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DEFENSE LAWYERS GRILL INFORMANT IN NYC ORGANIZED-CRIME TRIAL

Dobbs Ferry man who pleaded guilty testifies against 6

NEW YORK - A battalion of defense lawyers took aim yesterday at government informant Maurizio "Mo" Sanginiti for the second time in five months.

Sanginiti, 40, of Dobbs Ferry has pleaded guilty to gambling and extortion, and is testifying in U.S. District Court in Manhattan against six reputed members of an Albanian-led organized-crime group that federal prosecutors charge flourished in Westchester, the Bronx and Queens over the last few years.

He testified in May at the federal extortion trial of six Westchester men who were eventually convicted of extorting White Plains con man John Perazzo. Sanginiti admitted he took part in the kidnapping and torture of Perazzo, as well as a number of other illegal activities, from assault to illegal gambling to drug dealing.

Some of the illegal gambling he admitted to was part of his membership in the reputed Albanian crime group dubbed "The Corporation," and allegedly led by Alex Rudaj, 38, of Yorktown.

Sanginiti testified for the prosecution for 3½ days before defense lawyers began their cross-examination yesterday afternoon. Sanginiti endured blistering cross-examination from six defense lawyers during the trial in May. He appeared uncomfortable, clearing his throat often, fidgeting in his seat and repeatedly asking to have questions "rephrased" during the May trial even when he was being questioned by Assistant U.S. Attorney Timothy Treanor.

But he has appeared more relaxed during Treanor's questioning at the current trial, often sneaking in answers to Treanor's questions in the brief seconds between defense lawyers' objections and Judge Denise Cote's rulings.

Rudaj's lawyer, James Kousouros, attacked Sanginiti's truthfulness as he opened the defense barrage.

He engaged in a running back-and-forth with Sanginiti over whether he'd lied in previous sworn statements and testimony. Sanginiti would only admit that he was "being very difficult" in previous proceedings where it appeared he lied under oath.

At one point, Kousouros asked Sanginiti about a deposition he gave in 2001 in a civil suit filed against Perazzo by a family that was swindled on a real estate deal. Sanginiti refused to say he lied in the deposition.

"I was being very, very difficult that day," he said.

"Ooh, that was two verys, correct?" Kousouros replied, as jury members chuckled.

Sanginiti did eventually admit he had committed perjury in the case.

During that deposition, Sanginiti said he couldn't read a document because his vision was deteriorating. Kousouros asked him how his eyesight was now. Sanginiti acknowledged his eyesight was fine, but claimed it was deficient in 2001 because he had stayed up for two days playing cards and hadn't slept. "I sleep pretty good now," said Sanginiti, who is in a federal prison awaiting sentencing.