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# Wary judge denies bail to Mafia kingpin

Alfonso Caruana called too rich, powerful for bail

BY LEE LAMOTHE

TORONTO • Even two hours of freedom while out on bail is too much for one of the world's most powerful Mafia bosses, because his access to immense profits from his global drug network makes him highly mobile, an Ontario judge said yesterday.

Alfonso Caruana was ordered to remain in jail while waiting to hear if he will be sent to his native Italy, where he faces nearly 21 years in prison on drug trafficking and Mafia conspiracy charges.

Lawyers for Caruana offered his family's \$400,000 home as a surety and a promise to have him check in with authorities every two hours if he could stay out of jail until the December extradition hearing.

Mr. Justice Ian Nordheimer rejected defence arguments that putting the mafioso on an extremely tight leash would ensure he showed up for future court appearances in Canada.

"There's a high risk he would flee Canada rather than face the niceties of legal argument in an extradition hearing," said Mr. Justice Nordheimer. "Mr. Caruana could be out [of a half-way house] one morning and be halfway around the world by the time Corrections knows.

"All those funds must exist somewhere," he said. "Simple logic pre-

sumes he has access to them."

Widely regarded as one of the most powerful of Italy's Cosa Nostra leaders, Caruana, dressed in a grey-patterned sweater, yellow open-necked shirt, and khaki pants, kept his hands folded on his lap and listened quietly as his life in the underworld was detailed in court.

After decades of global police interest in his family's affairs, Caruana, his two brothers and a nephew were arrested in Woodbridge in 1998, after police probed the importing of nearly a tonne of cocaine to Canada, the United States, and Italy.

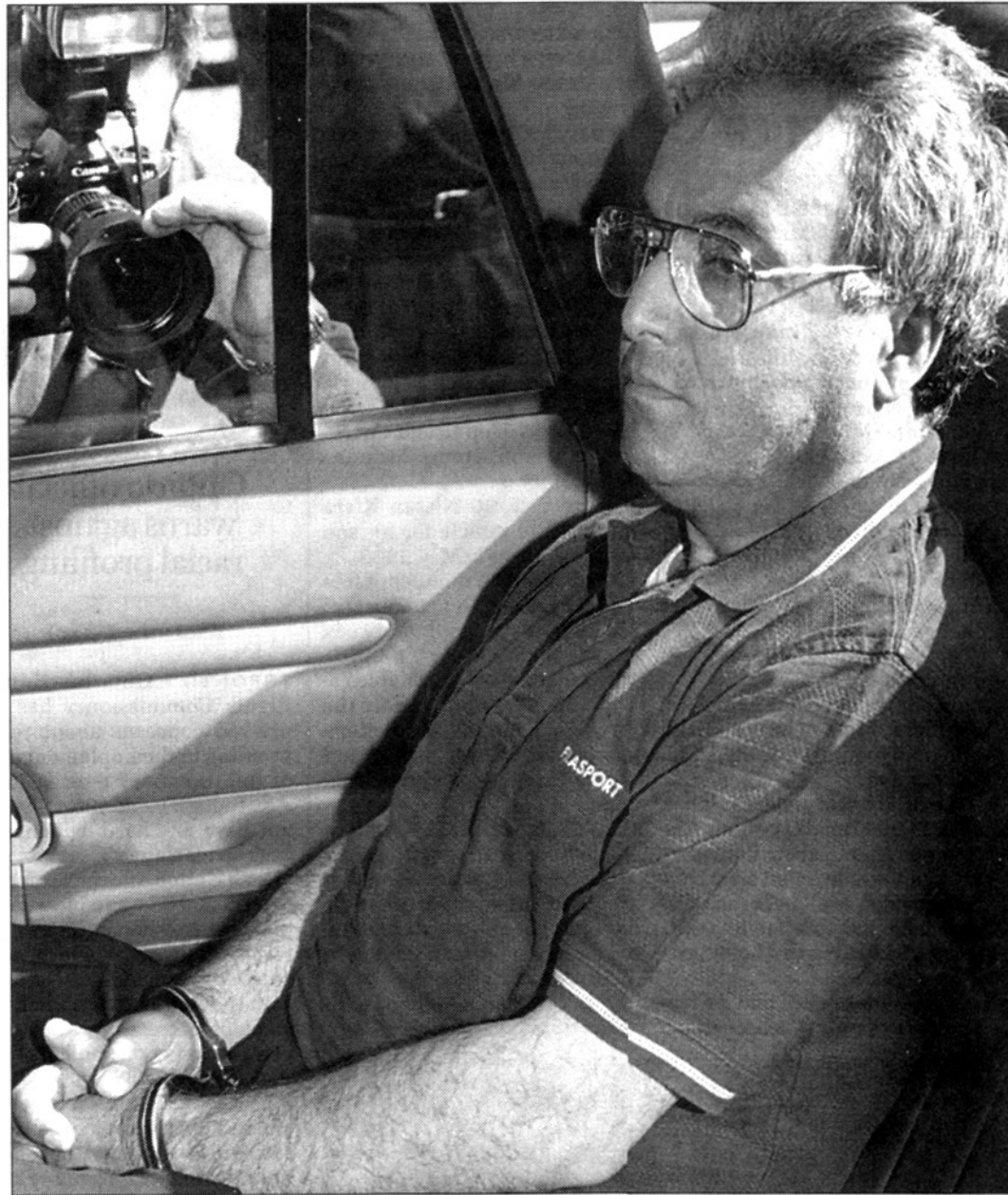
He pleaded guilty in February, 2000, and was sentenced to 18 years in prison.

