

## LOCAL TODAY

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DETROIT

U.S. won't seek death in drug, murder case

The U.S. Attorney's Office in Detroit won't seek the death penalty for **Thelmon Stuckey III**, who is accused of the 1996 killing of a former Detroit police officer turned suspected drug dealer.

Assistant U.S. Attorney Michael Buckley said Wednesday the Justice Department notified his office of the decision last week and that he relayed it to the trial judge on Tuesday. He said the Justice Department doesn't divulge its reasoning in death penalty cases.

**Stuckey**, 34, allegedly belonged to a large-scale, violent Detroit drug gang. He's accused of killing Ricardo Darbins, 28, in 1996 to prevent Darbins from talking to federal agents about **Stuckey**'s activities. **Stuckey** now faces a maximum penalty of up to life in prison if convicted of the charge.

The case is expected to go to trial early next year.

**Stuckey**'s lawyer, Anthony Chambers of Detroit, said he is pleased with the decision, adding: "Mr. **Stuckey** is wrongly accused and the proofs are woefully lacking."

Ashcroft authorized the death penalty in February for three other men facing drug and murder charges in Detroit federal court. Last month, a federal jury in Detroit refused to impose the death penalty in another drug murder case.

By David Ashenfelter

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