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Friend of Defendant Turns Witness in Police Slaying

By JOSEPH P. FRIED

Less than two hours before a New York City police officer was murdered, one of the men later charged with the execution-style shooting drove past the officer's car and pointed him out to a friend, the friend testified yesterday.

"I said, 'For what purpose are you going to kill a cop?' " the friend, Debra Scott, said yesterday in State Supreme Court in Queens.

" 'I am getting paid to kill a cop,' " she quoted the defendant, Scott Cobb, as having responded.

Ms. Scott, 26 years old, appeared for the prosecution as the third week of testimony began in the trial of Mr. Cobb, 25, and two other men charged with killing the rookie police officer, Edward Byrne, 22, while he was guarding the Queens home of a drug-case witness on Feb. 26, 1988.

The prosecution contends that Mr. Cobb and three other men - Philip Copeland, 23, David McClary, 23, and Todd Scott, 20, - carried out the murder at the order of a high-level drug dealer seeking to retaliate against the police for having been jailed in a gun-possession case. Mr. Copeland and Mr. Scott are on trial with Mr. Cobb; Mr. McClary will be tried later. Mr. Scott is not related to Ms. Scott.

Ms. Scott, constantly fidgeting in court, said she had been a girlfriend of Mr. Cobb in 1986 and ran into him in their South Jamaica neighborhood the night before the slaying. She said she was still with Mr. Cobb shortly after 1:30 A.M. the morning of the killing when "Scott Cobb said he would take me past the police he was going to kill."

Mr. Cobb, she said, drove her past 107th Avenue and Inwood Street, where she saw an officer sitting in a police car, apparently reading. She said Mr. Cobb had told her that he had first considered killing the officer by throwing a hand grenade at him, but had decided to "blow his brains out instead."

Mr. Cobb drove away and dropped her elsewhere, she said. Prosecutors say that at 3:30 A.M. Mr. Cobb returned to the officer's car with at least two of the other defendants and that one of them shot the officer in the head.

Ms. Scott quoted Mr. Cobb as having told her that the direction "to kill a cop" had come from Howard (Pappy) Mason, a reputed drug dealer who prosecutors say ordered the slaying. Mr. Mason has not been charged with the crime and has denied involvement.

Defense lawyers sought to impugn Ms. Scott's credibility by bringing out that she made some statements in court yesterday that she had not made to detectives who first questioned her several days after the killing.

Ms. Scott said she was now living in "another part of the country," having been relocated by the authorities.

