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Gartner to call upon Rangers

DA's office to seek assistance in investigation of Scott

By MARK ENGLAND
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McLennan County District Attorney Paul Gartner said Wednesday that he will ask the Texas Rangers to investigate allegations that Police Chief Larry Scott misused his office.

"We're not turning our case over to them," Gartner said, "but they've investigated allegations against public officials in the past. I feel they would do a good job.

"Our investigators may work with the Rangers," he added. "I feel it would be inappropriate for anyone from the Waco police to be involved."

Gartner said the district attorney's office will be in charge of the investigation of Scott.

Ironically, the Texas Rangers made Scott an honorary Ranger at an appreciation dinner police department captains held for Scott on Feb. 16. Gartner,

however, said he had faith in the Rangers' impartiality.

"I have full confidence in the integrity of Texas Rangers," Gartner said. "I anticipate this case will go to the grand jury. It won't be me or the Rangers making the final decision on what to do. The Rangers will assist my office in interviewing witnesses and taking statements. You don't just go to the grand jury with witnesses. You have to determine who would make an appropriate witness."

Sgt. Malissa Sims, Waco Police Association president, reported several allegations of misconduct on Scott's part Monday to Gartner and to Waco City Manager John Harrison. Waco will conduct its own investigation of the allegations.

Sims reported that she had information that Scott used on-duty police officers to work on his ranch in Limestone

County; that he used on-duty officers to investigate a pending \$44 million lawsuit that former District Attorney Vic Feazell filed against Scott, a Dallas television reporter and the television station's parent company; and that Scott wrote letters in an attempt to influence the awarding of a city contract for the care and training of horses used to patrol Cameron Park.

Scott refused to comment on Sims' letter.

He posted it, however, Wednesday morning on a bulletin board outside the break room at the Waco Police Station.

In the letter, Sims reported an allegation that Sgt. Billy Kevil's beeper went off during a meeting on targeting career criminals. The chief's voice could be heard saying, "Billy, the cows are out," Sims reported.

Rangers may investigate Scott

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Sims named 12 police department employees who reportedly worked on Scott's ranch: Capt. Joe Rodriguez, Lt. Harold Stieg, Kevil, Sgt. John Vicha, Sgt. Gary Dale, Sgt. Dean Priddy, officers Charlie Herrin, Donnie Morgan, Kevin Ashby, Wayne Hoskins and Robert Grissom and police photographer Amy Cooper.

One of the officers named disputed Sims' allegation.

"It's just claims," Hoskins said. "I talked to several people, and they don't know what she's talking about. I've been out to the chief's place, but I haven't done any work on city time, that's for sure. I helped work cows on

weekends a number of times, but it was on my own time."

Hoskins said the letter was politically motivated.

Sims is one of 56 WPA members to file a civil lawsuit against Scott alleging that certain positions in the department constitute promotions because they carry benefits such as daytime hours and weekends off. The WPA says the department should give tests to fill the positions.

"The man's doing a good job," Hoskins said. "If this is the only thing they have to come back on him on, they must be hurting."

A December trial date has been set in the libel suit Feazell filed against Scott. Feazell claims Scott assisted Channel 8

reporter Charles Duncan and Belo Broadcasting Corp. in a series of articles about Feazell's office that aired in 1986.

Sims, in her letter, said Sgt. Donnie Tidmore and officer Frank Turk reportedly traveled outside McLennan County helping Scott prepare his defense for the upcoming trial.

Questions about whether Scott attempted to influence the city's awarding of the bid for the care and training of the horses used to patrol Cameron Park arose a few months ago when the city renewed a contract with Linda Vicha, wife of Sgt. John Vicha. City officials, at the time, discounted the claims.