

# Experimental Blimp Crashes In Flames; Crewman Killed

Lakehurst, N.J. (AP) — An experimental 343-foot-long airship made from a blimp and parts of four helicopters caught fire and crashed yesterday while on a test flight here, killing one of five crew members aboard, authorities said.

The four other crewmen were not injured seriously when one of the helicopters malfunctioned, causing the 7 p.m. crash at the U.S. Naval Air Engineering Center, the site where the Hindenburg exploded in flames 49 years ago, said Nick Grand, center public information officer.

A fire fighter on the ground also suffered minor injuries, said Barbara Backus, a spokeswoman at Community Memorial Hospital in Toms River, where four of the injured were taken.

The Heli-Stat was designed by Frank N. Piasecki, a helicopter pioneer who began to assemble it 1979 in Lakehurst. It was rolled out in March, 1985, for fueling and testing and its airbag was filled with helium for a public demonstration.

It was intended to be used for remote timber harvesting, and was being built for the U.S. Forest Service by Piasecki Aircraft Corp. of Sharon Hill, Pa.

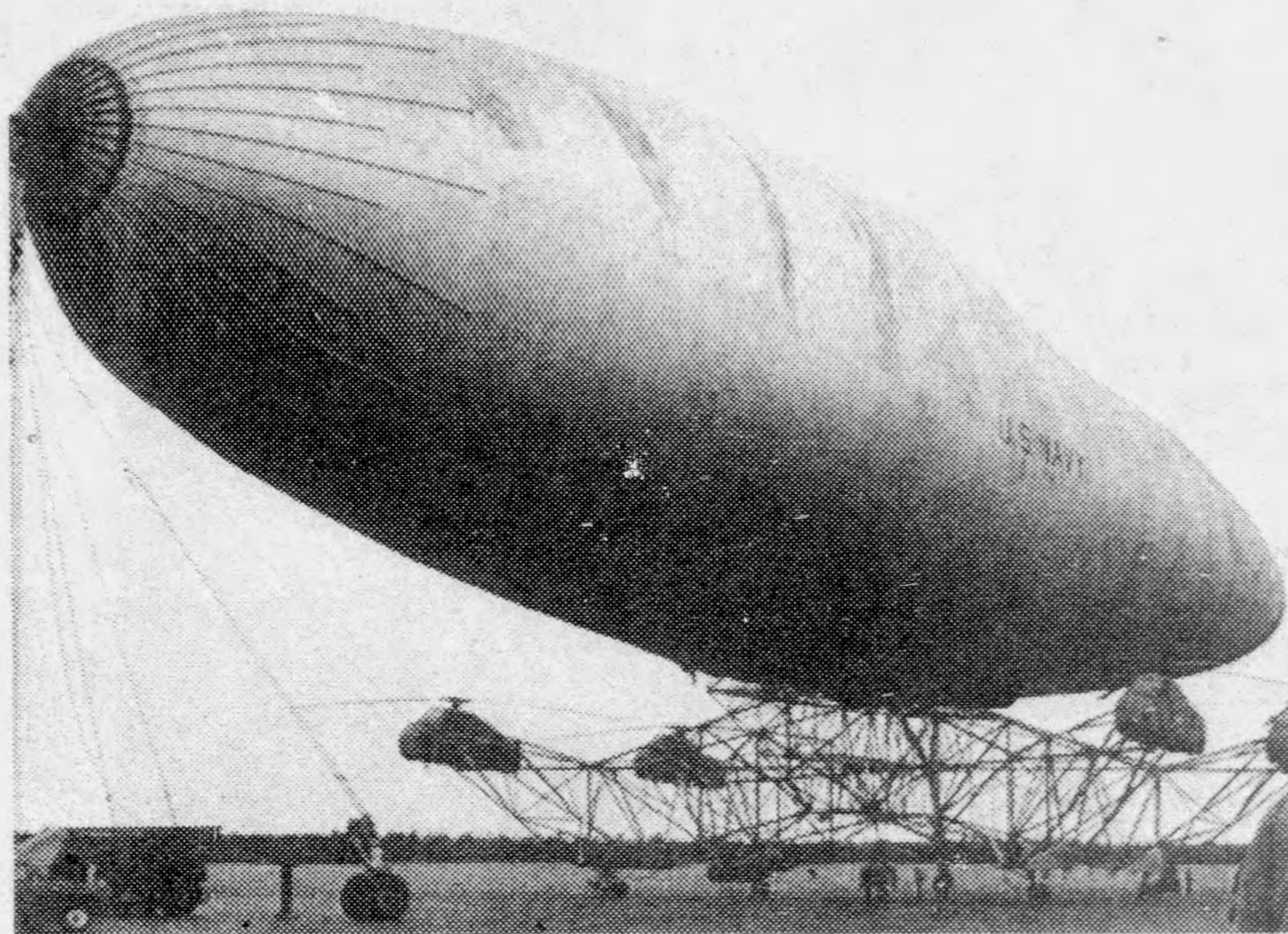
Mike DeStanko, a civilian member of the Lakehurst Navy Flying Club, said the Heli-Stat was hovering above the ground and tilted backward when the rear helicopter caught fire.

