

McLennon DA indicted, arrested

WACO (AP) — McLennan County District Attorney Vic Fezell was arrested today on federal charges alleging he accepted bribes from defense attorneys in order to influence criminal cases, federal authorities said.

Fezell, 35, was taken into custody at the McLennan County Courthouse at about 9:20 a.m. on a 12-count sealed indictment alleging violations of the Racketeering Influence and Corrupt Organizations Act and mail fraud, said U.S. Attorney Helen Eversberg.

According to the indictment, Fezell instructed certain defense attorneys to increase their legal fees and pass on a portion of the money to him in exchange for favorable settlement of their cases.

The sealed indictment was returned by a federal grand jury in Austin following an investigation by the FBI, the Internal Revenue Service and the Department of Public Safety, according to a statement issued by the

federal prosecutor's office in Waco.

The indictment, which includes two racketeering counts and 10 counts of mail fraud, alleges Fezell violated state bribery laws 14 times between May 29, 1984, and April 10, 1985.

Fezell faces up to 20 years in prison and a \$250,000 fine on each of the racketeering counts and five years in prison and a \$1,000 fine for each of the mail fraud counts. If convicted of all the charges, he could be sentenced to a total of 90 years in prison and \$560,000 in fines.

Ms. Eversberg was not immediately available for further comment.

Col. Jim Adams, director of the Department of Public Safety, declined to elaborate on the charges.

"There's not really anything I can add to the information set forth in the indictment, since it speaks adequately to the nature of the charges against Mr. Fezell," Adams said.

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Fezell, a Democrat who was elected to the district attorney's post in 1982 and faces re-election in November, remained in custody today pending an initial appearance before a federal magistrate.

In July 1985, Fezell said he feared he might be murdered or wrongly indicted because he had criticized law enforcement agencies working on cases involving self-professed mass killer Henry Lee Lucas.

At the time, a federal grand jury was convened in Austin to investigate allegations of corrup-

tion. Fezell termed the investigation a retaliatory "witch hunt" prompted by the DPS and Adams following Fezell's criticism of a DPS task force's handling of the Lucas case.

A McLennan County grand jury investigated Lucas' confessions in 1985 and declined to indict Lucas in any of three Waco-area slayings to which he had confessed.

Lucas, who once claimed responsibility for hundreds of slayings nationwide, later recanted, saying he was trying to discredit law officers.