



**U.S. Department of Justice**

**Terrence Berg  
United States Attorney  
Eastern District of Michigan**

***Suite 2001  
211 West Fort Street  
Detroit, Michigan 48226-3277***

**For Immediate Release:**

**Contact: Gina Balaya (313) 226-9758**

**Sandra Berchtold - FBI (313) 237-4218**

**May 6, 2009**

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**Event: Indictment**

**Defendant: Ghazi Manni et al**

**DETROIT BUSINESSMEN INDICTED ALONG WITH FORMER  
PROFESSIONAL THOROUGHBRED JOCKEY**

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Ghazi Manni, age 52 of Sterling Heights, Michigan, Mitchell Edward Karam, age 76, of Troy, Michigan, and Ricardo Alfredo Valdes, age 43, of Ocala, Florida were indicted by a federal grand jury in Detroit on charges of conspiracy to commit wire fraud and conspiracy to commit sports bribery, announced United States Attorney Terrence Berg. Manni and Valdes were also charged with unlawful use of interstate facilities.

Berg was joined in the announcement by Andrew Arena, FBI Special Agent in Charge, for the Detroit Division of the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

The 19-count indictment charges that between December 2005 and December 2006 Manni and Karam paid money to professional horse racing jockeys, including Valdes, in order to gather inside information and to influence, or attempt to influence, the final results of particular races at Tampa Bay Downs in Tampa, Florida and elsewhere. The indictment

alleges that Manni and Karam then used the simulcast pari-mutuel wagering system to place bets on the fixed races.

United States Attorney Berg stated, “My office will aggressively prosecute bribery, whether it involves public figures or in this case sport betting. It is our duty to make sure that any process that involves the public trust is run fairly and honestly. We will not tolerate those who corrupt the process to line their pockets.”

Special Agent Arena stated, ““This case is an example of how organized crime can influence professional horse racing. The FBI is committed to investigating organized crime matters as well as sport bribery allegations. The FBI would like to express our appreciation to the Thoroughbred Racing Protective Bureau for their assistance in this case.”

The penalty for conspiracy to commit wire fraud is imprisonment for not more than 20 years and/or a \$250,000 fine. The penalty for conspiracy to commit sports bribery and for unlawful use of interstate facilities is imprisonment for not more than five years and/or a \$250,000.00 fine.

An indictment is only a charge and is not evidence of guilt. A defendant is entitled to a fair trial in which it will be the government's burden to prove guilt beyond a reasonable doubt.

The case was investigated by special agents of the FBI. Valuable assistance was also provided during the investigation by the Thoroughbred Racing Protective Bureau based in Fair Hill, Maryland. The case is being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorneys David E. Morris and Saima S. Mohsin.