

# Grand jury indicts Soon Ja Du

Associated Press

A grand jury has indicted Soon Ja Du with murder in the shooting of Latasha Harlins at Empire Liquor Market.

The prosecution sought the indictment to speed up the case. By obtaining the indictment on May 2, the district attorney's office eliminated the need for a preliminary hearing, which had initially been scheduled for April 29 then continued to May 31.

"We saw a long period of delays ahead before this case would go to trial," said Mike Botula, a spokesman for the district attorney's office. "So we went to the grand jury and got an indictment and we can get this case to trial in a timely fashion."

Du, 49, arrived in court in a wheelchair with friends and family.

Her lawyer, Charles Lloyd entered a plea of innocent to the charge of murder and use of a firearm, which could bring a maximum sentence of 30 years to life in prison.

Du, the owner of Empire Liquor in south Los Angeles, had been charged with first-degree murder

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in the shooting of Harlins, 15, in March. According to police, the shooting occurred after a dispute over a bottle of orange juice.

Lloyd told reporters he would prove the killing was justifiable homicide and that Du herself was a victim in the incident.

Deputy District Attorney Roxanne Carvajal argued to keep Du in jail, but Superior Court Judge Lance Ito kept her \$250,000 bail in effect.

Du posted bail on March 26 and has been living at home in Mission Hills with her family.

The prosecutor said a doctor's report obtained by the Du family shows that the defendant has "death wishes" and suffers from "paranoid ideation" (ideas or mental images).

"She will be even a greater threat at this time to herself and the people around her," Carvajal said. "We can only keep her in custody to make sure that in this paranoid ideation she doesn't take someone else down with her if she tries to kill herself."