"Two back helicopters looked like they were totally on fire and there's a crewman in every one," DeStanko said. "It was just hovering for one of their test flights and it looked like it just tilted and caught on fire."

Grand said one of the helicopters malfunctioned when the Heli-Stat was about 40 feet off the ground about three-quarters of a mile from where the German dirigible Hindenburg exploded on May 6, 1937, killing 36 people.

It lost power and "obviously problems developed," he said. "What specific—

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File photo of Heli-Stat, which crashed at site of Hindenburg disaster

## Judge Orders Franzese to Jail

Says plea bargain 'not lived up to', revokes postponement

By Robert E. Kessler

A visibly angry federal judge yesterday ordered Michael Franzese to be imprisoned immediately after learning that Franzese had failed to pay a total of \$31,472 to cover the costs of the federal marshals who were guarding him, and that he had attempted to pay part of the marshals' bill with \$8,000 in bad checks.

The action by U.S. District Court Judge Eugene Nickerson in Brooklyn came four hours after he had turned down Franzese's request for a six-month delay in beginning a 10-year prison sentence on a fraud conviction but had granted Franzese a routine four- to six-week postponement.

Nickerson ordered Franzese's imprisonment on the request of federal prosecutor Jerry Bernstein and Suffolk County assistant district attorney Ray Jermyn, a specially designated federal prosecutor for the Franzese case. They said they learned of the

failure to pay the marshals' bills only after the earlier session. They said that Franzese had lied to the marshals about paying the money and about the bounced checks.

"Obviously, Mr. Franzese has been committing the same kind of flim-flam activities with the marshals that he was conducting before he was [arrested]," Bernstein said.

"The purpose of the agreement was for the benefit of the government, not for the benefit of Mr. Franzese," Nickerson said. "In my judgment, that agreement has not been lived up to."

Nickerson was also angry that Franzese had spent the early afternoon at his lawyer's office giving media interviews. Nickerson said he had released Franzese to conduct legal business. John Jacobs, Franzese's lawyer, said he had received permission from the marshals to grant the interviews, but the deputy chief federal marshal in Brooklyn, Michael Pizzi, denied this.

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Franzese, 35, formerly of Brookville, had been allowed to live in a halfway house in Los Angeles for the past three months in order to raise \$14.75 million he owed the government. He was required to pay the \$3,500- to \$4,500-a-week cost of the federal marshals who were guarding him.

The unusual arrangement was all part of a complex plea-bargain under which Franzese agreed to plead guilty to charges of racketeering and income-tax conspiracy and to convince several of his associates also to plead guilty.

