



Department of Justice

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FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 12, 2008
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CRM
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TDD (202) 514-1888

ELEVEN INDICTED FOR CONSPIRACY TO CHEAT TWELVE CASINOS ACROSS THE UNITED STATES

WASHINGTON – A federal grand jury in San Diego has indicted 11 defendants for an alleged conspiracy to cheat 12 casinos across the country, Acting Assistant Attorney General for the Criminal Division Matthew Friedrich and U.S. Attorney for the Southern District of California Karen P. Hewitt announced today.

The one-count indictment, handed down in the Southern District of California on Sept. 9, 2008, and unsealed on Sept. 11, 2008, charges Bryan Arce; Don Man Duong; Hogan Ho; Thang Viet Huynh; Uttama Keovongsa; Leap Kong, a/k/a "Lanida Kong;" Qua Le; Khunsela Prom, a/k/a "Danny Prom;" James Root; Darrell Saicocie; and Dan Thich each with one count of conspiracy to commit several offenses against the United States, including conspiracy to steal money and other property from Indian tribal casinos, and conspiracy to travel in interstate and foreign commerce in aid of racketeering.

According to the indictment, from approximately March 2002 through July 2007 the defendants and co-conspirators allegedly formed and participated in a conspiracy, defined in the indictment as the "Tran Organization," to cheat at gambling in casinos across the United States. The indictment lists 12 casinos that were allegedly targeted by members of the conspiracy, including five casinos that are owned and operated by Indian tribes.

According to the indictment, the defendants and others executed a "false shuffle" cheating scheme at some of the listed casinos during blackjack and mini-baccarat games. The indictment alleges that members of the criminal organization bribed casino card dealers and supervisors to perform false shuffles during card games, thereby creating "slugs" of un-shuffled cards. According to the indictment, after tracking the order of cards dealt in a card game, a member of the organization would signal to the card dealer to perform a "false shuffle," and then members of the group would bet on the known order of cards when the slug appeared on the table. By doing so, the indictment alleges that members of the conspiracy repeatedly won thousands of dollars during card games.

The indictment also alleges that members of the organization used sophisticated mechanisms for tracking the order of cards during games, including hidden transmitter devices and specially created software that would predict the order in which cards would reappear during baccarat and blackjack games.

If convicted on the conspiracy charge, defendants face a maximum five year prison sentence.

A three-count indictment was returned in San Diego on May 22, 2007, and unsealed on May 24, 2007, charging Phuong Quoc Truong, a/k/a "Pai Gow" John and John Truong; Van Thu Tran; Tai Khiem Tran; Anh Phuong Tran; Phat Ngoc Tran; Martin Lee Aronson, a/k/a "Martin Smith;" Liem Thanh Lam; George Michael Lee; Tien Duc Vu; Son Hong Johnson; Barry Wellford; Willy Tran, a/k/a "Duy;" Ha Thuy Giang, a/k/a "Thuy Ha Giang;" and Han Truong Nguyen each with one count of conspiracy to participate in the affairs of a racketeering enterprise, defined in the indictment as the Tran Organization; one count of conspiracy to commit several offenses against the United States, including conspiracy to steal money and other property from Indian tribal casinos; and one count of conspiracy to commit money laundering. That

three-count indictment also charged five separate individuals each with one count of conspiracy to commit several offenses against the United States, including conspiracy to steal money and other property from Indian tribal casinos, and one count of conspiracy to commit money laundering.

To date, 17 defendants have pleaded guilty to charges relating to the casino-cheating conspiracy: Phuong Quoc Truong; Anh Phuong Tran; Martin Lee Aronson; Liem Thanh Lam; George Michael Lee; Tien Duc Vu; Son Hong Johnson; Barry Wellford; Willy Tran; Tuan Mong Le; Duc Cong Nguyen; Han Truong Nguyen; Roderick Vang Thor; Sisouvanh Mounlasy; Navin Nith; Renee Cuc Quang; and Ui Suk Weller.

Han Truong Nguyen was sentenced on May 12, 2008, to 27 months in prison and ordered to pay \$1,896,659 in restitution to designated victims in the case. Nguyen was also ordered to serve three years of supervised release. The remaining defendants who pleaded guilty are awaiting sentencing.

The prosecution of the case is being handled by the Criminal Division's Organized Crime and Racketeering Section (OCRS) and prosecuted by OCRS Trial Attorneys Joseph K. Wheatley and Robert S. Tully. The case is being investigated by the FBI's San Diego Field Office, the Internal Revenue Service (IRS)-Criminal Investigation, the San Diego Sheriff's Department and the California Department of Justice. The investigation has received assistance from federal, state, tribal and foreign authorities, including: the Ontario Provincial Police; the National Indian Gaming Commission; the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Western District of Washington; FBI resident agencies in Gulfport, Miss., Tacoma, Wash., and Toledo, Ohio; the Indiana State Police; the Rumsey Rancheria Tribal Gaming Agency; the Sycuan Gaming Commission; the Barona Gaming Commission; the Mississippi Gaming Commission; the Washington State Gambling Commission; and others.

The Indian Gaming Working Group (IGWG) was established in February 2003 to combat crimes related to Indian gambling. The group is spearheaded by the FBI and includes the Department of Interior's Office of Inspector General, the National Indian Gaming Commission, the IRS's Tribal Government Section, the Department of the Treasury's Financial Crimes Enforcement Center, the Department of Justice, and the Bureau of Indian Affairs' Office of Law Enforcement Services. The IGWG works to ensure the honesty and fairness of Indian gambling activity for visitors and fights organized crime groups attempting to commit embezzlement and other scams.

An indictment is merely an allegation. Defendants are presumed innocent until and unless proven guilty in a court of law.

Anyone with information relating to the investigation may contact the FBI's San Diego Field Office at (858) 565-1255.

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