

Probe targets influential D.C. lobbyist

by UPI

WASHINGTON -- Investigators are probing whether an influential lobbyist used straw campaign contributors to funnel illegal donations to U.S. lawmakers, sources say.

The lobbyist, Paul Magliocchetti of the PMA Group, is closing the doors of his once-booming practice next week amid reports that federal prosecutors have raided his office and his home, The New York Times reported Monday.

The newspaper, quoting unnamed former PMA staff members familiar with the inquiry, said the prosecutors' initial direction appears to be focusing on allegations that Magliocchetti set up phantom campaign contributors to get money to lawmakers, as well as on his activities at a Washington restaurant where witnesses claim he regularly plied Capitol Hill guests wine and food.

Magliocchetti was been linked with U.S. Rep. John Murtha, D-Pa., chairman of the House of Representatives Defense Appropriations subcommittee. Murtha denies doing anything wrong and says he not a part of the investigation, the Times reported.

"All the combustibles are here for a very salacious set of allegations that could go far beyond his campaign finance problems," Stanley Brand, a veteran Washington criminal defense lawyer, told the newspaper.

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