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Judge denies bond for alleged Hampton Roads gang leader

NORFOLK

Since he left prison seven months ago, alleged Bloods leader Dearntha Thomas left his gang life behind, got a job at Captain D's and was following the rules of probation, his lawyer said.

Calling it "laughable" that his client was running one of the most vicious gangs while 12 or 13 years old, the attorney on Monday asked a federal court judge to let Thomas out on bond pending trial.

U.S. Magistrate Judge Tommy E. Miller didn't find it so funny. He ordered Thomas to stay in jail pending trial.

Thomas, now 24, nicknamed "Bloody Razor," is charged with leading a faction of the Bloods street gang that operated in the Cradock section of Portsmouth, the College Square area of Suffolk (where Thomas is from), Churchland, the Dunedin area of Chesapeake, and the Huntersville and Burbage Grant neighborhoods of Suffolk.

Assistant U.S. Attorney William Muhr told the judge that Thomas rose to become a three-star general in the gang and was second in command to James A. Mack, known as the Original Gangster. Mack is serving life in federal prison following his conviction in federal court last year.

Thomas' attorney, Tim Anderson, said Monday that the government failed to offer any solid evidence that his client was involved in criminal activity since he got out of prison in September. The crimes Thomas is charged with occurred between 2000 and 2006, when Thomas was between 12 and 18 years old.

"I question the seriousness of the defendant's leadership role in this gang," Anderson told the judge. "To indicate that someone 12 years old, or even 13, 14 or 15, was running one of the most serious gangs since the 1960s is laughable."

Anderson said Thomas hasn't committed any crimes since 2006 and has had no probation violations since leaving prison last fall. He also noted that the statute of limitations on many of the crimes would have expired in one month.

Muhr said Thomas was wearing red and black, the colors of the Bloods, when he was arrested last week and had two red bandanas in the car he was riding in, "which would seem to indicate that he's still with the Bloods."

Anderson quipped that if that's the basis for charging someone with gang activity, then "every Cincinnati Reds fan should be indicted today."

Muhr presented testimony from Portsmouth gang detective B.K. Hall, who went through some of the shootings and robberies Thomas is accused of in the indictment.

But Miller struck the testimony after Muhr failed to turn over to Anderson all of Hall's notes and documents he collected in the investigation, as required by court rules.

Anderson still had a hurdle to climb. Because a grand jury issued an indictment, the judge had a

presumption to keep Thomas in jail.

Thomas will return to court May 4 for arraignment when a trial date will be set. He faces a maximum of life in prison if convicted of the most serious racketeering counts.

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