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BUJU'S ATTORNEY,
DAVID MARKUS

MISTRIAL FOR BUJU

by Dre Weston

INTERNATIONAL MUSIC STAR BUJU BANTON CAUGHT A HUGE BREAK IN HIS DRUG TRIAL IN FEDERAL COURT IN TAMPA. HHW BRINGS YOU ALL THE DETAILS, INCLUDING WORDS FROM BUJU'S LAWYER, WHO TELLS US WHAT HAPPENS NEXT FOR GARGAMEL.

Dancehall music icon Buju Banton scored a huge victory in his federal drug trial after a judge declared a mistrial on September 27th. This, after a 12-member jury failed to agree on a verdict after three days of deliberations at the U.S. Courthouse in Tampa. The popular Jamaican DJ (born Mark Myrie) was facing as many as 20 years behind bars, on charges of conspiring to buy more than five kilo's of cocaine from an undercover law enforcement officer, and for carrying a firearm during the course of a drug trafficking crime in Sarasota, Florida last December. He was the target of a sting operation. After being arrested at his home in Tamarac, FL, Buju pleaded not guilty to the charge and was shipped to Tampa to await his trial. He didn't seek bail in Miami because he knew he would be held by immigration officials as soon as he was released.

Shortly after news of his arrest

broke, surveillance footage of a man authorities believed to be Buju, inspecting cocaine during a drug meeting with an informant and undercover officer, landed online. And though the situation looked grim, many fans and industry people refused to believe that the Grammy-nominated reggae music legend could have had any part in trying to purchase the cocaine. In court, jurors heard wiretapped conversations between Buju and the informant, Alexander Johnson, as they discussed money and drug shipments, which during his testimony, Buju explained was merely his way of trying to impress Johnson. Johnson himself told jurors that Buju never gave him money to buy the drugs. Two other men pleaded guilty in connection with the case, but Buju has maintained his innocence, even deciding against seeking a plea deal with the government.

"We've had the first trial, and the

government did it's best to get Mr. Myrie found guilty and sent to jail for the next 20 years, and they didn't accomplish that," said Buju's lawyer, David Oscar Markus, who spoke with HHW exclusively, following the jury's ruling. "Now we have to gear up for the next trial and hopefully beat them." As for how Buju was holding up in light of the good news, Markus explained, "He feels really good. He's optimistic, he's hopeful. This was a huge fight. The government generally wins over ninety-five percent of their cases, and they didn't win this one. We're appreciative of all the support we've gotten from the fans and the community. Now we just need to gear up for another trial." At press time, a bail hearing was to be held October 6, and if/when Buju is released, he would most likely be confined to his Tamarac residence, and would not be allowed to travel to his home in Jamaica or tour. A new trial is expected to begin in December.