

Juror made contact with NYC trial witness

by UPI

NEW YORK -- Lawyers said they will seek to void a guilty verdict in the deaths of two New York firefighters because a juror urged a witness to contact him on Facebook.

Attorneys for Cesar Rios contend the juror's actions during the trial constituted an improper conduct that could have tainted deliberations in the so-called Black Sunday trial earlier this year.

"It interferes with due process," Neal Comer, who represents the company that owns the Bronx building where firefighters Curtis Meyran and John Bellew were killed in 2005, told Newsday.

Rios was the manager of the building and was convicted of failing to take steps to remove illegal walls in the premises.

Newsday said Wednesday that the defense team alleges the juror sent a computer message to the witness during the trial asking him to keep in touch, apparently in order to strike up a friendship, and urged him to join Facebook.

The newspaper said sources believe the witness was one of the firefighters who testified in the trial. The witness reported the contact to prosecutors who informed the judge and the defense.

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