

Girl, 4, beaten and raped

Fridays Sun

Her 15-year-old cousin, who was baby-sitting her, is charged

By Chris Yakaitis Sun Reporter Originally published June 22, 2006, 10:16 PM EDT

A 4-year-old girl clung to life Thursday after, according to police, she was brutally beaten and raped in a Northeast Baltimore apartment. Her 15-year-old cousin, who had been baby-sitting her, has been charged.

Court documents say the teen, Ronald Hinton, had called 911 to report that the toddler had been bouncing on a bed and fell. Police found her face-down and unconscious on the floor, bleeding from the mouth and nose.

Investigators said they later determined that the girl had been sexually assaulted, beaten with a belt and bitten three times Wednesday afternoon. They charged Hinton as an adult with first-degree rape, assault and child abuse.

"Anytime something happens to a young child, especially a young child, it's very tragic," said Col. Fred H. Bealefeld III, chief of detectives. "This is another tragedy."

Police said the girl was in critical condition Thursday night at Johns Hopkins Hospital. According to the court documents, she suffered a brain injury called a subdural hematoma and displayed little brain activity when she was brought in Wednesday afternoon.

Hinton, who police said had no juvenile arrest record, was held without bail at the Central Booking and Intake Center. He is scheduled for a bail hearing Friday. According to court records, Hinton told police he was "sorry for doing it and that it was dumb."

Hinton is the youngest son of a Baltimore police trainee who died in New York City under suspicious circumstances in 1992.

Relatives of the victim declined to comment Thursday. Hinton's family could not be reached for comment.

Court records indicated that Hinton had been baby-sitting the girl and her 7-year-old brother since Monday. Police had no evidence that the brother was harmed, Bealefeld said.

Bealefeld said police believe Hinton had been left alone to baby-sit children before. "I don't believe there's any indication that [the family] suspected he was capable of this," he said. According to court records, Hinton initially told police he was making breakfast for the young girl when "he heard a thump" and ran upstairs to check on her. He said he washed blood off her face, covered her in a comforter and carried her downstairs.

But later that evening, Hinton confessed to homicide detectives that he had sexually assaulted the girl, bitten her on the chest and thigh and slapped her repeatedly in the face, court papers said. At one point he chased her downstairs, carried her back to an upstairs bedroom, got a black belt from a closet and beat her with it, he allegedly told police.

The court documents described the sexual and physical assaults as a "continuing course of conduct."

Neighbors interviewed Thursday were unwilling to divulge their names when describing Hinton.

The Sun reported on the mysterious death of Sean Hinton in 1997. The Baltimore Afro-American also did a story on the family. That confirmed that Ronald was

Sean Hinton's son and was a year old when his father died, just as the father was about to complete his training for the Baltimore police.

He disappeared on Oct. 24, 1992. His body was found in the East River near Battery Park in New York 10 days later, but police did not know why he had traveled there.

A New York medical examiner ruled the death a suicide, but his family contested the ruling for several years.