

# Grisly murder trial under way in Clay County

**The defendant is charged with killing his father's girlfriend.**

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Kaczmar

By [David Hunt](#)

GREEN COVE SPRINGS - A Clay County jury has begun hearing evidence in a case against a registered sex offender charged with stabbing his father's girlfriend to death during a sexual assault in late 2008.

If convicted, Leo Louis Kaczmar III, 26, could face the death penalty.

Kaczmar is accused of stabbing Maria Ruiz, 49, more than 50 times in a Green Cove Springs home before [setting the house on fire to cover up the crime](#).

Jurors were shown pictures of the fire damage and Ruiz's remains.

Christopher Modlin, who lived about 100 yards from the crime scene, said he and Kaczmar had been smoking marijuana and snorting cocaine throughout the day before Ruiz was killed.

Modlin said Kaczmar was in his bedroom watching a pornographic video. He said Kaczmar smoked five crack rocks and thrust himself into a state of paranoia.

"He would pick up his socks and shake them," Modlin said.

Investigators say Ruiz's blood stained Kaczmar's socks during the stabbing, although Kaczmar told the authorities the blood came from a fishing accident.

Defense attorney Francis Shea tried to discredit Modlin's testimony by saying he was offered leniency in another case to testify against Kaczmar. Modlin said he wasn't, but admitted the drugs made his recollection of the day of the crime, Dec. 13, 2008, rather hazy.

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