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Local

Information emerges on 3 held here

Associated Press

ST. PETERS, Mo. - Two Missouri brothers held in Billings in connection with an Arizona murder were decent teens who were influenced by their older cousin, who's also jailed in the case, a neighbor of the boys said.

Cary Pratt, 21, of St. Peters, said his 15- and 16-year-old neighbors, Nicholas and Joshua Aston, looked up to their cousin, Justin Harrison, 22, of Wright City, Mo. Harrison and the boys left the area with Harrison on Christmas.

The three currently are jailed in Billings on suspicion of killing Del Monte Foods executive Pedro Corzo, 35, who was shot and killed outside Phoenix. His body was found in a shallow grave Jan. 11, two days after he disappeared.

Arizona authorities said the motive did not appear to be robbery.

Montana police found handwritten notes detailing the ethnic makeup of Dateland, Ariz., about 30 miles southwest of the murder scene.

Corzo, who was of Cuban origin, was scheduled to drive to a farm in Dateland to meet with Del Monte field workers on Jan. 9, two days before he was reported missing.

Search

Authorities said the teens and Harrison had shaved their heads and had pretzel-shaped tattoos on their necks.

Pratt, who knew all three suspects, told the St. Louis Post-Dispatch that Harrison said he was headed to Arizona to look at land.

Pratt told the newspaper Harrison said if anyone got in the way, he'd "snuff 'em out," but Pratt didn't think he was serious. Pratt also said Harrison threatened to injure him if he told anybody about the planned trip.

Harrison's sister, Sarah Harrison of Wright City, said her brother was unemployed and often went on trips.

She said he had not had any serious problems with the law.

"I can't believe they killed someone, if they did it," she said.

Arizona detectives have come to Billings to interview Harrison and the brothers.

The three left behind a note in the brothers' Missouri home saying they'd kill anyone who interfered with their plan to commit robberies in the desert, said St. Charles County Sheriff's Detective Gerry Pollard.

The three were stopped near Billings on Thursday after a highway patrol officer became suspicious because the 1985 Chrysler New Yorker they were in was driving slowly and had Missouri plates.

A license plate check showed the car was connected to the teen brothers, who had been reported as runaways, and included an alert that the brothers were likely armed.

Authorities said Harrison was driving and three guns were confiscated from the trunk. When officers took the three to an office to contact the teens' parents, one of the brothers told officers of the slaying in Arizona, authorities said.

On Friday, the brothers appeared in Youth Court where a judge ordered them held on suspicion of murder. Prosecutors said they had probable cause to suspect that the brothers were involved in the Arizona murder, or witnessed the crime.

Harrison was booked into the county jail on suspicion of murder.

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