



Anne Milgram, Attorney General

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ATTORNEY GENERAL ANNOUNCES CHARGES IN MULTI-MILLION DOLLAR SPORTS GAMBLING RING THAT OPERATED INSIDE BORGATA CASINO

23 charged, including 6 casino employees, in ring that took in \$22 million since 2006

ATLANTIC CITY – Attorney General Anne Milgram, New Jersey State Police Superintendent Colonel Rick Fuentes and Criminal Justice Director Gregory A. Paw announced that criminal charges were filed this morning against the leader and 22 other participants in a multi-million dollar sports bookmaking ring that operated inside the Borgata Hotel Casino poker room and took in more than \$22 million in bets since March 2006. Six casino employees were charged.

The alleged leader of the gambling ring, Andrew Micali, 32, of Ventnor, was arrested on charges of promoting gambling, money laundering and criminal usury. In addition, three associates of Micali were arrested: Vincent Procopio, 41, of Brigantine, was charged with promoting gambling, and Anthony Nicodemo, 36, and Michael Lancellotti, both of Philadelphia, were charged with conspiracy to promote gambling.

A supervisor in the Borgata poker room, Joseph Wishnick, 42, of Brigantine, was also arrested on a charge of promoting gambling. Complaint summonses were issued charging eighteen other individuals with promoting gambling, money laundering or conspiracy. They were not arrested.

“The members of this gambling ring brazenly used the Borgata Casino poker room to conduct business and launder their criminal proceeds,” said Attorney General Milgram. “They sought to escape detection by enlisting casino employees in their crimes. I’m pleased to say they greatly underestimated our vigilance and determination to keep organized crime out of Atlantic City’s casinos.”

The charges stem from an investigation dubbed “Operation High Roller” that was led by the New Jersey State Police and New Jersey Division of Criminal Justice with assistance from 11 other law enforcement agencies in New Jersey and Pennsylvania. The investigation, which began in March 2006, revealed that Micali relied on a network of agents to take in millions of dollars in bets on college and professional football and basketball. Micali, and his alleged partner, Jack M. Buscemi Jr., 50, of Mullica Hill, allegedly received a percentage of the gambling proceeds collected by the agents. Buscemi was charged by complaint summons with promoting gambling.

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-2-

“This was an organized criminal group, including licensed casino employees, that transformed a high-end poker floor at the Borgata into an underground sports betting ring that siphoned \$22 million out of the legitimate gaming economy,” said Colonel Rick Fuentes, Superintendent of the State Police.

“We tracked the activities of this gambling ring from the Borgata in Atlantic City to Philadelphia, where we made additional arrests and searched the so-called ‘wire rooms’ where the ring based its operations there,” said Director Paw of the Division of Criminal Justice. “We are putting a halt to this criminal enterprise.”

It is alleged that certain casino employees ignored exchanges of cash and casino chips made by the ring to avoid filing financial reports that are required whenever a transaction exceeds \$10,000 or is suspicious in any way. The reports are intended to prevent money laundering at the casinos.

Investigators conducted extensive surveillance and observed the defendants conducting business in the Borgata poker room. They observed defendants accepting bets and settling up with bettors, either by accepting payment on losses or paying out to winners. It is alleged that some losers were forced to accept loans to cover their losses at an annual interest rate exceeding 50 percent, in violation of New Jersey’s criminal usury statute.

The other casino employees charged via complaint summons with promoting gambling are:

- Paul Parks, 31, of Egg Harbor, another Borgata poker room supervisor;
- Austin Johnson-Brown, 35, of Atlantic City, a Borgata poker dealer;
- Robert McEwen, 26, of Edison, a Borgata poker dealer;
- Matthew Weyler, 26, of Turnersville, a Borgata bartender; and
- Jeffrey Ebert, 45, of Ventnor, a Tropicana poker room supervisor. Ebert was also charged with criminal usury.

The state obtained a court order freezing a bank account of Micali’s containing more than \$200,000, and investigators seized more than \$40,000 in Borgata chips and cash from his safe deposit box at the Borgata. Search warrants were executed at two homes in Ventnor, including Micali’s Princeton Avenue home, where investigators seized gambling records, a laptop computer and a loaded .357 caliber semi-automatic handgun. Investigators also searched Ebert’s home, where they seized gambling records, two computers and a small quantity of marijuana. Additional gambling records, computers, a handgun and \$20,000 in cash were seized in searches of three houses in Philadelphia, including another home owned by Micali and two “wire rooms” allegedly used for gambling operations.

The Division of Gaming Enforcement will be notified of the charges against each of the licensed employees so that appropriate administrative procedures can be initiated against their licenses.

Attorney General Milgram credited these agencies for conducting and assisting the investigation:

- New Jersey State Police Organized Crime Control Bureau South
- New Jersey State Police Casino Gaming Bureau
- New Jersey State Police Digital Technology Investigation Unit
- New Jersey Division of Criminal Justice

- New Jersey Division of Gaming Enforcement
- Pennsylvania Office of the Attorney General - Organized Crime Section
- Ventnor City P.D.
- Margate P.D.
- Harrison Township P.D.
- Sea Isle City P.D.
- Galloway Township P.D.
- Brigantine P.D.
- Egg Harbor Township P.D.
- Franklin Township P.D.
- Philadelphia Bureau of Narcotics Investigation
- Borgata Security Department
- Borgata Surveillance Department

These additional defendants were charged as follows by complaint summons:

- Russell Brown, 44, Egg Harbor - Promoting Gambling.
- Nicholas Caltabiano, 24, Brigantine - Promoting Gambling.
- Fekre Tesgaye, 50, Atlantic City - Money Laundering
- Ian Blackman, 28, Mays Landing - Promoting Gambling, Conspiracy to Commit Criminal Usury.
- William DePena, 39, Philadelphia - Conspiracy to Promote Gambling.
- Joseph Baldino, 22, Philadelphia - Promoting Gambling.
- Frank Baldino, 21, Philadelphia - Promoting Gambling
- Mark Galasso, 23, Philadelphia - Conspiracy to Commit Money Laundering.
- Steven Cassassanto, 37, Philadelphia/Margate - Conspiracy to Promote Gambling.
- Douglas Rubino, 30, Philadelphia - Promoting Gambling.
- Matthew Zambaninni, 27, Bear, Del. - Promoting Gambling.
- Robert Mackie, 39, Staten Island, N.Y. - Promoting Gambling

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