banking Board, the Chicago Sun-Times said. There is also speculation Democratic presidential hopeful and Illinois Sen. Barack Obama is the "political candidate" who received \$10,000 in campaign funds directed by Rezko during Obama's senatorial bid in 2004. Bill Burton, a spokesman for Obama, denied the allegations saying, "By now it is well-established that Sen. Obama is not involved in the matters at issue in the (Rezko) trial."

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