

Reno drops Tick-Talks; 30 will go free

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Operation Tick-Talks is dead.

Dade State Attorney Janet Reno killed the controversial drug case today with a letter to Dade Circuit Court Judge Gerald Kogan. The letter informed Kogan that Reno's office would not appeal the judge's ruling that wiretap evidence in the case could not be used.

Reno's decision means the hard-fought drug case is over and some 30 defendants walk free. The case was made by Miami police intelligence detectives using over 1,000 hours of wiretap tapes.

Reno said there's "adequate legal basis" to appeal every adverse finding by Judge Kogan. But, she added, the decision on whether to appeal must be based on the "reasonable probability" of winning.

"We disagree with the legal and factual conclusions of the court," Reno told The Miami News. "We believe there is an adequate basis upon which to appeal each and every one of the adverse findings reached by the court.

"But . . . we believe the court's order would be affirmed (by a higher court)."

She added, "We tried our best and we are going to continue to try our best to meet the requirements of the law with respect to wiretaps. We are going to use Judge Kogan's order as a further standard so we take all possible precautions to see that every legal requirement that any judge may have is met with respect to future wiretaps."

Reno said she was concerned about the judge's criticism of Miami Police Department handling of the wiretaps. She said her office is responsible how the wiretaps were conducted since an assistant state attorney reviewed the wiretap applications and supervised the investigation.

She said Miami police diligently investigated the case and should not be criticised for following the di-

Please see TICK-TALKS, 3A

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reaction of her office.

Reno said her office originally decided the testimony of key state witness Ricardo (Monkey) Morales was "adequate" to apply for the wiretaps — a judgement strongly criticized by the judge.

In his ruling, Judge Kogan strongly criticized the way the investigation was handled. He said Miami police and the Dade State Attorney's Office disregarded safeguards built into the wiretap law. The law is designed to make wiretapping a tool of last resort and Kogan said no other investigative tools were used before the wiretap orders were obtained.

Kogan also criticized on these points:

✓ Investigators obtained wiretap orders based on

the word of Morales, who the judge said was highly suspect among South Florida lawmen and not reliable, as a witness because he was "known to sell his services to the highest bidder."

Morales is an admitted murderer and bomber. But, Kogan said in his ruling, Dade Circuit Court Judge Thomas Scott, who signed the wiretap order, was never told of Morales' character though the entire case depended on his word.

✓ Police failed to follow a state law which required them to tell Judge Scott that wiretaps were involved in a previous investigation of a key suspect in the Tick-Talks investigation, so named because the bugging device was hidden inside a clock in the living room of a drug suspect.