He became eligible for accelerated parole last February but was arrested on a warrant from Italy in April while inside Fenbrook Institution, a medium-security prison north of Toronto where he was serving his sentence.

Documents provided to the court by the Italian government detail the alleged involvement of the Caruana family in decades of drug trafficking and money laundering. Authorities say Caruana is the current head of the Caruana-Cuntrera Family, a vast criminal organization. Among the criminal operations cited by the Italian government are:

- 1964 to 1970: continual shipping of heroin to Canada;
- 1980, 1981, 1982, 1985: heroin shipments to the United Kingdom, Canada, and the United States;
- 1980: 250 kilograms of hashish seized in Britain;

sumes he has access to them."



Alfonso Caruana of Woodbridge began serving an 18-year prison term in Canada in February, 2000. Italian authorities would like him extradited to face drug-running charges there.

■ 1982: 200 kilograms of hashish shipped to Italy.

Financial investigations in Europe and North America uncovered the financial channels used by the Caruana-Cuntreras to launder tens of millions of dollars in profits.

A report from the Office of the State Attorney General, in Palermo, Sicily, describes Caruana as "a front-line participant in managing a colossal heroin traffic, the drug being produced in clandestine Sicilian laboratories and transported to the United States."

He sent "a river of money" through his financial network, the Palermo attorney-general said, and that money was used to buy morphine to be refined into heroin.

"Thereby, [they] kept up non-stop circuit of drugs to the U.S.A. and of money to Switzerland and thence to Sicily."

In their investigation, Italian police developed several high-level Mafia informants who ex-

posed the inner-workings of the organization.

The Italian case was bolstered by testimony from RCMP Sergeant Mark Bourque, who painstakingly outlined the families' complex financial operations from Canada to Switzerland.

After a failed attempt yesterday at having a publication ban on the hearing, Caruana's lawyers, David Rose and Joseph Neuberger, attempted to have him released on bail, offering unusually strict con-

ditions. Mr. Neuberger said the defence was conducting its own investigation into the Italian allegations and said the much-reported assets held by Caruana "almost rises to the level of folklore."

The sole defence witness was Caruana's son-in-law, Anthony Catalanotto, who offered to put up bail.

It was Mr. Catalanotto's opulent wedding to Caruana's daughter, Francesca, in 1995 that sparked the ultimate destruction of the drug network. While monitoring the telephone conversations of Toronto mobster Enio Mora — who was later murdered by the Sicilian Mafia — police heard Caruana's name.

They set up surveillance at Toronto's Sutton Place Hotel and photographed the father of the bride. He was subsequently identified as an international fugitive.

An investigation involving several countries and a dozen law agencies began and, although only 200 kilograms of cocaine was seized, several Caruana family members were charged and convicted.

Mr. Catalanotto, 38, told the court he worked for a Woodbridge money-trading company. He said he had been authorized by Carlo Napoli, another of Caruana's sons-in-law now living in Venezuela, to put up more than \$400,000 worth of equity in the Caruana family home as bail for Caruana.

He said Mr. Napoli had bought the house as an investment but had never lived there.

"If there was a breach [in bail conditions] I would contact the proper authorities — police or Corrections Canada," Mr. Catalanotto said, adding he would "supervise" his father-in-law.

Mr. Catalanotto told Department of Justice lawyer Bradley Reitz that he, his wife and two young children, as well as Caruana's wife and son, now live in the family home on Goldpark Court in Woodbridge.

Caruana's crimes involved "absolutely enormous" amounts of drugs and the resultant profits weren't "folklore," Mr. Reitz told the court.

Mr. Justice Nordheimer ordered Caruana held until his extradition hearing on Dec. 11.

National Post