

## WITNESSES CAN BE ASKED OF DRUG ROLES

Detroit Free Press (MI) - Friday, June 30, 1989

Author: JOE SWICKARD Free Press Staff Writer

The case against Raed Jihad in the fatal shooting of reputed cocaine kingpin **Harry Kalasho** hit a potential stumbling block Thursday when a judge ruled that the witnesses can be questioned about involvement in Kalasho's alleged multimillion-dollar drug ring.

Wayne County Circuit Judge Richard Hathaway ordered a preliminary examination for Jihad to determine whether he should stand trial, but attorneys for the witnesses said their clients might take the Fifth Amendment regarding the alleged drug ring.

The Fifth Amendment issue -- the right of witnesses to refuse to give testimony that could be self-incriminating -- is crucial because witnesses Issam (Sam the Bull) Hermiz and Najah (Nick) Konja are facing federal drug charges stemming from a cocaine ring allegedly run by Kalasho, 24.

Their testimony about the alleged drug ring could be used against them in a future federal drug trial.

On Thursday, lawyers for Konja and Hermiz told Hathaway it was premature to say whether their clients would take the Fifth Amendment, but said to do so would be reasonable and common sense advice.

The prosecution of the Kalasho case rests on the testimony of Hermiz and Konga, who identified Jihad as the gunman who shot Kalasho in February.

Hathaway set a \$250,000 bond for Jihad, who had been held without bond on a first-degree murder charge. Jihad, 19, can be freed by posting \$25,000. Mark Kriger, Jihad's lawyer, said Hathaway's ruling was an important step toward clearing Jihad.

Louis Akrawi, Kalasho's uncle and family spokesman, denounced Hathaway's decision and repeated his assertion that federal authorities are trying to smear his dead nephew and derail the Jihad prosecution.

"There's no justice in that bond," Akrawi said. "He should be locked up."

Shortly after Jihad was ordered held on the Kalasho killing, Konja and Hermiz were named in federal complaints as playing key roles with Kalasho in a drug ring that brought up to 100 kilograms (about 220 pounds) of cocaine a week into the Detroit area.

Federal officials have named Kalasho and associates as targets in a major drug probe, but have denied any inappropriate involvement in the murder case.

\*\*\*

Edition: METRO EDITION

Section: NWS

Page: 10B;

Index Terms: DRUG ; SHOOTING ; DEATH ; HARRY KALASHO

Record Number: 8901270304

Copyright (c) 1989 Detroit Free Press