

Chesimard attorney found dead

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NEW YORK—Defense attorneys for JoAnne Chesimard were stunned yesterday to learn of the death of chief defense counsel Stanley S. Cohen, found dead in his lower Manhattan apartment Tuesday.

"I think we're kind of in a state of shock at this time," said Lewis Myers of the National Conference of Black Lawyers yesterday.

Myers said the rest of the defense team representing Mrs. Chesimard, the Black Liberation Army member on trial in New Brunswick, N.J., for the 1973 murder of a state trooper, probably would meet Monday to discuss Cohen's loss.

The 51-year-old New York attorney was found face down in the kitchen of his apart-

ment at 199 W. 10th St. Tuesday by a son, city police reported.

A Manhattan medical examiner who performed an autopsy on Cohen's body yesterday said it was "pretty badly decomposed," indicating the lawyer died at least five days before his body was discovered.

"We haven't established any definite cause of death as of yet," said Dr. Faruk Presswalla, "but it's not something suspicious."

Presswalla ruled out a heart attack or obvious foul play such as a stabbing or gunshot wound, as the cause of death. Cohen, however, could have died from an overdose of alcohol possibly combined with other drugs, the doctor speculated. He said the autopsy revealed the attorney was a "heavy drinker."

Presswalla said the exact cause of death

would not be known until a toxicological examination of Cohen's organs is completed. He said the results would not be available for at least a week because of "a shortage of personnel" in the medical examiner's office.

The city police report on the discovery of Cohen's body provided few details, but Presswalla said it was his understanding there was no evidence of a disturbance in the lawyer's apartment. He said he believed Cohen lived alone.

Cohen, who successfully defended the 29-year-old Mrs. Chesimard against a city bank robbery charge earlier this year, became a member of the suspect's New Jersey defense team in February when he temporarily was admitted to the state bar there.