

Biker club ex-leader kept jailed

Detroit News, The (MI) - Thursday, January 15, 2009

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But judge wants case speeded up against man locked up since 2006.

By Paul EganThe Detroit News

DETROIT — A federal judge on Wednesday refused to let a former leader of an alleged outlaw motorcycle gang out of prison, ruling that Aref "Scarface" Nagi poses a threat to the community.

But U.S. District Judge Nancy G. Edmunds stepped up pressure on prosecutors to speed up their case against Nagi, 45, charged in connection with an FBI crackdown on the Highwaymen Motorcycle **Club**. He has been locked up awaiting trial since October 2006, and "the length of time is starting to bother me," Edmunds said at a hearing.

Assistant U.S. Attorney Diane Marion has promised a large and sweeping racketeering indictment against Nagi and as many as 100 other defendants. She told Edmunds those charges have been delayed because new witnesses keep coming forward with information, leading to new and complicated multistate investigations involving stolen property and other crimes.

Nagi's Detroit attorney, James C. Thomas, said his client is presumed innocent and should be released on an electronic tether to await trial. "It's been too long," Thomas said. "You should allow him to at least go home to his family."

Edmunds agreed with Marion that Nagi, who is charged with drug trafficking conspiracy, should remain locked up as a danger to the community, based on weapons seized at his home and talk of violence by Nagi picked up on FBI wiretaps.

"Stay strong," a courtroom supporter yelled to Nagi as he was led away in handcuffs following the hearing.

Edmunds said if prosecutors have not brought their promised new indictment by the end of next month, the drug trial, which involves more than a dozen defendants, will go ahead in April.

Nagi, owner of two Pancho Villas restaurants, a bar and a janitorial company, is described as a former top official of the Highwaymen who remains an honorary member. Spokesmen for the **club** deny it is a criminal organization.

Edition: no-dot

Section: Metro

Page: 5B

Record Number: det34048529

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