



Dotcom associates' fears revealed

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Conversations intercepted by the FBI showed associates of alleged internet pirate Kim Dotcom were worried he would run off with the firm's money if they got into trouble.

Their fears were made public, as the German millionaire was denied bail in the North Shore District Court yesterday. He was remanded in custody until February 22 for an extradition hearing.

His lawyer says Dotcom, who has diabetes, a slipped disc and hypertension, will appeal the decision.

The case has sparked political controversy and has raised questions over why Dotcom, who had a criminal record, was allowed permanent residency.

But Prime Minister John Key said yesterday that on the facts known then he would have agreed with the decision to grant him residency. He confirmed government ministers were not kept in the loop over the FBI investigation until just before the raid on Dotcom's Coatesville mansion.

In the judge's decision to keep Dotcom, 38, in custody, Judge David McNaughton explained he believed Dotcom posed a significant flight risk.

Documents provided by the FBI showed his co-accused – at least at one time – believed the same.

In a 2007 Skype conversation between head programmer Bram van der Kolk, 29, and co-founder Mathias Ortmann, 40, the pair discussed their fears about Dotcom.

"I mean if Kim was a solid guy with a good financial background and being safe with his money, I wouldn't mind, but the current situation is a bit risky in my opinion," van der Kolk said.

Ortmann replied: "The good thing is he is operationally dependent on us – he cannot sneak away with the money."

Van der Kolk: "What if the s... really hits the fan – would he take the last little bit of money and take off? He's good at that."

Ortmann: "True, but with his spending now days he will attempt to get the s... off the fan, and that's what he needs us for."

The document was released just before Ortmann, van der Kolk and their third alleged co-conspirator, Finn Batato, 38, were brought into court for their own bail hearing. They learn today if they have got bail.

While Crown lawyer Anne Toohey opposed bail for each of the men, she was particularly concerned about the flight risk posed by Ortmann and Batato, who she said had few links to New Zealand.

The US is seeking to extradite the men to face charges of conspiring to commit racketeering, conspiring to commit money laundering, copyright infringement, and aiding and abetting copyright infringement over the internet through the website Megaupload.