



Written by [Raven Clabough](#) on October 26, 2010

Reid's Aide Guilty of Fraudulent Marriage

An unsettling development has reared its ugly head for Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid just one week before the midterm elections. Fox News reports, "An aide to Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid reportedly lied to federal immigration and FBI agents and submitted false federal documents to the Department of Homeland Security to cover up an illegal seven-year marriage to a Lebanese national who was the subject of an Oklahoma City Joint Terror Task Force investigation."



The aide is Diana Tejada, Reid's Hispanic Press Secretary, who has admitted to receiving payments for "some of her expenses" connected to her fraudulent marriage to Bassam Mahmoud Tarhini in 2003. The false marriage helped Tarhini to acquire permanent U.S. residency.

Tejada and Tarhini met at Oklahoma City University and were married in September 2003, allowing Tarhini to avoid compulsory service in the Lebanese National Army.

According to Fox News, "Tarhini, now 37, was held in jail and at an immigration detention center in connection with his 2009 indictment on felony charges, documents show. He pleaded guilty to entering a fraudulent marriage to evade immigration laws — a class D felony — in November 2009, and he was deported in March 2010. Tejada, now 28, was never charged for her role in the crime."

Bob Troester, spokesman for the Western District of Oklahoma U.S. Attorney's Office, is currently prosecuting the case, which began as an FBI investigation of the Oklahoma City Joint Terrorism Task Force.

"We did not charge the woman, and of course we don't discuss the reasons we don't charge people," remarked Troester.

He added, "There's multiple factors that go into a charging decision. She wasn't charged and we can't go beyond that."

Tarhini's attorney Jeffrey Byers remarked, "I don't honestly know the reason why they chose to prosecute Bassam and not her ... I don't think they could've prosecuted the case without one of the two of them saying something, but I suspect they chose to work with the American citizen rather than Bassam."

Court documents currently refer to Tejada as "an uncharged coconspirator in the crime of perjury, filing false immigration documents, the crime of sham marriage."

Tejada, who later joined the National Council of La Raza as a spokeswoman, signed a variety of



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affidavits attesting to the legitimacy of her marriage, and also participated in interviews with Citizenship and Immigration Services in Oklahoma City to do the same.

In 2008, however, Tejada became a subject of interest when Tarhini filed suit against ICE officials to force a decision regarding his expiring visa application, prompting the FBI to track down Tejada to question her about Tarhini. In May of the same year, she was interviewed by both ICE and FBI agents, with whom she continued to assert the legality of her marriage.

Fox News explains, "According to interviews and court records obtained by FoxNews.com, Tejada knowingly filed false documents with the Department of Homeland Security's U.S. Citizen and Immigration Services; lied in in-person interviews with ICE and FBI agents; and submitted fraudulent visa application affidavits and marriage license documents — all in attempt to use her status as an American citizen to get Tarhini permanent residency. As a result of her actions, according to court documents, Tarhini was able to obtain a work permit."

An official from the Justice Department has stated: "As exhibited in the court documents, the case prosecuted by the U.S. Attorney's office in Oklahoma City was a straightforward case involving two individuals who entered into a fraudulent marriage during college in order for one to evade immigration laws and obtain lawful residence."

Just a few weeks ago, Tejada appeared as a spokeswoman for Harry Reid on a Spanish-language radio program. As of yesterday, however, Reid's spokesman Jim Manley indicated that Tejada was no longer employed by Reid's office: "Our office was not previously aware of these allegations and, following an internal investigation, the staffer at issue is no longer with our office. The conduct alleged, which took place several years before the staffer worked for Senator Reid, was clearly wrong. But the bottom line remains that this story was a desperation measure by partisan Republicans, who have stooped to slinging mud about junior staffers to score points in the waning days of her campaign."

Ironically, California Republican gubernatorial candidate Meg Whitman's campaign staff made similar accusations of mudslinging against the Democratic Party when Whitman's opponent Jerry Brown accused Whitman of knowingly hiring an illegal immigrant as her housekeeper. When the controversy first broke, the *Los Angeles Times* wrote: "Meg Whitman accused the Brown campaign of being behind the housekeeper dust-up, saying she had heard a report from Bay Area television reporter Randy Shandobil that he was contacted about the matter two weeks ago. Sterling Clifford, a spokesman for Jerry Brown, said he had spoken with Shandobil and others about rumors he heard that Whitman had hired undocumented workers."

Photo of Harry Reid: AP Images



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