

CAPITOLA HOMICIDE

# Details emerge in fatal stabbing

Suspect, victim dined together on night of slaying

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SANTA CRUZ — Homicide suspect Marcos Robert Chavez had dinner with Ronald Aaron Carpenter the night he killed him inside a studio apartment in Capitola, prosecutors said Thursday.

More details emerged about the Dec. 11 slaying Thursday after Chavez appeared in court, where his bail was increased to \$1 million from \$750,000. "Special circumstances" of robbery and attempted robbery were added to a charge of murder.

Chavez, who appeared shackled in yellow jail clothes, delayed entering a plea until his next court date Jan. 5. His attorney, Jerry Vinluan, declined to comment outside court.

If convicted of murder, Chavez faces 25 years to life in prison, according to sentencing rules. If convicted of murder with a special circumstance of robbery, Chavez faces life in prison without the possibility of parole.

"It appears that robbery was a motive," prosecutor Celia Rowland said outside court.

She said Chavez wanted cash, and investigators were looking into what money Chavez and Carpenter had on them that night. Rowland declined to comment on the relationship between Chavez and Carpenter because she did not want to compromise the investigation.

But she said Carpenter, 36, and Chavez, 23, ate and drank the night of the killing at restaurants in Soquel and Santa Cruz. They then went to Chavez's studio apartment, which is attached to a two-story house on the 3200 block of Virgil Lane in Capitola, Rowland said.

Sometime after 10 p.m., neighbors heard a woman scream. Two people called 911 and emergency responders were dispatched about 10:45 p.m., according to dispatch records.

The woman who screamed was a

Marcos Robert Chavez appears in Superior Court with his attorney Jerry Vinluan on Thursday.



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## HOMICIDE

Continued from C1

neighbor who was unrelated to the case, Rowland said.

"At this point, (Chavez) is the only suspect," she said.

Prosecutors allege Chavez used a knife and a clothing iron to kill Carpenter. Carpenter's carotid artery and jugular vein were slashed, according to the coroner.

Prosecutors said Thursday that military records of Chavez and Carpenter have been subpoenaed and Chavez's phone records from the day of the killing have been obtained.

Chavez was a U.S. Marine sergeant who served in Afghanistan until late 2010. Carpenter joined the U.S. Army in late 1999 but was injured jumping out of a truck and was honorably discharged in 2000, his family said.

Carpenter had just finished classes at Cabrillo College that are required for becoming an emergency medical technician. He had just sold his Toyota pickup for about \$2,000, money he planned to use to move to Maui at the end of December to work at a scuba diving shop and continue his education, his family said.

Chavez was also a Cabrillo student, and, like Carpenter, did work-study at the Santa Cruz County Vets Center on 41st Avenue.