

# Suspect to be held pending Friday hearing

By JOHN E. HURLEY  
and RAYMOND A. WITTEK  
ADVANCE STAFF WRITERS

Andre Rand's defense lawyer claimed yesterday he has "solid evidence" that the 43-year-old drifter was not the person who was seen with 12-year-old Jennifer Schweiger on July 9, the day she was last seen on a Westerloigh street and at the Staten Island Developmental Center, Willowbrook.

"I'm saying that he wasn't the person with her and had absolutely nothing to do with her murder," said Jerome Giovinnazzo of West Brighton, Rand's court-appointed attorney.

Giovinnazzo's statement came outside the Stapleton Criminal Court room where Rand, bearded and erect — far different than in

previous appearances — was officially declared mentally competent to stand trial.

Giovinnazzo said he agreed with the finding of the two Kings County Medical Center psychiatrists, saying Rand was lucid during their conversations.

Rand stood silently without expression during his appearance before Judge Michael Brennan, surrounded by a shield of uniformed court officers.

Seated in the courtroom directly behind him were Jennifer Schweiger's parents and relatives of Holly Ann Hughes and Alice Pereira, two other children whose disappearances are now being linked to Rand, although not officially.

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ADVANCE PHOTO/IVING SILVERSTEIN

A SWAT team police officer stand before the crowd outside the Stapleton Criminal Courthouse.

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