Jacobs, saying that "Michael isn't stupid," said Franzese didn't deliberately avoid paying the bills and had quickly moved to cover the bounced checks and the outstanding bills. Jacobs said that the mar-

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## 6 Charged in Racehorse Scam

By Robin Topping

Five owners and trainers of standardbred racehorses at New York tracks and one track veterinarian were indicted yesterday on charges that they conspired to kill racehorses to cash in on inflated insurance policies, law enforcement officials said.

A joint investigation by the Nassau County District Attorney, the state Racing and Wagering Board and the state Insurance Department revealed that at least nine horses were either destroyed, switched or shipped out of state between 1982 and 1985 to collect more than \$500,000 in insurance payments.

Four of the owner/trainers worked primarily at Roosevelt and Yonkers Raceways. The fifth worked primarily at Monticello Raceway, where the veterinarian was employed.

Nassau County District Attorney Denis Dillon said that in each case, the owner/trainer would buy a young and lightly raced standardbred horse valued at between \$500 and \$5,000 but would obtain insurance for anywhere from \$35,000 to \$94,000. Between two and nine months after the insurance was in effect, Dillon said, the horse's death was reported to the insurance company and then verified by the veteri-

arian charged in the case. Payment was then made.

In most cases, investigators said, the horses were killed. But in others, they suspect the horse was shipped out of state or switched with another horse.

"We consider the wanton destruction of horses for insurance purposes to be a serious and dastardly act," said Richard Corbisiero, chairman of the Racing and Wagering Board, which regulates state racing tracks. He said the licenses of the five owner/trainers have been suspended.

Assistant District Attorney Kitley Covill said officials had performed autopsies on three of the horses and had found no apparent cause of death. Autopsy documents filed by the veterinarian on horses not found by officials listed such causes of death as "mismanagement of feed" or "frosted grass" — possible causes of potentially fatal equine colic.

Five of the six individuals indicted were arrested yesterday and charged with first-degree insurance fraud, second-degree grand larceny and fifth-degree conspiracy. The sixth was sought on similar charges.

Charged are: Dr. Chris R. Aylesworth, 38, of White Lake; Patrick A. Barchi, 36, of 562 Windsor St., Westbury; Anthony P. Buffalino, 36, of 473 Canter-

bury St., Westbury; Salvatore Sparacino, 51, of 795 Regent Drive, Westbury; Edward G. Pines, Jr., 31, of upstate Rock Hill; and John P. Barchi, 43, of 6 Asbury Avenue, Westbury. All except Pines were arraigned before Nassau County Judge John Thorp and released in their own custody; Pines couldn't be located.

Joel Weiss, head of the District Attorney's Rackets Bureau, said an investigation is continuing and that it will widen to cover the thoroughbred racing industry. Weiss said the probe would also focus on a former employee of the New Jersey-based insurance company involved.

Timothy Rooney, Yonkers president, said: "This kind of thing is devastating for the whole industry. People who do this are a tremendous detriment to the majority of innocent people involved with the sport." Officials at Roosevelt and Monticello Raceway were not available for comment.

Marvin Kornberg, attorney for all but Aylesworth, denied any wrongdoing on the part of his clients. He said the horses all died of natural causes. David Cohen, attorney for Aylesworth, said, "My client adamantly denies the charges. He followed appropriate and acceptable veterinary procedures."

# Town Board Splits on Refuse Plant

By Michelle Slatalla

Two North Hempstead Town Board members made a rare, public break with the group yesterday by announcing opposition to building a garbage disposal plant anywhere in town because not enough is known to guarantee the plant will operate safely.

But local civic activists and Democrats immediately labeled the move by council members Joseph Guarino and Jerome Weinstein a political maneuver and said their opposition would not prevent the plant from being constructed.

