

DEFENSE LAWYERS FIGHT CHARGES IN ' 82 KILLINGS JUDGE IS ASKED TO RULE ON DELAY IN FILING CASES AGAINST YOUNG BOYS INC. DRUG RING SUSPECTS

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Recorder's Court Judge George Crockett III will be asked today and Friday to decide if the law waited too long to try former Detroit drug lord Milton (Butchie) Jones and his alleged gunmen, who made Young Boys Inc. a feared synonym for murderous drug gangs.

Defense lawyers for Jones, Richard Daniels and Curt (Kirk McGurk) Napier are challenging murder **charges** against the three, arguing that the Wayne County Prosecutor's Office has waited too long **in** bringing them to court.

If the **charges** are allowed to stand and the Detroit men are convicted, they would face mandatory life sentences without parole.

If not, Jones and Napier -- after serving current sentences -- would return to the streets they allegedly ruled with ruthless efficiency during the Young Boys' heydays of the late 1970s and early 1980s. Daniels is not **in** jail.

Defense lawyers , seeking dismissal of first-degree murder **charges** filed **in** 1988 **in** connection with a series of 1982 drug- related **killings** , claim the three cannot properly defend themselves because witnesses are no longer available and that the passage of time has dimmed the memories of witnesses who can be called.

There is no statute of limitations on murder, but the **lawyers** said the prosecution could have brought the **charges** as early as 1985, but chose not to.

But Assistant Prosecutor Robert Hood said the passage of time is not enough reason to dismiss the **charges** . He said the delays are justifiable, citing a federal grand jury investigation and concerns for the safety of witnesses. Furthermore, he said, the **defense** must prove it has been hurt by the delay.

"Sure, these crimes were committed **in** the early '80s, but they have never been addressed **in** court," Hood said. "And even if Jones and Napier are serving other sentences, there are these murders out there that we believe they are responsible for. We're talking about first-degree murder and that's about as serious as it gets."

The **killings** took place as federal authorities were preparing indictments of the gang's leadership. The gang allegedly was settling old scores as well as tightening its grip on the street-level drug trade, authorities said.

In 1985, Young Boys lieutenant Kevin Wilson became a federal witness and his testimony about the **killings** provided evidence to support federal racketeering **charges** against Young Boys leaders.

Jones pleaded guilty to a federal drug **charge** and murder- related counts were dismissed. He was sentenced to 12 years and will be eligible for release **in** five or six years. Napier was sentenced **in** Recorder's Court to a 20-to-40-year prison term for assault.

In 1988, using Wilson's testimony, the Wayne County Prosecutor's Office filed the murder **charges** .

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