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## 28 suits filed in crash case

■ **Lawsuits say airplane manufacturers and parts makers knew there were problems with some of their products and those problems led to a plane crash in the Atlantic nearly a year ago.**

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A Miami attorney has filed 28 lawsuits against aircraft and parts manufacturers seeking damages after a plane crash last year that left 228 people dead. Air France Flight 447 was flying through thunderstorms from Rio de Janeiro to Paris when it crashed into the Atlantic Ocean intact last June.

While many details about the crash are unknown because on-board recorders haven't been found, French investigators have speculated that the crash was triggered by ice on the plane's speed sensors.

In the lawsuits filed in federal court in Miami, attorneys say the plane's manufacturer, Airbus, knew

about problems with the plane ranging from faulty radar to defective speed and ice sensors.

"There is no doubt that there was a product problem," said Steve Marks, attorney for the families of about 30 victims. With the 28 cases Marks has filed, the Southern District of Florida now has more cases related to the crash than any other in the country, he said.

Although the crash took place outside the United States, Marks, with the Miami firm **Podhurst Orseck**, has filed suit against American-based manufacturers and foreign companies doing business here. He hopes a judicial panel will rule to consolidate cases filed all over the country to be heard in federal court in South Florida.

"Miami has a lot of advantages for an international case such as this," Marks said. "It is the gateway to Latin America. Miami's jury pool is largely Hispanic and the local Brazilian population has become very

large."

The 18 named defendants include Airbus, Honeywell International, Motorola, GE Aviation Systems, DuPont and Raychem.

"It's usually manufacturers that refuse to act reasonably regardless of how clear their culpability is," he said.

One purposeful omission is Air France.

"Insurers for airlines tend to act very quickly and responsibly," Marks said. "We have had numerous discussions with the insurers. We are fairly optimistic we will come to some reasonable conclusion."

Earlier this month, a Brazilian judge ordered the French airline to pay \$1.2 million in damages to the family of a Brazilian state prosecutor killed in the crash. The airline's insurer said in a statement it would appeal the ruling.

The airline continues to search for the plane's so-called black box recorder.