

Judge orders new hearing as detective's credibility challenged

By GARY REMAL
Staff Writer

AUGUSTA — Allegations of a State Police cover-up prompted Superior Court Judge Donald Alexander on Wednesday to order a new hearing into the validity of a search warrant used in a Waldo County drug probe.

Lawyers for Richard Sargent, charged in 1984 with growing illegal mushrooms, say State Police Detective Sgt. Michael Pratt lied in court about his relationship with a police informant.

Pratt is one of three State Police detectives placed on administrative leave Feb. 10 pending results of internal and FBI investigations of alleged improprieties by under-

cover police.

Pratt's testimony was crucial in an earlier decision by Judge Alexander to permit police to use evidence obtained with a search warrant.

Among allegations made against the three detectives was inappropriate sexual relationships with female police informants.

Pratt testified before Judge Alexander in early 1986 that his relationship with police informant Sharon Pomeroy (then known as Sharon Sargent, the defendant's sister-in-law) was strictly professional. But now Sargent's lawyers allege that both Pratt and Pomeroy have since told others they had a sexual relationship as well.

Lawyers for Sargent, his sister

Linda Harriman and their mother Frances Sargent say if Pratt lied about that on the stand his credibility as a witness is thrown into question and the use of the search warrant should be overturned.

The three are charged with trafficking in psilocybin — an illegal drug derived from mushrooms police say were being grown in Harriman's Winterport house.

Defense attorney Marshall A. Stern said he repeatedly reported to State Police his charges of impropriety on the part of Pratt and the other detectives in various cases.

He said his complaint to U.S.

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Attorney Richard Cohen finally initiated the current FBI investigation after state officials refused to act.

Pratt and the other two detectives under investigation were part of the combined state and federal Tri-County Cocaine Task Force.

"We don't want to hurt the officers. We just want fairness, and the way you ensure fairness is to dismiss this case, not continue with the cover-up," Stern said.

Judge Alexander said a hearing would be scheduled in about a month to once again take up the issue of the search warrant.

He said he also would consider ordering state and federal officials to turn over the results of the investigations into the activities of the three detectives when the hearing is convened.

Waldo County Assistant District Attorney Patricia G. Worth said Maine State Police officials have told her the internal probe of the three detectives has been put on hold until completion of the federal criminal investigation.

