

Evidence

Judge to Review 1,100 Crime Lab Docs; PD: 'This Could Be Pandora's Box'

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By [Martha Neil](#)

A California judge has ordered the San Francisco police crime lab to turn over for a relevance review some 1,100 pages of documents related to an investigation of a veteran technician suspected of stealing cocaine evidence during her 29-year career there.

Depending on what Judge Anne-Christine Massullo sees, the review could potentially open the door to appeals in dozens of drug cases that have already gone to trial, according to the [San Francisco Chronicle](#).

She is reviewing the documents only concerning their potential evidentiary role in the upcoming trial of Mario Bell in a cocaine-selling case. However, if it is determined that authorities had prior knowledge of problems at the lab that were not revealed to defense lawyers this could lead to the rejection of claimed evidence not only in his drug case but many others, according to the newspaper article.

"This could be Pandora's box," Public Defender Jeff Adachi tells the Chronicle. "Judge Massullo is taking this very seriously."

Already, prosecutors have dropped over 250 cases since the city's police chief closed the crime lab's drug-testing section earlier this month. However, they hope to refile a number of these cases after narcotics is retested. If convictions are reversed in other cases due to evidentiary issues, however, double-jeopardy rules may preclude retrial.

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