

Judge urges swift prosecution of alleged motorcycle gang leader

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

Author: Paul Egan / The Detroit News

Judge urges swift prosecution of alleged motorcycle gang leader

By Paul Egan

The Detroit News

DETROIT — A federal **judge** on Wednesday refused to let a leader **of** an **alleged** outlaw **motorcycle** gang out **of** prison, but stepped up pressure on prosecutors to speed up their case against him.

Aref "Scarface" Nagi, 45, charged in connection with an FBI crackdown on the Highwaymen **Motorcycle** Club, has been locked up awaiting trial since October 2006, and "the length **of** time is starting to bother me," U.S. District **Judge** Nancy G. 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 multi-state investigations involving stolen property and other crimes.

Nagi's Detroit attorney, James C. Thomas, said Nagi 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. Spokesmen for the club deny it is a criminal organization.

You can reach Paul Egan at (313) 222-2069 or pegan@detnews.com.

Edition: Online

Section: Metro

Record Number: det33999103

Copyright (c) The Detroit News. All rights reserved. Reproduced with the permission of Gannett Co., Inc. by NewsBank, inc.