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## **Doctor is a 'subject of interest' in Santa Monica model's slaying, prosecutor says**

The physician, who has fled the country, apparently had briefly dated the victim and had employed the woman accused of beating and strangling the 21-year-old in her condo in 2008.

By Joel Rubin, Los Angeles Times

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A physician with ties to an aspiring model who was killed in Santa Monica in 2008 and to the woman accused of murdering her is a "subject of interest" in the investigation and has fled the country, according to the prosecutor in the case.

Those allegations about Dr. Munir Uwaydah, a Marina del Rey doctor, came at a hearing in which bail for the accused woman, Kelly Soo Park, 44, was raised to \$3.5 million from \$1 million after prosecutors convinced the judge that she was a flight risk as well.

Park is accused in the beating and strangulation of Juliana Redding, a striking, 21-year-old Arizona native who had come to Los Angeles to study and pursue work as an actress and model after she was featured for her good looks in a popular men's magazine.

Redding's battered body was discovered in her condominium on March 16, 2008, after she failed to return phone calls from her family. She had been strangled fiercely enough that a bone in her throat was crushed.

The DNA extracted from blood and other evidence found on Redding's body and in the condo was matched to Park's genetic profile, Jackson said.

He went on to accuse Park of a failed plot to destroy evidence of her involvement by blowing up the condo, saying she had turned on Redding's gas stove and lighted a candle before leaving. Phone records also show that Park called the restaurant where Redding worked and was outside the woman's building the night before she was killed, Jackson said.

The lengthy investigation of the killing by Santa Monica police culminated in June with the arrest of Park and her roommate, Ronnie Wayne Case. Prosecutors decided not to charge Case, saying they were continuing to investigate his possible involvement.

In seeking a higher bail for Park from Los Angeles County Superior Court Judge Keith L. Schwartz, Deputy Dist. Atty. Alan Jackson sought to further establish Park's close tie to Uwaydah.

Uwaydah, according to Jackson, was the only common denominator linking Park to Redding. Uwaydah dated Redding briefly and had employed Park, paying her \$10,000 a month for several years as she worked for him in a vaguely defined capacity, Jackson said.

Park had assisted Uwaydah in running a large medical insurance fraud scam that is under investigation and Uwaydah, "bragged to people that he had a 'female James Bond,' that he could rely on to take care of business," Jackson told the judge.

Jackson also alleged that Uwaydah had transferred \$250,000 to Park three weeks before the killing.

Jackson went on to allege that Redding's father, a pharmacist, and Uwaydah had planned to start a pharmaceutical business together, but that Greg Redding announced his plans to pull out of the deal days before his daughter was killed. Greg Redding was present for the court hearing Tuesday, but declined to comment afterward.

Schwartz asked Jackson whether he believed Uwaydah had sent Park to Redding's condo "to send a message or something and unfortunately Ms. Redding was the recipient of that message."

"The evidence certainly suggests what the court has just put two and two together on, yes," Jackson replied.

When Schwartz asked whether Jackson considered Uwaydah a person of interest in the case, Jackson replied: "Extreme."

Uwaydah's attorney, Henry Fenton, acknowledged that Park worked for Uwaydah, but refuted the allegations against his client, saying: "It's all bologna. It's all untrue. Dr. Uwaydah had nothing to do with this case."

Fenton said he had offered to set up a meeting between Uwaydah and prosecutors, but was rebuffed.

He refused to discuss Uwaydah's whereabouts.

Park, handcuffed and her face looking drawn, wept quietly at times throughout the hearing.

One of Park's attorneys, Jennifer Keller, tried to poke holes in Jackson's theory during the hearing, saying that Park worked as Uwaydah's personal real estate broker and frequently received large payments from him as part of transactions.

On the day Park was arrested, Jackson said, Uwaydah "fled the jurisdiction of the United States" by driving across into either Mexico or Canada and now "is gone."

He argued that Uwaydah now wants Park freed on bail so she too can leave the country and not implicate Uwaydah to authorities. To bolster this theory, Jackson played a clip from a phone call that Park made from jail to her sister that was recorded by investigators. In it, the sister assures Park that "Munir is going to bail you out."

"We believe Munir Uwaydah has a plan and he has begun that plan already," Jackson said, adding that Uwaydah is thought to have funneled "tens of millions" of dollars into overseas accounts that could be used to bail out Park.

Keller dismissed that theory and said Park could be outfitted with a monitoring device if freed on bail. After the hearing, she expressed disappointment in the judge's decision to raise the bail, saying such hearings can be "misleading" since the prosecution is not required to support claims with evidence.