

Violence Mars L.A. TIMES Hearing for 13 ~4/76 N.Y. Panthers

NEW YORK (AP) — A bomb-plot hearing involving 13 Black Panthers was disrupted Tuesday for the second straight day as a courtroom melee spread into a corridor amid shouting, kicking and fisticuffs.

Two court attendants and a detective suffered minor injuries. A defense attorney claimed one of the Panthers was beaten with a blackjack. A former defendant, in court as a spectator, was arrested after police said he kicked the detective in the chest.

As he had on Monday, State Supreme Court Justice John M. Murtagh recessed the pretrial hearing for a cooling-off period, while spectators shook their fists and screamed insults at him.

After the scuffling had subsided and the courtroom was cleared, Murtagh returned to the bench to hear a defense lawyer express concern over the physical safety of the Panther defendants.

Whose Safety?

Murtagh asked: "Of the defendants? A report has been made to me that two court officers have been injured."

Several outbursts from defendants marked an afternoon session of the hearing. It got under way after two of the defendants, Richard Moore, 24, a self-employed painter, and Joan Bird, 20, a nursing student, complained they were beaten by court officers during the earlier disorders.

The 13 defendants are under indictment on charges of conspiring to murder policemen and to bomb police stations, railroad facilities and department stores, as well as possession of dangerous weapons. Maximum penalty on all counts would be 15 years in prison.