

Rev. Al Vexed by Video

HBO to air tape from 1983 showing talk of drug money

By Ron Howell
STAFF WRITER

HBO tonight is scheduled to air a 1983 videotape of the Rev. Al Sharpton meeting with an undercover FBI agent posing as a drug dealer looking to launder money from the sale of cocaine.

In the tape, Sharpton appears to nod in agreement when the agent offers him a cut from future drug sales, although Sharpton yesterday emphatically denied he was agreeing to any illegal deal.

The cable television show, "Real Sports With Bryant Gumbel," revisits the minister's past ties to mob figure Michael Franzese and his work as an FBI informant in the mid-1980s.

In January 1988, Newsday reported that Sharpton agreed to turn over to federal agents information on boxing promoter Don King, as well as on reputed organized crime figures and black leaders. Later that year, Newsday reported that Sharpton had worked with the FBI to locate then-fugitive black revolutionary Assata Shakur, now known to be living in Cuba.

An angry Sharpton said yesterday that the HBO airing of the videotape is part of a conspiracy to derail his bid for the presidency. Sharpton said he was "one of the few people" in the United States questioning President George W. Bush's homeland security plans and otherwise challenging the Republican president in an aggressive way.

"This is dirty tricks at its best," Sharpton said.

Sharpton also disputed HBO's assertion that the videotape with Victor Quintana, a federal agent posing as a

drug dealer, was newsworthy. He said the tape was shown during a Senate hearing 10 years ago on corruption in boxing.

In the tape, a cowboy hat-wearing Sharpton is heard to ask Quintana, "So what kind of time limit are we dealing with, with this?"

"The coke?" Quintana asked.

"Yeah," Sharpton said.

At another point, Quintana says he can get \$35,000 for each kilogram of cocaine and "every kilogram we bring in, \$3,500 to you."

"How does that sound?" Quintana asked Sharpton.

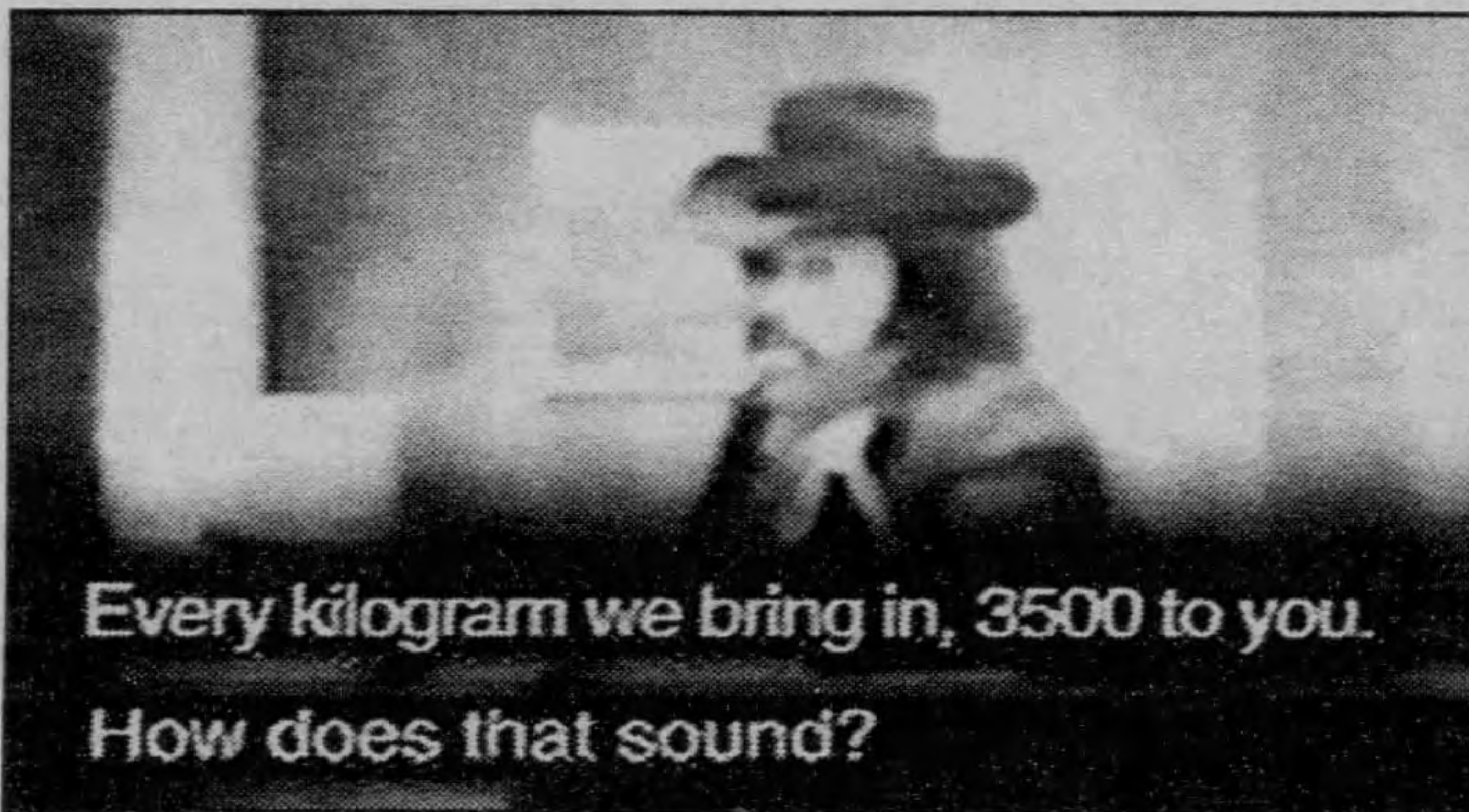
Sharpton nods his head up and down, and then is heard to say, "I hear you."

