

# Gang opens fire on witness

A drive-by shooting didn't prevent Anthony Santiago from trying to testify yesterday.

by Jeffrey Klineman  
Eagle-Tribune Writer

**LAWRENCE** — Prosecutors say the life of a key witness against a Latin Kings gang member might be in danger, and they tried to use a legal motion to get his testimony yesterday.

But a judge would not allow the man to talk before the gang member's trial begins.

Members of the Latin Kings threatened Anthony Santiago, 19, with shooting at his car and yelling at him in an attempt to dissuade him

from testifying in a carjacking case against one of the gang's purported leaders, Joseph Irizarry, according to authorities and Mr. Santiago.

Mr. Irizarry, 20, is already in jail, on charges he murdered Angel Rodriguez Jr., a member of the rival NETA gang.

At the time of Mr. Rodriguez's murder, Mr. Irizarry was out on bail, awaiting trial for the carjacking of Mr. Santiago's red Honda Civic.

Because of Mr. Irizarry's position

Please see **GANG**, Page 12

## **NORTH ANDOVER**

### Carjacker on the loose

**NORTH ANDOVER** — Investigators have released a composite sketch of the man they say robbed two women of money and their car at gunpoint on July 2.

Detective Lt. Paul J. Gallagher said the incident happened at 9:40 a.m. that day in front of the Fleet Bank branch at the North Andover Mall.

According to police, the two women were from another business in the mall and were making



A sketch of carjacker.

a deposit in the deposit drop box when the man approached them, displayed a silver handgun and ordered them to hand over the deposit bag.

After they

See **CARJACKER**, Page 12

12 Wednesday, July 12, 2000 The Eagle-Tribune

**LOCAL**

## Gang: Witness is threatened

Continued from Page 11

in the gang, and the threats against him, prosecutors waged a losing battle to get Mr. Rodriguez's testimony on the record under a rare "motion to preserve testimony."

"People came to his house and told him not to testify," said Assistant District Attorney Murat Erkan during a hearing on the motion. "The defendant was the victim of a drive-by shooting."

The motion would have given Mr. Rodriguez the chance to testify — and be cross-examined by Mr. Irizarry's defense attorney, Carol L. Cahill — even before the Essex County district attorney tries to indict Mr. Irizarry.

It was not allowed because Mr. Irizarry was not in court, the result of an administrative mix-up that left him in jail, unable to face the witness.

Mr. Irizarry, whose street name is "Camouflage," allegedly carjacked Mr. Santiago last Dec. 5 after Mr. Santiago spurned his invitation to join the Latin Kings.

Mr. Santiago said that as he and a friend were traveling home after visiting a South Lawrence girl, Mr. Irizarry and another man carjacked him, jumping into Mr. Santiago's car as he stopped at the corner of Water Street and Broadway. The two men threw Mr. Santiago's friend out of the car and Mr. Irizarry held a "Rambo knife" to Mr. Santiago's

"At the moment, I was scared, but I knew if I went back, something worse would happen," Mr. Santiago said. He drove home instead and honked his horn so that his mother came out of the house.

The two men challenged each other to a fight, but Mr. Irizarry instead went back to the car he and his friends had used to tail Mr. Santiago and retrieved a gun. Before he had a chance to use it, however, police arrived and the gang members fled.

Days after the incident, gang members fired two shots into the car as it sat in his driveway, Mr. Santiago said. He has since sold the car.

Mr. Santiago said Mr. Irizarry was angry at him because he had turned down the Latin Kings after going to one meeting, telling Mr. Irizarry's girlfriend the gang was "fake" and "full of snitches and stuff."

"He (Mr. Irizarry) was saying that maybe I wouldn't make it back home that day," he said. "He said, 'Now we're going to hurt you ... you shouldn't have said those things you said.' He thought the gang thing was the only thing."

A hearing to get Mr. Santiago's testimony on the record was originally scheduled for June 9. Gang members drove by his house a few days before that, threatening Mr. Santiago and his mother, he said.

"They told me not to testify or I knew what was going to happen," he said. "They sliced the tires on my

Lawrence District Court to testify, a group of Latin Kings waited outside the courthouse and Mr. Santiago fled because he was scared, he said.

Nevertheless, yesterday Judge Richard A. Mori turned down Mr. Erkan's motion to preserve Mr. Santiago's testimony.

Mr. Erkan told Judge Mori he was concerned that Mr. Santiago might be in danger and that his testimony might not make it to court. Judge Mori turned down the motion because Mr. Irizarry was not in court for the testimony.

Mr. Santiago is now expected to be called as a witness during a grand jury hearing to indict Mr. Irizarry in the carjacking case. Although the testimony would be useful in bringing the indictment against Mr. Irizarry, it would not be admissible in court, because grand jury notes are inadmissible as evidence during a trial.

The next chance for Mr. Santiago to testify would be during Mr. Irizarry's trial.

Sitting on a bench outside Courtroom 6 in Lawrence District Court, with his mother looking on, Mr. Santiago told his story to a reporter. He admitted he had been to jail and was now out, trying to straighten out his life and obey the terms of his probation. He said he was not intimidated, even though he is testifying against a man who police say shot Mr. Rodriguez twice April 16.

"It scares me sometimes, but it