"Guarino is trying to distance himself from the problem and make sure it will not be an issue this year in his

congressional campaign against [Robert] Mrazek [D-Centerport]," said Franklin Ornstein, North Hempstead Democratic leader. "Weinstein will be up for election next year, and this sounds like a backroom deal set up to take the heat off these two."

Both Guarino and Weinstein live in Port Washington, the community the town has targeted as the site for the proposed plant. At a public hearing last week, Port Washington residents vehemently opposed putting the plant in their area.

Guarino — who along with Weinstein originally supported the plant — denied that he was motivated by political considerations. "There are ques-

tions about the safety and health effects of this plant and I am not satisfied that those questions have been answered," he said. "I think that you'd better be sure of the safety before you start the process."

Weinstein — who issued a joint statement with Guarino — did not return phone calls yesterday.

The other three members of the all-Republican board — Gerard Cunningham, Charles Fuschillo and Supervisor John Kiernan — released a joint statement that said, "We are shocked at the flip-flop by Councilman Guarino and Councilman Weinstein on our resource-recovery project. Up to today, they had voted for and supported every element and step of this pro-

ject . . . The health and safety of our residents will be protected. If anyone believes otherwise, they are wrong."

Guarino said he had decided to wait to voice his concerns until after last week's public hearings. He said he was concerned that no one has been able to accurately gauge the level of dangerous substances, including dioxin, that would be emitted from the plant as it burned garbage.

Port Washington activists said they will continue to fight the plan to build the plant in their community, adding that they believe a plant should be built elsewhere, so the town will be able to close the Port Washington landfill by 1990 to comply with state law.

## Michael Franzese: Proudly His Father's Son

By Robert E. Kessler

Michael Franzese says he has been fighting the government for half his life, ever since his father was convicted — falsely, Franzese says — of bank robbery and sentenced to 50 years in prison.

And so, says Franzese, who was ordered to prison yesterday to begin serving a 10-year sentence for heading multimillion-dollar criminal schemes, "It'll almost be a relief to go to jail. How can you keep fighting the federal government even if you're guilty or innocent? It's become a grind that gets you worn out."

Before being ordered to prison, Franzese, 35, formerly of Brookville, spent an hour yesterday in his lawyer's office discussing his life — a life in which, government officials have charged, he has followed in the footsteps of his adoptive father, John, a reputed captain of organized-crime.

Franzese, who says he is a movie producer, denied that he is or has ever been a member of organized crime. "The only thing in 'The Godfather' that I've ever seen is those scenes of Italian American family life," he said. "I went to weddings like those in the movie. But everybody did."

Franzese said his father "never brought his business home." He knew John Franzese as a "loving man" who married his mother, Christina, when Michael was 3 years old, after she had divorced his natural father, Louis Grillo.

Until he was 18, Franzese said, he kept the name Michael Grillo. It probably helped shield him from too much attention both at elementary school in Garden City and at a parochial high school in Flushing, where he was a star shortstop on the baseball team and a halfback on the football team.

But there were moments. Franzese recalled once, when he was 14, chasing after a ball that had rolled away from the front of the family's home in Roslyn. A federal agent hiding down the street, he said, opened his jacket, pointed to a pistol and said, "This is for your father, if he gets out of line."

When Michael was a teenager, his father was indicted and convicted of bank robbery. That case led to Michael Franzese's first brush with the law. He picketed FBI headquarters in New York with other members of the Italian-American Civil Rights League while holding a sign reading, "My father is a victim of the FBI." Franzese got into a scuffle with 10 police officers and was

charged with harassment, but the charges were dropped, said his former attorney, Barry Slotnick.

Franzese entered Hofstra University, but dropped out after three years of pre-medical studies to help with his father's legal defense and to go into business for himself.

"My father was very upset," Franzese said. "He had plans to send me to Italy to study medicine."