Sharpton said yesterday that he was afraid of Quintana. He said he was lured into the meeting with Quintana on the pretext of setting up a professional boxing match or a concert. Sharpton said that when Quintana started to talk about drugs, he began to wonder if he would get out of the meeting alive.

"I don't know if this guy has got a gun in his desk," Sharpton said yesterday. "I'm trying to get out of here. I don't know where this is going."

According to the HBO report, federal agents later confronted Sharpton with the videotape, and he asked what he would have to do to stay out of jail. Thereafter Sharpton began a five-year period of assisting the FBI as an informer, HBO reported.

Sharpton denied he was an informer, calling the assertion "a lie." He said the government's initial motivation was to "bust Don King and I... for political rea-



Rev. Al Sharpton, above, watches himself in an FBI surveillance tape as part of an item on HBO's "Real Sports With Bryant Gumbel." At left, an image from the 1983 tape shows a cowboy-hat wearing Sharpton listening to a pitch from an agent posing as a drug dealer.

sons." He denied turning over information on the boxing promoter.

Franzese, who was with the Colombo organized crime family, told HBO that King "was a player" connected to the mob in Cleveland, and that Sharp-

ton was a go-between in a meeting between Franzese, Quintana, Sharpton and King.

Franzese said he did not know at the time that Quintana was a federal agent.

Moussaoui Roommate Pleads Guilty

By Patricia Hurtado
STAFF WRITER

A Saudi college student who briefly roomed with alleged 20th hijacker Zacarias Moussaoui pleaded guilty yesterday to making false statements to FBI agents both before and after the September terrorist attacks.

Hussein al-Attas, 24, who has been held by federal authorities as a so-called material witness for the last 10 months, told U.S. District Court Judge Michael Mukasey that he lied repeatedly to agents in August 2001 and again on Sept. 11.

Al-Attas, a bearded, diminutive man, pleaded guilty to seven separate crimes. He faces up to 6 months in prison when he is sentenced by Mukasey on Sept. 4.

Moussaoui, a French citizen of Moroccan descent, was arrested on immigration charges in August after he aroused the suspicions of flight school instructors because of his insistence about learning to fly jumbo jets despite poor skills. He had attended the Airman Flight School in Norman, Okla., and after flunking out, he enrolled in Minnesota flight school.

Moussaoui is the only person to have been charged

with conspiring to help the 19 hijackers who commandeered commercial jets and slammed them into the World Trade Center, the Pentagon and a Pennsylvania field. Although he is slated to go to trial in federal court in Virginia, he attempted to enter a guilty plea last week.

Al-Attas, who was born in Riyadh to Yemeni parents, described meeting Moussaoui at an Oklahoma mosque last year. His lawyer said he briefly shared an apartment with Moussaoui near the University of Oklahoma, where he was studying mathematics and engineering.

He told Mukasey that he agreed to drive Moussaoui to Minnesota during the summer vacation and that the two also planned a road trip around the country in August 2001. "I had planned to travel with him to visit New York, Colorado and possibly

Los Angeles before returning," al-Attas said, adding that, eventually, plans to visit Colorado and California were dropped.

Al-Attas said he also planned to make a trip to Pakistan at Moussaoui's urging to meet Islamic scholars, but he told agents he wanted to go to Pakistan to investigate medical care for a sick relative. He also admitted lying about knowing Moussaoui's true name, which he said he had seen on a luggage tag.

Al-Attas was first questioned on Aug. 17 after he and Moussaoui were arrested as they left their hotel room in Eagan, Minn. While Moussaoui remained in custody, al-Attas was released but re-arrested on Sept. 11. He admitted yesterday to lying to agents during this second interview when he denied "having

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Insurance Battle May Stall WTC Site Work

By Graham Rayman
STAFF WRITER

The disclosure by Port Authority officials that they would consider renegotiating the World Trade Center lease with Larry Silverstein raises the possibility that the developer's insurance battle will affect the timeline for designing a new site.

Port Authority officials disclosed the possibility of renegotiation after public criticism over the weekend focused on the fact that the site plans released last week all replace the 11 million square feet of office space, as required by the developer's lease with the agency.

Last night, officials with Lower Manhattan Development Corp. said they hoped to release two or three revised site plans by the middle of this fall instead of the original deadline of September. By year's end, a final plan should be ready, said businessman Roland Betts, a member of the LMDC board.

But timing remains uncertain because Silverstein may be not able to renegotiate the trade center lease until after he learns how much he will receive from his consortium of insurance companies, money he

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