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Hollywood lawyer concerned over movie based on his client

Film is set for release as trial in 2000 murder gets underway. Defense may seek change of venue.

Santa Barbara- A movie starring Bruce Willis and singer Justin Timberlake may make it difficult for murder suspect Jesse James Hollywood to get a fair trial, his defense attorney said.

The release of "Alpha Dog" later this year will coincide with the start of Hollywood trial, lawyer James Blatt said this week during a court hearing.

The movie is based on the August 2000 slaying of 15 year old Nick Markowitz. Hollywood, 25, is accused of orchestrating the plot to kidnap and kill the boy because of bad blood with Markowitz's half brother, who allegedly owed Hollywood \$1,200 in a drug debt.

Markowitz was abducted as he walked near his San Fernando valley home and spent two days partying with his captors before they killed him, according to grand jury testimony.

The boy was forced to walk a mile into Los Padres National Forest before being shot nine times and buried in a shallow grave, authorities said. His body was discovered four days later by hikers.

Four people were convicted of kidnapping or murder in the case, but Hollywood fled and became the focus of a nationwide manhunt. He was arrested in March in Brazil and returned to California.

A grand jury indicted Hollywood on charges of murder, kidnapping and criminal conspiracy. If convicted, he could face the death penalty.

Prosecutors, detectives and some potential witnesses including Hollywood cooperated in the making of the movie and spoke with its director, Blatt said.

The father "did that without my knowledge or permission," Blatt said.

The attorney said he has not decided whether he would seek to have the trial moved from Santa Barbara. In the interim, he asked superior court judge Brian Hill to ban prosecutors from distributing any more information about the case.

Hill said he would consider Blatt's request next week.

The film, by writer and director Nick Cassavetes, is based on the case, but the names and the setting have been changed.