

DEATH PENALTY REQUEST MAY BE WITHDRAWN

Detroit Free Press (MI) - Wednesday, September 14, 1994

Author: JIM SCHAEFER Free Press Staff Writer

Federal prosecutors in Detroit want to withdraw a **death penalty** case against a reputed leader of Best Friends, a murder-for-hire gang that ruthlessly ruled the city's drug world in the mid- to late 1980s.

Reginald (Rockin' Reggie) Brown, a suspect in the 1992 shooting **deaths** of three adults and a 3-year-old girl, would have been the first person tried in Michigan under a 1988 federal law that allows capital punishment in drug-relating killings.

His trial was scheduled to begin Monday in U.S. District Court. But it has been indefinitely postponed. The government likely still will pursue drug charges against Brown.

He has been in jail awaiting trial.

Assistant U.S. Attorney William Soisson said Tuesday that his office is pursuing new evidence that Brown's involvement in the slayings **may** not have been as serious as once thought.

"He **may** have still **be** involved in it, but not **be** the actual shooter," he said.

Brown's attorneys recently filed an alibi with the court, as required in **death penalty** cases. They said two people, including a convicted member of Best Friends, would testify that Brown was in New York City at the time of the murders, attending an NBA playoff game between the Knicks and Chicago Bulls.

Soisson said he didn't believe the alibi at this point but said new evidence of someone else being the gunman had changed his mind on the **death penalty** .

Four other members of Best Friends still are scheduled to **be** tried this fall in cases that carry the **death penalty** upon conviction. Law enforcement officials have said that Best Friends was responsible for as many as 80 murders.

Memo: SEE ALSO METRO EDITION, Page 2B

Edition: METRO FINAL

Section: NWS

Page: 2B

Record Number: 9402020627

Copyright (c) 1994 Detroit Free Press