

Sister of Bush nominee is convicted cocaine dealer Series: BRIEFLY

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TAMPA - The sister of the nominee for the post of U.S. ambassador to Spain is a convicted cocaine dealer who agreed to testify against other drug dealers to avoid prison, the Tampa Tribune reported Wednesday. Joseph Zappala, appointed by President Bush on Feb. 13, is co-founder and president of Straight Inc., which operates drug-rehabilitation centers. His older sister, Angela Zappala Lee, 56, lives in another state for her own protection. She makes regular trips back to circuit court in Tampa to comply with her part of a deal for five years' probation instead of a minimum 15 years in prison. Lee was arrested with two pounds of cocaine in July and began cooperating soon after, but prosecutors say they didn't know she was Zappala's sister until a few weeks ago, after they cut the deal, the newspaper reported. Lee pleaded guilty Nov. 21 to trafficking in more than 400 grams of cocaine.

Arson suspected in fire at historic Tampa building

TAMPA - A fire early Monday that destroyed a historic waterfront building downtown is believed to have been deliberately set, fire officials said Wednesday. Traces of a flammable liquid were found in the remains of the former Design Advocates Building at 237 Ashley St., said Tampa Fire Department Capt. Melvin Stone. Samples of charred debris were examined by a mobile arson investigations unit, operated by the state, that was used this week for the first time in Tampa. Stone said the unit was called in because of extensive losses - at least \$1-million - sustained in the fire. The case has been turned over to the state attorney's office for further investigation, said Chief Assistant State Attorney Chris Hoyer. Hoyer declined to comment on the case. Stone said he knew of no suspects.

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