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## Last man held for biker trial to go free

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*The Detroit News*

*Detroit* -- The last defendant still behind bars in the massive Highwaymen Motorcycle Club racketeering case -- former national president Joseph "Little Joe" Whiting -- is expected to be released on bond today.

U.S. District Judge Nancy G. Edmunds, over the objections of federal prosecutors, said Tuesday she planned to grant bond to Whiting, 56, who has been in a federal prison in Milan awaiting trial for eight months.

His conditions of release are expected to be finalized this morning, but it's expected he will have to wear an electronic tether and follow a curfew.

Assistant U.S. Attorney Christopher Graveline told Edmunds Tuesday that Whiting is both a flight risk and a danger to the public.

The FBI has a secretly recorded conversation of Whiting discussing plans to kill a club snitch, Graveline said.

"Go ahead and get rid of him. Just tell them make sure he's not wearing -- wearing colors," Whiting allegedly says on the tape in an apparent reference to the club insignia.

It was also Whiting who sent a list out of Milan titled "Bad Peoples" containing the names of club members suspected of cooperating with the federal investigation, Graveline said.

But Henry Scharg, Whiting's Northville attorney, said Whiting's lengthy criminal record includes no violent acts. "The most that could be said is that he condoned violence," Scharg told the judge.

Despite government assurances the case will go to trial by summer, "there's nothing that I see that this case is going to trial within the next eight to 12 months," Scharg said.

Edmunds recently was ordered by the U.S. 6th Circuit Court of Appeals to release Aref "Steve" Nagi, the lead defendant in the case, who had been locked up awaiting trial for more than three years.

She expressed concerns Tuesday about Whiting's due process rights, which the appeals court found had been violated in the case of Nagi.

A total of 83 club members and associates are charged in the case that stems from a lengthy FBI investigation, making it one of the largest criminal cases ever brought in the eastern district of Michigan.

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