

D.A. doubts contract's legitimacy

Finally, we've got an indication of what **Jaramillo** documents the D.A.'s Office has sent to a forensics lab to be ink-dated. Judge **Frank Fasel's** order, which finally appeared in the file yesterday, specifies the documents are a "confidential disclosure agreement" and an "independent contractor agreement."

While there are any number of documents this might apply to, the one contract that has come under the greatest scrutiny is the consulting agreement **George's** wife, **Lisa**, purportedly signed with police-equipment entrepreneur and inventor **Charles Gabbard**. This contract is pivotal to at least three of the 11 felony counts against George.

Gabbard, prosecutors allege, bribed then-Assistant Sheriff George with \$25,000, the first \$10,000 of which was in the form of a check made out to Lisa on Oct. 15, 2000. Prosecutors told the Grand Jury that Gabbard's check registry showed the check immediately preceding the one to Lisa in numerical order was one written to George on the same day, also for \$10,000. That check was voided. Gabbard's girlfriend and business partner, **Toni Van Schultz**, testified George had asked that the check be made out instead to Lisa because he thought working for Gabbard might be a conflict of interest for him and he wanted to check with county attorneys first. George and Lisa testified, however, they believed Lisa had a legitimate contract to provide administrative services for Gabbard, but they couldn't find it at the time of their Grand Jury testimony in 2004.

(Lisa's sister, **Erica Hill**, who really was Gabbard's office manager, told the Grand Jury she never saw a written agreement between Gabbard and Lisa. And Erica's very employment raises an interesting question: If Gabbard really had hired Lisa for administrative work, why did he shortly after cutting the \$10,000 check to her turn around and hire Erica for the very same job?)

What makes sense, given the nature of the ink-dating test, is that some type of contract with Lisa has recently surfaced from the defense side and the D.A.'s Office doubts its authenticity.

Ink-dating might show whether the contract dates back to 2000 or was created more recently. Results are accurate to within six months. If the tests show the contract was created well after 2000, not only would the defense lose it as significant exculpatory evidence, somebody could be looking at new charges – manufacturing evidence or obstruction of justice.

If the tests come back showing the contract doesn't date back to 2000 and if it looks like the D.A. might pursue further charges – two big ifs, true – I'm guessing George will decide he's done and cop a plea.

The D.A.'s office indicated in court the ink-dating tests would be completed this week. I called co-prosecutor **Brian Gurwitz** to ask about it and he said, "We'll let the evidence come out in court." In fact, he wouldn't even confirm the Lisa Jaramillo contract is what is being tested. George's attorney, **Bob Corrado**, doesn't even acknowledge the existence of the ink testing.

So it appears we might have to wait until the next pre-trial hearing Monday to find out. And maybe not even then. Fasel seems to like to do these in chambers. It could well be the only evidence the public will see of this behind-the-scenes drama is the point at which the judge and attorneys come out of chambers and George, formally and briefly, pleads guilty.

Is Mary Matalin still hot or what? She was the speaker Tuesday – along with her serpent-

headed husband – at the Orange County Business Council dinner at the Irvine Hyatt. Even holding her granny glasses in one hand as she gestured from the lectern. Especially holding her granny glasses. There's just something about a woman at the stage in life where she has nothing left to prove giving her husband grief in front of hundreds of people – and he lapping it up like a dog scarfing scraps off the linoleum because he's just so whipped.

James Carville sat there and took it as Matalin described him as "someone who looked to have been sired out of the love scene from 'Deliverance.'" As for her political words of wisdom, her most likely scenario for what **Bush** and the new Congress will bring Americans in the way of achievements: Not much. Washington will be in a "holding pattern" through 2008 because members of Congress are quickly choosing sides in the presidential race. Every significant piece of legislation will be weighed for its political impact on the various candidates, creating gridlock. How cheery.