

DEALER'S LETTER DEEMED TRIVIAL - REVELATIONS UNDERCUT TERROR TRIAL PROSECUTOR

Detroit Free Press (MI) - Saturday, February 7, 2004

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A federal prosecutor thought so little of a **letter** that a notorious drug dealer wrote to attack the credibility of his eventual star witness in last year's Detroit terrorism trial, he said he didn't bother sharing it with defense lawyers.

But he may have been concerned enough about its contents to share it with the star witness, Youssef Hmimssa.

That's the upshot of a transcript that U.S. District Judge Gerald Rosen released Friday of his closed-door interview in December with Milton (Butch) Jones, cofounder of Young Boys Inc., a Detroit drug gang.

Jones told federal prosecutors in a **letter** in late 2001 that Hmimssa had lied to the FBI, which handled the investigation that resulted in charges against four men for allegedly supporting terrorism. Three men were convicted at a trial in June. Hmimssa testified that they plotted terror.

Defense lawyers complained during the trial that prosecutors had withheld documents and witnesses. Months later, they found out about Jones' **letter**. At a court hearing in December, Rosen, who is considering a request for a new trial, faulted prosecutors for failing to give the **letter** to defense lawyers.

The lead prosecutor, Assistant U.S. Attorney Richard Convertino, said he didn't think the **letter** was important enough to give to defense lawyers.

Jones, who bunked near Hmimssa at Wayne County Jail and the federal prison at Milan, said Hmimssa eventually confronted him about the **letter** in February 2003, shortly before the terror trial began.

"You wrote the prosecutor and told on me," Jones said Hmimssa told him while in Milan federal prison, accusing Jones of messing up his situation. "I hope you burn in hell."

Defense lawyer William Swor said "it's outrageous" that Convertino shared the **letter** with Hmimssa and not with them. Swor and other defense lawyers think the Jones **letter** might have helped their clients at trial.

Convertino could not be reached.

Assistant U.S. Attorney Keith Corbett, who helped try the case, said he didn't know how Hmimssa found out about the **letter** -- if he even did. Hmimssa is in custody awaiting sentencing for credit card and document fraud.

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Caption: Photo

Youssef Hmimssa

Edition: METRO FINAL

Section: NWS

Page: 3A

Index Terms: YOUSSEF HMIMSSA ; MILTON (BUTCH) JONES ; TERRORISM ;
INVESTIGATION ; LETTER

Record Number: 0402070321

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