

RETRIAL MOVING TO FLINT FOR COPS CHARGED IN STING

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Author: JOE SWICKARD Free Press Staff Writer

The **retrial** of Detroit area police officers on federal cocaine conspiracy and money laundering charges will be moved **to Flint** because of news reports of an FBI probe involving Detroit City Councilman Gilbert Hill.

U.S. District Judge Barbara Hackett ordered the rare change of venue Monday, noting weekend news accounts that federal agents were checking into Hill's handling of the investigation of a drug-related killing while he was a Detroit police inspector.

Hackett's ruling marks the first time in five years that a change of venue has been granted in a Detroit federal trial. In 1987, the **retrial** of laid-off autoworker Ronald Ebens, charged with civil rights violations **for** the fatal beating of Vincent Chin, was moved **to Cincinnati**.

Hill is not charged in the police conspiracy case, but he has been closely associated with the two main defendants, former homicide investigator Jimmy Harris and Willie Clyde Volsan, the father of Mayor Coleman Young's niece, Cathy Volsan Curry. Volsan and Harris allegedly helped recruit police officers **to** ride shotgun on drug and money laundering shipments. But the supposed drug dealers were actually undercover FBI agents.

Hill met twice with the phony dealers, but has said he broke off the contact because he feared a setup.

A jury acquitted three officers and a civilian in the case, but was unable **to** reach verdicts on Volsan, Harris and two other police officers also facing **retrial**.

Defense attorney Timothy Murphy said that **Flint** -area jurors, while exposed **to** Detroit newspapers and newscasts, would not be as sensitive **to** the latest Hill news reports.

Although his office had argued against a change of venue, U.S. Attorney Stephen Markman said Hackett's ruling "is not an unreasonable decision. We really have no strong feelings on this."

The first drug conspiracy trial ended this summer with the jury acquitting several minor figures, but deadlocking on Harris and Volsan.

Jurors in **retrial**, scheduled **to** begin Nov. 11, will be drawn from four counties surrounding **Flint**.

The recent news stories involve Hill's actions during the investigation into the killing of 13-year-old Damion Lucas in Detroit in 1985.

Two convicted drug dealers, Johnny Curry -- who is Volsan's son-in-law -- and Richard (White Boy Rick) Wershe charged that Hill supplied them information about the investigation and impeded it.

Hill has denied the allegations, and labeled them a rehash of earlier rumors spread by dope men eager **to** get out of prison. He said the allegations are part of continuing FBI efforts **to** discredit him and other black officials.

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