

## ALLEGED LEADER OF KILL-FOR-HIRE GANG IS ACCUSED BROWN IS SOUGHT IN 4 EAST SIDE SLAYINGS

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CONTRIBUTED

Reginald (Rockin' Reggie) Brown, described as a **leader of** a reputed murder-for-hire Detroit drug **gang** , was charged Thursday in the executions **of** three men and a 3-year-old girl.

Brown has not been arrested, but police are searching for him.

"There are four people dead -- we're talking about a mass murder here," said George Ward, chief assistant in the Wayne County Prosecutor's Office. "We want him pretty bad."

After several witnesses identified Brown from photographs Thursday afternoon, investigators went to the home **of** Magistrate Richard Halloran Jr. **of** 36th District Court, who signed the warrant charging Brown with four counts **of** first- degree murder and use **of** a firearm during a felony.

On Saturday, Brown allegedly walked past several onlookers -- exchanging pleasantries -- and then opened fire at people on the porch **of** a home on Buckingham Street near Mack.

Alfred Austin, 26, was shot first. Then the killer eliminated two witnesses, Harry Roper, 24, and Lawrence Gainey, 23. Investigators believe the little girl, Lori Roper, was killed by a stray bullet.

Police said the target was Austin, who had been charged in Kentucky with federal weapons violations and was considering a deal with the government in exchange for information.

Austin's lawyer said federal agents wanted him to inform on Terrance (Boogaloo) Brown, the younger brother **of** Reginald Brown and also a reputed **leader of** the Best Friends **gang** . Austin, the lawyer said, had made no decision on the deal.

A federal official in Detroit said Austin told the hierarchy **of** Best Friends about the deal in what could have been a misguided display **of** loyalty.

Best Friends rose to power in the mid-1980s and appears to be re-emerging with the Browns as **leaders** , investigators have said.

Reginald Brown was convicted **of** murder in 1989, but Recorder's Court Judge George Crockett III ordered a new trial this year and freed Brown on bond in February. The Michigan Court **of** Appeals revoked Brown's bond in March, but he **is** still at large.

Terrance Brown was acquitted in the 1989 slaying **of** a rival outside the St. Regis Hotel in the New Center area.

Investigators believe that the **gang** initially muscled and shot its way into east side narcotics trafficking in the 1980s. Rather than as dealers, members **of** Best Friends were known first as enforcers and debt collectors for distributors. They are suspected in dozens **of** slayings.

Best Friends was closely allied with imprisoned drug lord Richard (White Boy Rick) Wershe and Richard (Maserati Rick) Carter, a dealer who was shot to death in a Detroit hospital bed.

If business called for it, even the elimination **of** friends was carried out, said investigators and others who followed their careers.

Austin was one such friend, investigators said.

Staff writers Roger Chesley and Joe Swickard contributed to this report.

Caption: Photo

: Reginald Brown \*\*\*

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