

OFFICIALS SAY BROTHERS WERE AT CENTER OF GANG 2 BROWNS WERE SLAIN

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The burly, intimidating **Brown** brothers from Detroit's east side formed the nucleus of Best Friends, the reputed murder- for-hire gang formed four years ago, according to officials close to an investigation of the gang.

But fortune has not been kind to the **Browns** . Within a week in December 1986, **Ezra** , 24, and Gregory, 22, were shot to death. Their killings remain unsolved.

Reginald, 33, the eldest brother, is serving a life sentence for the September 1987 killing of associate Steve Roussell and wounding of another man.

And Terrance, 20, the youngest, is awaiting trial on a first-degree murder charge. He is charged with killing rival James Lamont, 30, as he sat in a Suzuki Sidekick outside the St. Regis Hotel in the New Center area on March 16.

Lamont is believed to have been a rising cocaine dealer who raided Best Friends' membership to build up his own forces.

Defense lawyer Paul Curtis has denied any link between Terrance **Brown** and Best Friends, even the other **Browns** .

"There's nothing to it," Curtis said, contradicting information in police files and from a woman who identified herself as Mrs. **Brown** -- the mother of all four men.

"Those are my boys," the woman said when reached by telephone at the **Brown** house on the east side. "But I don't know nothing about no Best Friends. My boys are good."

Curtis said he was concentrating on defending Terrance **Brown** .

"The police are going to say what they're going to say. The newspapers are going to say what they're going to say," he said.

Terrance **Brown** has no previous record, but the three other **Browns** had been accused of crimes involving drugs and violence.

Before his murder conviction, Reginald **Brown** was acquitted in the September 1986 shooting death of Carlton Journey, 19, and wounding of Pamela Robinson, 25. He also was a suspect in the May 1987 shooting death of Kirt Levy, 25, and wounding of William Miles, 24, but the case was dismissed.

Ezra Brown had been arrested along with an associate and charged with stealing a Cadillac Eldorado in August 1983, but the case was dismissed. In April 1982, he pleaded guilty to attempted possession of marijuana with intent to deliver. He was sentenced to one year probation and community service, violated probation and was sent to jail for six months. He was subsequently slain and his homicide remains unsolved.

Gregory **Brown** pleaded guilty to attempted possession of marijuana with intent to deliver after his arrest in July 1985. He was slain while on two years' probation.

CUTLINE:

The **Brown** Brothers

The nucleus of Best Friends, the reputed murder-for-hire gang, are, from left: Reginald, 33, serving a life sentence; Terrance, 20, charged with murder; and Gregory, 22, who was shot to death. Not pictured is the fourth brother, **Ezra** , 24, who was shot to death.

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