Even federal officials familiar with Michael Franzese's career agree with that statement. They say that while in prison, John Franzese, whose nickname is "Sonny," had even assigned one of his associates to see to it that Michael was never involved in any organized-crime activities. But gradually, Michael Franzese became increasingly involved in illegal activities and showed a shrewd talent for making a profit, the federal sources contend. And in organized crime, where "earners" are the people who get true respect, Michael was a rising young star.

"Michael Franzese is, pure and simply, a capo in the Colombo organized-crime family," said Ed-

ward McDonald, head of the federal organized-crime strike force in Brooklyn.

Jeffrey Schaffler, deputy head of the U.S. Labor Department's New York Office of Labor Racketeering, said, "Michael wasn't targeted because he was Sonny's son. He was targeted because he and his organized-crime associates were milking a labor union."

Franzese said these stories are all federal myths. He was, he said, simply a success despite the fact that his books were constantly being subpoenaed and despite the fact that he had gone through four trials without a criminal conviction until last year.

After serving his current sentence, which will take from four to six years, Franzese said he wants to live in California and concentrate on a career in motion pictures. He has already produced three.

"I want to make peace with the government," he said. "I've given them their pound of flesh, so to speak. I want to start a new life."

## John Franzese's Hearing Delayed



John Franzese

A hearing to determine if John Franzese, a reputed captain in the Colombo organized-crime family, violated his parole by associating with known criminals has been postponed for two weeks because of a typographical error, officials said.

The parole hearing was adjourned yesterday because documents laying out the allegations against Franzese indicated that an undercover investigator saw him at a Jericho restaurant on Jan. 26. Law enforcement officials said that was a typographical error, that the actual date was Jan. 28.

Faced with the last-minute change, Franzese's attorney, Ira Friedman, requested the adjournment. Friedman said he needed more time to prepare his defense.

The adjournment was granted, federal officials confirmed.

An investigator working with the Nassau district attorney allegedly saw Franzese at Laina's Restaurant with a man who had just collected a payment from the investigator on an allegedly usurious \$3,000 loan, at 208 percent interest.

Franzese, 67, of 47 Shrub Hollow Rd., Roslyn, has been incarcerated at the Metropolitan Correctional Center in Manhattan since he was taken into custody in April. He has been on parole since June, 1984, following his sentence on a 1967 bank robbery and conspiracy conviction. Friedman said Franzese will remain in jail until completion of the hearing, now scheduled to begin the week of July 18.

## Judge Orders Franzese Directly to Jail

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shals had complained about the bills because of their embarrassment when a television news report showed two of Franzese's guards allowing him to drive a car by himself and leaving him alone for 15 minutes while they bought lunch.

Earlier in the day, Franzese had argued that he needed the six-month delay in order to raise the \$14.75 million in restitution and forfeitures he had agreed to pay as part of the plea bargain. Franzese said he would raise the money if allowed to finish a series of deals, including a contract to produce 12 movies in Poland for the Polish government; a movie about Evel Knievel;

the start-up of a motion-picture film-processing company; a luxury-automobile leasing firm; and the sale of the soundtrack of one of the movies he had produced, "Knights of the City."

"This is my opportunity to change things," Franzese said in a statement at the morning session. "It makes sense for the government. It makes sense for the American people. It makes sense for me."

In arguing against the six-month delay, Bernstein had said that the government did not have the ability to constantly monitor Franzese's business activities to ensure that they would all be conducted legally. Franzese said that every deal

he was working on was legitimate. Jermyn said that it was obvious Franzese has hidden assets.

Defense attorney Jacobs said, "It's obvious that the government never really wanted to collect the money, but just wanted the headlines," and said he would advise Franzese to consider backing out of the plea-bargain arrangement.

In related developments, Nickerson sentenced two of Franzese's associates. Frank Cestaro, 46, of 7 Central Ave., Amityville, received 5 years after pleading guilty to racketeering and conspiracy. Walter Doner, 53, of 321 Southport St., Ronkonkoma, received 18 months for pleading guilty to the same charges.