

Hale murder solicitation trial postponed; he will stay in jail

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A federal judge in Hammond on Thursday postponed white supremacist leader Matthew Hale 's murder solicitation trial until April and denied his request to be released from jail. The trial had been scheduled to begin on Monday.

U.S. District Judge James T. Moody said he did not think the community would be safe if Hale, who has been in jail since January, was released to his father's home in Downstate East Peoria.

"I still am convinced that this defendant should remain under observation 24 hours a day," Moody said. "There's just no reasonable assurance that he will not communicate with others in his organization."

Hale, 31, is charged with soliciting one of his followers to kill U.S. District Judge Joan Humphrey Lefkow over her enforcement of an injunction ordering Hale and others to stop using the name World Church of the Creator on their Web site and elsewhere.

On Wednesday, the prosecution introduced a second count of murder solicitation. Hale pleaded not guilty to the second charge Thursday.

Defense attorney Thomas Anthony Durkin was prepared to go to trial Monday but requested additional time to investigate the second charge after Moody ruled Thursday that the charges would not be tried separately.

"The government seems to be able to bring people out of the woodwork," Durkin said outside the courtroom after the ruling.

The defense also plans to hire a private investigator to look into the new charges.

Durkin requested Thursday that Hale be released into the custody of his father, Russell Hale, a former East Peoria police officer. Hale agreed not to use the Internet and have all of his personal calls monitored, Durkin said.

The prosecution objected and referred to a taped phone conversation in which Hale's father asked him how many U.S. marshals and guns are used when he is transported to court.

"That's not a normal conversation," Assistant U.S. Attorney David Weisman said in court. "That raises a whole host of serious risks."

Separately, Hale told a different federal judge that he has expended his savings and can no longer afford to pay his attorneys, Durkin and Patrick Blegen. The judge granted his request to have the government pay for his defense.

Moody, who sits in Hammond, was appointed to the trial amid concerns that no federal judge in Chicago should preside over a case involving a colleague. Still, the case will be tried in Chicago.

Caption: PHOTO

PHOTO: (Matthew) Hale .

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