

Prosecutor says data missing on traffic death scene

By Mike Miller

The Capital Times

A prosecutor told a judge Tuesday that the Madison Police Department no longer has any of the measurements taken by officers at a traffic death scene last year.

The dispute came in the case of Maria Ledezma-Martinez, 24, who is charged with homicide by negligent operation of a motor vehicle in connection with an accident last summer that claimed the life of Grete Merz, 67, a tourist from Germany.

Merz and her husband were crossing West Wash-

ington Avenue at South Fairchild Street when Ledezma-Martinez allegedly ran a red light while making a turn and struck and killed Merz.

Assistant District Attorney Paul Humphrey, in a hearing on what evidence must be turned over to the defense before trial, said a diagram of the accident and death scene, purportedly to a scale of 1 inch equals 20 feet, is the only document that exists. He said the defense could make its own calculation of measurements from the diagram.

State Assistant Public Defender Luis Cuevas demanded that he be given the actual measurements, and said there was no way he could prepare for trial in the case if he did not have them.

Although Humphrey insisted the measurements of the accident scene no longer exist, an incredulous Dane County Circuit Judge James Martin said someone had to have initial measurements in order to make the diagram Humphrey provided.

Martin ordered Humphrey to produce measurements as they related to different items shown on the diagram. The judge set a deadline for producing the numbers and indicated he would probably not allow testimony on measurements at the trial if the defense did not have them.

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1-21-04 Cap