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Days after mistrial, trucker pleads guilty to conspiracy in drug case

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Less than a week after the trial of a truck driver charged with carrying \$516,000 worth of marijuana in his rig ended in a hung jury, the California man pleaded guilty yesterday to conspiracy with intent to distribute the drugs.

Instead of standing trial again, Michael Daley, 39, of Oakland pleaded guilty in Superior Court in Morristown to a second-degree violation. He would have faced 20 years in prison if convicted at trial. However, under the plea deal, he likely will receive a five-year sentence.

Judge Thomas Manahan set

sentencing for Feb. 5, and Daley remained free on \$200,000 bail.

Yesterday's plea was the same deal Daley was offered before his trial, and the same one given to his co-defendant, Adeilei Mosley-Bakari, 35, of Atlanta, who earlier this year pleaded guilty and was sentenced to five years in prison, Morris County Assistant Prosecutor Robert Lane told the judge.

"I think it's a fair resolution to the case," defense attorney Alex Pagano said.

Pagano said he only learned of Daley's complicity in the crime after Manahan declared a mistrial Friday when the

jury became hopelessly deadlocked. At that time, both sides said they were prepared to go to trial again.

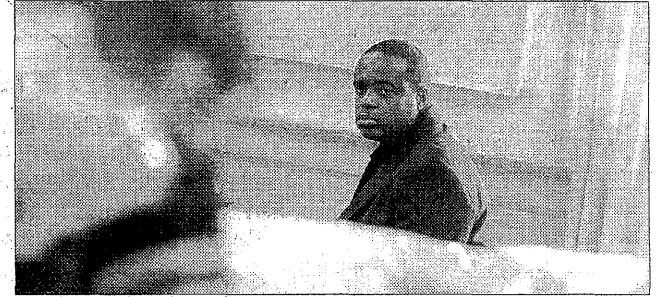
"This now brings closure to this matter without the need of another trial and we believe sufficiently punishes the defendant for his transgressions," Morris County Prosecutor Robert Bianchi said in a statement. Daley was accused of conspiracy and possessing for distribution the marijuana found in his rig when stopped by police on Route 80 in Mount Olive on March 10, 2008.

During the trial, Pagano argued that Daley had no idea the marijuana was on board and the drugs belonged to Mosley-

Bakari. Assistant Prosecutor Kelley Lavery argued there was no way Daley could not have known about the large amount of pungent marijuana stuffed into three duffel bags stowed in a cabin where Daley slept when not behind the wheel.

Daley, a native of Jamaica who is a U.S. citizen, and Mosley-Bakari were trucking partners and drove as a team. On March 8, 2008, when they were near Ontario, Calif., Daley learned Mosley-Bakari was in the process of transporting the marijuana to the East Coast, he admitted.

Daley agreed to participate, in return for cash from Mosley-



ROBERT SCIARRINO/THE STAR-LEDGER

Michael Daley watches detectives wheel in plastic bags containing 147 pounds of marijuana during his trial earlier this month.

Bakari to help pay off his truck, he admitted.

Because the amount of marijuana was more than 25 pounds, Daley was facing a first-degree crime, as well as several lesser charges. Under

the plea, the state will recommend a five-year sentence, and other charges and traffic tickets would be dismissed.

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