

Landlord fights for release amid murder probe

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DOWNTOWN LA — A federal judge has postponed the trial of two elderly women — one a Santa Monica landlord — on charges of insurance fraud, as investigators continue to look into their suspected roles in the hit-and-run murders of several homeless men.

Appearing before U.S. District Judge Gary Klausner for the first time last Tuesday, Helen Golay, 75, of Santa Monica, and Olga Rutterschmidt, 73, of Hollywood — who were to stand trial today — found out that they would be sitting in jail an additional three months, with Klausner setting an Oct. 24 trial date.

Golay and Rutterschmidt are suspected by authorities of playing a part in the deaths of several homeless men whom they befriended, set up in apartments and then collected insurance payouts following their respective deaths in mysterious back-alley hit-and-runs. The two have often been referred to as “the Black Widows” by the media.

Golay’s attorney, Roger Diamond, said Monday that the delay was granted over his objections, with Rutterschmidt’s attorneys striking up an agreement with

'Black Widows' trial postponed until October by federal judge

GOLAY, from page 1

federal prosecutors behind his back. Diamond insists he was prepared for trial this week, but the co-defendant's representation was looking to buy time to review evidence being turned over by the government.

"The judge asked if we were prepared to go ahead with trial and we were, but (the public defender's office) had already made an agreement with the government," said Diamond, who expressed frustration with the pace of proceedings in the case.

Contending Golay's Sixth Amendment rights to a speedy trial are being violated — the women are only formally charged with insurance fraud in connection to one of the victims, Kenneth McDavid — Diamond, who is based in Santa Monica, has filed a separate motion to have Golay released on bail. Klausner has yet to schedule a hearing date for the bail request.

Golay, who owns three apartment complexes in Santa Monica, and Rutterschmidt, likely face a protracted trial for their suspected involvement in a fraud ring that police feel left at least two unsuspecting homeless men dead, the result of back alley hit-and-runs shortly after the two women became eligible to receive life insurance claims on them.

While Golay and Rutterschmidt are considered suspects in the deaths, no charges have been filed beyond those in relation to their attempts to collect on more than \$2 million worth of life insurance payouts.

Since the pair's arraignment on June 5, Golay has since been transferred to the Metropolitan Detention Center in downtown Los Angeles, after being held in a San Bernardino facility because authorities wanted to keep the suspected conspirators separate.

"She's fine, optimistic," said Diamond of Golay.