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## Dealer says he regrets kidnap in 'Alpha Dog' case

By GREG RISLING – 14 hours ago

SANTA BARBARA, Calif. (AP) — An admitted marijuana supplier testified Tuesday that he and two friends grabbed a 15-year-old boy off a street nine years ago but said a cohort acting without his knowledge later killed the boy whose slaying inspired the movie "Alpha Dog."

Jesse James Hollywood told a packed courtroom that he didn't orchestrate the killing of Nicholas Markowitz and regretted an impulsive decision to take the teen.

"I just feel terrible about everything that happened," Hollywood said while being questioned by his attorney. "I feel terrible for the Markowitz family. I feel terrible that anyone would think I could do something like that."

Hollywood, who has pleaded not guilty to kidnap and murder, said the teen was abducted in an escalating dispute over a drug debt with the boy's older half-brother. Hollywood said Ben Markowitz owed him \$2,500 — more than twice the amount prosecutors have cited.

Hollywood, 29, said he wanted to find Ben Markowitz to end their feud and there was "no purpose or plan" in abducting Nicholas. He and two friends were driving in a van when they saw Nicholas on a street, he said.

"I pinned him up against a tree and said, 'Where's your brother, where's your brother?'" Hollywood testified. "He didn't know where he was."

Hollywood said he smoked marijuana and played video games with Nicholas and the teen wasn't in any danger. He was taken to various spots around the Santa Barbara area over two days before he was killed. His body, buried in a shallow grave, was later found by hikers.

Prosecutors contend Hollywood decided to get rid of Nicholas after learning from an attorney that he could face life in prison for kidnapping. They also believe the murder was a way for the gunman, now on death row, to settle his own drug debt with Hollywood.

On cross examination, Hollywood acknowledged he did things that were wrong. "Not taking him (Nicholas) home. Pinning him against a tree. Taking him to Santa Barbara," Hollywood said.

He added taking the teen was a big mistake and reiterated it wasn't well thought out.

Earlier in his testimony, Hollywood said he believed the gunman, Ryan Hoyt, was going to drive up to Santa Barbara and return with Nicholas to Los Angeles. Instead, Hollywood said, Hoyt told him Nicholas had been killed because of concern about Ben Markowitz finding out about the abduction.

"Ryan Hoyt articulated to me that he and (associate Jesse Ruge) had shot Ben's brother and buried him," he testified. "I said, 'You gotta be kidding me. What were you thinking?'"

Hollywood fled after the slaying and testified he lived in Colorado, the Mojave Desert and various parts of Canada before he was captured in Brazil more than four years later.

Ruge was convicted of kidnapping but acquitted of murder. Hoyt and two other people have been convicted in the case.

"Alpha Dog," released in 2007, starred Bruce Willis, Justin Timberlake, Sharon Stone and Emile Hirsch, who played "Johnny Truelove," a character based on Hollywood.

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