PHOENIX WOMAN PLEADS GUILTY TO THEFT OF $10,000 FROM LOCAL CASINO

PHOENIX- Shirley Cota Santillano, 49, of Phoenix, pleaded guilty on Monday, March 17, 2008, to Theft by an Officer or Employee of a Gaming Establishment in federal district court in Phoenix.

Shirley Santillano was charged with Theft by an Officer or Employee of a Gaming Establishment after a variance of $10,000 was discovered on April 17, 2007 at the Vee Quiva Casino in Laveen, Ariz. where she worked as a cashier. The theft was discovered by a casino cage manager during an audit and was confirmed by review of video surveillance by the Gila River Tribal Gaming Office. The review of surveillance tapes showed suspicious activity on the part of Santillano, including placing a bundle of bills down her jumpsuit. After an investigation by the tribal gaming investigators, it was determined that nearly $10,000 was missing from the casino and that it had been taken by Santillano.

Sentencing is set before Judge Mary H. Murguia on June 2, 2008 at 1:30 p.m. A conviction for Theft by an Officer or Employee of a Gaming Establishment carries a maximum penalty of 20 years in federal prison, a $ 1,000,000 fine or both. In determining an actual sentence, Judge Murguia will consult the U.S. Sentencing Guidelines, which provide appropriate sentencing ranges. The judge, however, is not bound by those guidelines in determining a sentence.

The investigation in this case was conducted by the Gila River Tribal Gaming Office and the Gila River Police Department. The prosecution is being handled by Mark Brnovich, Assistant U.S. Attorney, District of Arizona, Phoenix. Brnovich is assigned to prosecute casino related crime in the District of Arizona.

CASE NUMBER: CR-07-1220
RELEASE NUMBER: 2008-065(Santillano)

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