

Suspect's lawyers claim prosecutor hidin

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Attorneys for Serge A. Motti, charged with the March slayings of two Putnam County dog breeders, Tuesday accused local prosecutors of dropping a "cloak of silence" over two key material witnesses.

Motti's attorneys asked that they be allowed to question Diane Hall, the defendant's girlfriend, who reportedly is being hidden by Putnam County police at an undisclosed location.

Law enforcement sources say that Miss Hall, who has been held by police as a material witness since the suspect's March 24 arrest, is believed to have been with Motti when he allegedly shot to death dog-breeder Rose Marie Robert and her assistant, Rosalie Ramos, at the Dinro Kennels on March 21.

In papers filed with the Putnam County Court clerk, counsel Frank P. Lucianna of Hackensack, also asks that defense attorneys be allowed to interview a second woman, Robin Bulterman of North Bergen, N.J.

Miss Bulterman, the defense believes, may have information about the whereabouts of Miss Hall, who has not returned to her Boulevard East apartment in North Bergen since Motti was arrested there.

A spokesman for the Putnam County Sheriff's Office declined to discuss the matter Tuesday.

Both District Attorney S. Barrett Hickman and Assistant District Attorney Stephen L. Greller were out of town and unavailable for comment Tuesday. They have in the past indicated that they would oppose any defense motions seeking to interview a material witness.

In a telephone interview, Lucianna charged that a "cloak of silence had descended" over possible witnesses in the case. Lucianna

and Howard F. Cerny, the suspect's Manhattan-based attorney, said that the inability of the defense to gain access to the two women made it impossible for them to prepare an adequate defense for the 22-year-old Fairleigh Dickinson College freshman.

The motion to interview criminal case witnesses, along with four other motions filed by the defense, is set to be heard Monday before Putnam County Court Judge Frank C. Bowers. Motti, free on a \$200,000 bail bond posted by his family last month, is awaiting an anticipated fall trial.

The defense motion marks the first time that Miss Hall has been identified in court documents as a possible material witness in

the case and is the first mention of Miss Bulterman in connection with the slayings.

Lucianna said Tuesday that Miss Bulterman refused to discuss the case with him.

Contacted at her home Tuesday evening, Miss Bulterman declined comment on the case, except to deny that she had been pressured to keep silent by Putnam prosecutors. "I'd rather not talk to you at all about it," she said.

Cerny conceded that the defense's latest motion was "unusual," but said that he and Lucianna had been forced to take that tack by the lack of cooperation from the District Attorney's Office.

In past interviews, both

Hickman and Greller have refused to discuss Miss Hall, and would neither confirm nor deny that she was being held as a material witness in the case.

"Normally, the D.A. is not as protective of witnesses as he is in this case," said Cerny. "No, it's not a normal motion. It's unusual."

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Cerny claimed that the district attorney is required to make witnesses available for interviewing in criminal cases. Law enforcement sources have said that the Putnam prosecutor's reluctance to do so in this case is rooted in a fear that Miss Hall might be subject to harm should her location become public.