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Attorney: Nevada Gov. Gibbons cleared in FBI probe

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By Matt Apuzzo, Associated Press Writer

WASHINGTON — Nevada Gov. Jim Gibbons, whose first term has been marred by an FBI corruption investigation, has been cleared of wrongdoing and will not be charged in the probe, his attorney said Sunday night.

Gibbons, a former Republican congressman, has been under investigation into whether he improperly received gifts from a software company that received military contracts while he was in Congress. Gibbons steadfastly denied any wrongdoing and said the Justice Department could look as hard as it wanted and wouldn't find anything inappropriate.

Defense attorney Abbe Lowell said the Justice Department told him that Gibbons would not be charged. Such assurances are commonplace when prosecutors have completed a case.

"The prosecutors in the case confirmed what the governor has been saying for the past two years -- that he did nothing wrong and there was no basis for any allegations against him," defense attorney Abbe Lowell said in a prepared statement.

The Justice Department had no comment on Lowell's assertion Sunday. But a law enforcement official close to the case, speaking on condition of anonymity because authorities have not even officially acknowledged the investigation, confirmed the substance of Lowell's statement.

The investigation arose from allegations by a former employee at eTrepid Technologies LLC, who said company founder Warren Trepp lavished Gibbons with money and a Caribbean cruise in exchange for help winning defense contracts for the company. But the credibility of the employee, Dennis Montgomery, was put in doubt after a computer expert questioned the authenticity of e-mails he claimed proved Gibbons was accepting freebies.

"It should be crystal clear that the only persons who should be investigated or charged are those who made false allegations of wrongdoing and who tried to fuel this investigation for their own private purposes," Lowell said. "The people of Nevada should be proud to know that their governor is the hardworking, honest and ethical man they elected in the first place."

Gibbons met with the FBI two weeks ago in Washington to discuss the case, and said afterward that he hoped for "a positive outcome."

The conclusion of the FBI investigation eliminates one major distraction for Gibbons, whose first term has been beset by problems. He has seen his approval ratings drop following a budget crunch, a messy divorce and lawsuits involving his private and public activities.

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