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## AT 'PIZZA' TRIAL, DEFENSE DENIES 22 TIED TO DRUGS

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A team of defense lawyers presented opening statements in a major Manhattan trial yesterday, disputing charges that the 22 defendants operated an international Mafia drug ring.

"Welcome to the pizza case," a defense lawyer, Joseph Benfante, told the Federal District Court jury, referring to charges that some of the defendants used pizzerias to disguise drug dealing.

Several of the lawyers said their clients owned pizza restaurants, but they described the restaurants as legitimate businesses and denied any involvement in the Mafia or with drugs.

Kenneth Kaplan said his client, Francesco Castronovo, came to the United States from Sicily in 1961, worked in pizzerias and became the owner of a successful restaurant in New Jersey.

'The American Dream'

"He was the embodiment of the American dream," the lawyer said of Mr. Castronovo.

Seventeen lawyers addressed the jury at yesterday's session, leaving two more to complete the opening statements today. Then, the testimony is to start, amid tight security at the United States Court House at Foley Square.

The defense statements, which began last week, portrayed the defendants as hard-working business executives who had nothing to do with drugs, contending that they were being persecuted because of their Sicilian origins.

"There is no crime in being Sicilian," a lawyer, Gerald DiChiara, told the jury. He accused the prosecution of trying to exploit "a wave of prejudice."

According to the prosecution's opening statement, which Robert Stewart, a Federal prosecutor, gave last week, the defendants are members of a Mafia ring that smuggled heroin into this country and sent profits back to Sicily. Mr. Stewart said the defendants were "members or associates of the Mafia."

A Fabrication Is Charged

A defense lawyer, Larry Bronson, told the jury yesterday that the prosecutor had "misrepresented substantial facts."

"Mr. Stewart," he added, "fabricated a story - a movie script."

Paul Bergman, a lawyer for Baldassare Amato, called "preposterous and absurd" an assertion that Mr. Amato had helped plan the 1979 murder of Carmine Galante, the boss of the Bonanno organized crime "family."

Another lawyer, Robert Koppelman, challenged the drug charges against his client, Vito Badalamenti, the son of Gaetano Badalamenti, another defendant accused of being a top Mafia supplier of heroin. The defendants include six others who are relatives of the Badalamentis.

"Vito Badalamenti was not involved in trafficking in narcotics," Mr. Koppelman said in a brief statement.

Marvin B. Segal was one of several lawyers who said the prosecution would try to twist the defendants' words in wiretapped conversations.

Other lawyers stressed that they would try to discredit Tommaso Buscetta, an informer identified by the prosecution as a witness with inside information about the Mafia.

Judge Pierre N. Leval adjourned the trial until this morning.