



Monday, October 23, 2000

Drug gang recruiting ploy: No equals death

By Karen Kapsourakis
Eagle-Tribune Writer

SALEM, Mass. -- When a man refused to join a prominent drug gang in Lawrence, one of its members carjacked him and threatened to kill him, police say.

Joseph Irizarry, 20, is accused of armed carjacking, attempted kidnapping, assault and battery with a deadly weapon, larceny under \$250 and threats to commit a crime in connection with the car jacking in December 1999.

He is the same man accused of gunning down a man as he stood outside a pizza parlor in April.

Mr. Irizarry, of 77 S. Union St., pleaded innocent to the carjacking crime before Judge Howard J. Whitehead.

Assistant District Attorney Murat Erkan asked that \$10,000 bail be set although Mr. Irizarry is still in jail on the shooting arrest. He has pleaded innocent to that crime.

The prosecutor asked for the bail because of Mr. Irizarry's "significant juvenile history" and the fact that he has missed some court dates.

Defense lawyer Carol Cahill urged the court set a \$1 bail as was set originally in the district court.

Ms. Cahill explained Mr. Irizarry is in custody at the Middleton Jail on other cases and that her client never failed to appear in court on his cases.

The judge went with the \$10,000 bail.

Ms. Cahill said the victim, Anthony Santiago, has given three different stories about the incident.

But the prosecutor said that on Dec. 5, 1999, Mr. Irizarry and

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tried to recruit Mr. Santiago into his gang, the Latin Kings.
Mr. Santiago declined.

Then Mr. Santiago, 19, left the party. But at a red light in Lawrence, Mr. Irizarry pulled up behind him, police said.

Mr. Irizarry allegedly threw Mr. Santiago's passenger out, pointed a knife at his side and ordered Mr. Santiago to drive down Water Street to South Lawrence or he would "kill him," said Mr. Erkan.

Mr. Santiago refused and instead drove to his mother's house and jumped out of the car. Mr. Irizarry reportedly stole the car key and fled. He was arrested a short time later.

Mr. Irizarry is being held without bail for the shooting death of Angel Rodriguez Jr., 22, who was gunned down April 16 on South Union Street, as he was standing smoking a cigarette with his friends.

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