

OFFICE OF THE RAMSEY COUNTY ATTORNEY
Susan Gaertner, County Attorney



50 West Kellogg Boulevard, Suite 315, St. Paul, MN 55102-1657
Telephone 651-266-3079 Fax 651-266-3015

NEWS RELEASE

April 8, 2009

Contact: 651-266-3322

'Terrorism' counts against 8 RNC defendants to be dismissed; other conspiracy charges remain

The Ramsey County Attorney's Office today gave notice that it intends to file amended complaints and dismiss terrorism counts against eight defendants charged with conspiracy to commit riot during the 2008 Republican National Convention in St. Paul. The other conspiracy charges against the defendants will remain.

Under the amended complaints, the defendants will still face felony charges of conspiracy to commit riot in the 2nd degree and conspiracy to commit criminal damage to property in the 1st degree. The counts charging conspiracy to commit riot in the 2nd degree "in further of terrorism" will be dismissed.

"We believe the terrorism charges would have been a distraction at trial," said Ramsey County Attorney Susan Gaertner. "Dismissing those charges will help us focus on the core illegal conduct that occurred."

The terrorism law, enacted by the 2002 Minnesota Legislature, provides longer sentences for felony crimes that involve premeditation and violence to persons or property and which are intended, among other things, to intimidate the public and disrupt the right of lawful assembly. In this case, however, the state's Sentencing Guidelines provide for stayed prison sentences with jail time, fines and other sanctions as possible conditions of probation. Thus, the defendants would not face longer prison sentences if convicted under the terrorism sentencing enhancement.

"Under the circumstances, the terrorism charge just complicates the case," Gaertner said.

The County Attorney's Office today informed the court that prosecutors will make a motion to amend the complaint and dismiss the terrorism counts at a hearing at 9 a.m. May 26, 2009, in Ramsey County District Court. Minnesota Rules of Criminal Procedure permit the state to amend a complaint any time before the trial starts.

-continued-

According to the criminal complaint, the eight defendants were part of a self-described anarchist group called the “RNC Welcoming Committee” that sought to disrupt the Republican National Convention or prevent it from occurring. The RNC Welcoming Committee’s own website said the organization intended to blockade streets, bridges and freeways utilized by delegate buses and dignitaries and to immobilize the buses, according to the complaint. The complaint says the RNC Welcoming Committee planned to damage property and riot in an attempt to shut down the convention. The defendants engaged in extensive planning and training to carry out that mission, the complaint says.

In addition to those eight defendants, the Ramsey County Attorney’s Office charged 13 adults with felony crimes related to street disturbances during the convention. Those charges included obstruction of legal process, criminal damage to property in the first degree and assault in the 2nd degree. To date, three defendants have pled guilty and eight are pending trial. Prosecutors dismissed charges against two defendants.

Note: Ramsey County Attorney Susan Gaertner is available to discuss this matter. If you wish to request an interview, please call 651-266-3322.