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## Quattrone Hires Top-Notch Lawyer

By Howard Mintz

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Frank Quattrone may be in big trouble with federal prosecutors, but he's hired one of the nation's top criminal defense lawyers, San Francisco's John Keke, to bail him out.

Best known as the lead prosecutor in the Iran-Contra trial of Lt. Col. Oliver North, Keke has built a reputation as a courtroom warrior who corporate chieftains turn to these days when they are the target of federal criminal investigations.

Among others, Keke's current roster of well-heeled clients in legal hot water includes former Enron chief financial officer Andrew Fastow and, locally, former Informix president and CEO Phillip White. Keke is defending Fastow and White in separate cases involving federal charges that they defrauded investors out of millions.

In Bay Area legal circles, Keke and his relatively small but high-powered 43-lawyer firm, Keke & Van Nest, enjoy the type of star status that his new client, Quattrone, once enjoyed in investment banking circles.

"I think John is the real thing," said Cris Arguedas, another of the region's most prominent defense lawyers who has known Keke for many years. "He's a great



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trial lawyer and he has no fear."

A former Marine whose left elbow was destroyed in Vietnam combat, Keke, 59, has primarily been a criminal defense lawyer representing white-collar clients, but has been unique in also handling major, complex civil cases. Just last year, Keke successfully represented biotech giant Genentech in a massive patent trial in Sacramento against the company's chief rival, the Chiron Corp.

Keke's law firm also represented San Jose-based

Cadence Design Systems in its long-running trade secrets battle with Avant!, a lawsuit that eventually netted Cadence hundreds of millions of dollars.

More than anything, Keke is hired for what he can do in the courtroom, where his baritone voice and commanding presence has swayed many a jury since he graduated from Yale Law School in the late 1960s. Keke clerked for former Chief Justice Earl Warren, became a federal public defender in San

Francisco and then established his own firm with a colleague.

Keke, who once served as head of the San Francisco Police Commission, has often been in the public spotlight, but never more than in the 1989 Iran-Contra trial, where he switched roles and was North's lead prosecutor.

Keke could not be reached Wednesday but in past interviews has discussed his willingness to take on the federal government on behalf of clients.