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AROUND SOUTH FLORIDA

Author: *From Herald Staff and Wire Services*

Article Text: Tropical storm delays start of murder trial

Opening arguments in the trial of Jesus N. Rodriguez, accused of murdering his estranged wife in 2001 and incinerating her body, were postponed on Monday because of Tropical Storm Rita.

Circuit Judge David Miller rescheduled the trial for Wednesday morning. Prosecutors believe Rodriguez killed his wife, Isabel, set her body ablaze, spread the ashes over his West Miami-Dade farm, then covered them in gravel.

No body has ever been found. Prosecutors are seeking the death penalty.

Rodriguez has said he believes Isabel abandoned the family and returned to her native Honduras. His attorney, Andrew Rier, has pointed out that there is no scientific proof a body was burned on the property.

MIAMI U.S. JUDGE DISMISSES SUIT AGAINST CASTRO

A federal judge has dismissed a wrongful death suit filed against Cuba and President Fidel Castro by the sister of a man executed in 2003 for his role in a ferry hijacking.

U.S. District Judge Patricia Seitz acknowledged in her ruling that the sister, Yordanis Montoya Isaac, had presented a ``sympathetic case." But Seitz said in a decision issued last week she could award no damages because neither Montoya nor her brother, Jorge Luis Martinez Isaac, were U.S. nationals when the execution took place.

Montoya had sought more than \$75,000 in damages from Cuba for the April 11, 2003, execution of her brother in the hijacking earlier that month of the Baragua, a 45-foot Cuban ferry carrying 50 passengers. The 45-foot ferry had been ordered to sail for the United States but ran out of fuel and was towed back to Cuba.

Other defendants in the hijacking received prison sentences of between two years and life in prison. The Cuban government never responded in court to Montoya's lawsuit.

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