

FBI expert testifies about computer in Rockwall County DA's theft, forgery trial

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A computer that Rockwall County District Attorney Ray Sumrow says he built as a backup server for his office contained documents related to eBay sales, personal e-mails and a cheat sheet for a computer game, an FBI computer expert testified Monday morning.

Rod Gregg, an FBI senior forensic examiner, said 80 percent of the content he found on the computer appeared to be personal rather than work-related.

Mr. Sumrow is being tried in Dallas on charges of forgery, theft and records tampering. As part of the case, prosecutors allege that he used office funds to buy the computer for personal use.

"I would not configure a backup computer in that way," Mr. Gregg said.

"When I saw that, I did not think of anything related to a government agency," he said.

The computer – equipped with two hard drives, seven fans, high-end video and audio cards, a wireless Internet connection and cables that glow under ultraviolet light – is designed for playing video games, prosecutors say.

Alan Timberlake, assistant director of information technology for Rockwall County, called the computer "gimmicky" and more suited to a college dorm room than an office.

Defense attorney James Wheeler said Mr. Sumrow built the computer from parts he purchased on sale.

Mr. Sumrow paid for the parts with a check drawn on the district attorney's "fee fund," which contains fees collected from hot-check writers.

Under state law, the district attorney can spend the money on office expenses such as supplies, equipment and employee salaries.

Prosecutors allege that Mr. Sumrow used it as a "personal slush fund." He bought computer equipment for his own use and to resell for personal profit, among other illegal expenditures, they have said.

Mr. Wheeler has repeatedly stated that the district attorney has sole discretion over how to spend the fund.

Testimony will resume today and is expected to last through at least midweek.

Mr. Sumrow could face two more trials related to the alleged misuse of money dedicated to operating his office.