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Use of TV In Panther Trial Sought

NEW YORK, March 23 (UPI)—The New York district attorney's office said today that "in the interest of a speedy trial" for 13 Black Panthers arrested almost a year ago in a bombing plot it will ask the court to resume pretrial hearings with the defendants watching over closed circuit television from outside the courtroom.

The motion will be made within the next two days before State Supreme Court Justice John M. Murtagh, who recessed the hearings indefinitely Feb. 25 after repeated courtroom disruptions during four weeks of testimony on admissible evidence. No jury has been chosen.

Assistant District Attorney Jeffrey Weinstein disclosed the plan as the U.S. Supreme Court refused to hear the claim of 12 of the 13 defendants that they were being held in jail under unduly high bail. The 13th defendant is free in \$100,000 bail furnished by supporters.

Defense attorney Gerald Lefcourt bitterly criticized the high court's action and said the defense would oppose the television plan as a violation of the Sixth Amendment guaranteeing a defendant the right to confront his accuser. Keeping the defendants out of the courtroom would also prejudice the jury against them and deny them closehand contact with their attorneys, he said.

"It's a total outrage," Lefcourt said. "There's no precedent for it in any case in this country."

Weinsten said he and fellow prosecutor Joseph A. Phillips will demonstrate to Murtagh the plan for the defendants to watch over television sets in or near their detention cells the proceedings recorded by cameras trained on witnesses and possibly the judge in the courtroom a floor above.

Special telephones that signal with lights rather than bells would link the defendants and their attorneys.

The Panthers were arrested last April 2 in an alleged plot to bomb department stores, police stations, railroad tracks and the Bronx Botanical Gardens last Easter. All except Mrs. Afeni Shakur have been unable to make bail of \$50,000 to \$100,000 and have been jailed since then.