



**DISTRICT ATTORNEY
QUEENS COUNTY**
125-01 QUEENS BOULEVARD
KEW GARDENS, NEW YORK 11415-1568
718-286-6000

RICHARD A. BROWN
DISTRICT ATTORNEY

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 9, 2011

CONTACT: QDA PRESS OFFICE
(718) 286-6315

SEVEN INDICTED IN \$1.0 MILLION RIDGEWOOD GAMBLING OPERATION

Queens District Attorney Richard A. Brown today announced that seven individuals have been indicted on charges of operating a \$1.0 million a year sports gambling enterprise, both in Queens County and through offshore accounts based on a gambling website.

District Attorney Brown said, “The defendants are accused of not only running a traditional, wire room in Queens – where bettors called in wagers over the telephone – but they are also alleged to have availed themselves of modern technology – using a gambling website where action was available around the clock to enhance their illegal gambling activity.”

The District Attorney identified six of the defendants as Queens residents Russell Colombo, 64, of 66-54 73rd Place, Salvatore Croce, 53, of 60-47 59th Avenue, Vincent Bracco, 49, of 60-65 60th Road, Armando Rao, 68, of 16-43 Putnam Avenue, Rocco Riccardi, 81, of 78-18 79th Street and Ralph Esposito, 59, of 78-19 68th Road, and the seventh defendant as Thomas Sabatino, 62, of 429 Graham Avenue in Brooklyn.

The defendants were arraigned yesterday before Queens Supreme Court Justice Fernando Camacho on a 12-count indictment charging each of them with one count of enterprise corruption (a violation of New York State’s Organized Crime Control Act), ten counts of first-degree promoting gambling and one count of conspiracy to commit promoting gambling. Bail was set at \$25,000 for Colombo, \$10,000 for Croce and Bracco, \$5,000 for Sabatino, and Rao, Riccardi and Esposito were released on their own recognizance. The defendants, who each face up to 25 years in prison if convicted, were ordered to return to court on March 30, 2011.

District Attorney Brown said that the investigation leading to today’s arrests began in December 2008 when the District Attorney’s Organized Crime and Rackets Bureau developed information about a betting ring operating in Queens County and elsewhere. The investigation included physical surveillance, intelligence information and court-authorized electronic eavesdropping that intercepted incriminating conversations.

District Attorney Brown said that, according to the indictment, Russell Colombo was a bookmaker and, as such, controlled and oversaw the entire operation and profited from each criminal pursuit by a member of the enterprise. Colombo allegedly ran his operation through a wire room located at 818 Woodward Avenue in the Ridgewood section of Queens and through accounts set up on the betallsportshere.com website. It is alleged that in his supervisory role as bookmaker for the enterprise, he recruited partners – Salvatore Croce, Thomas Sabatino and Vincent Bracco – who,

(MORE)

together, managed offshore accounts and also acted as bookmakers themselves in that they, too, had offshore accounts based on the gambling website. Colombo also allegedly employed clerks – Armando Rao, Rocco Riccardi and Ralph Esposito – who were paid a weekly fixed salary and participated in the illegal gambling activity by accepting bets and apprising the bookmakers of the current figures of wins and losses for the previous week.

The investigation was conducted by Detective David F. Gilbert, who is the lead detective, and the other members of the District Attorney’s NYPD Squad, under the supervision of Sergeants Francis X. Teran and Frank J. Horvath, Lieutenant Keith P. Gallagher and Captain John M. Zanfardino, and under the overall supervision of Deputy Chief Louis M. Croce Jr. and Chief of Detectives Phil T. Pulaski.

Assistant District Attorney Benjamin J. Mantell, of the District Attorney’s Organized Crime and Rackets Bureau, is prosecuting the case under the supervision of Assistant District Attorneys Gerard A. Brave, Bureau Chief, and Mark L. Katz, Deputy Bureau Chief, and the overall supervision of Executive Assistant District Attorney for Investigations Peter A. Crusco and Deputy Executive Assistant District Attorney for Investigations Linda M. Cantoni.

It should be noted that an indictment is merely an accusation and that defendants are presumed innocent until proven guilty.

#

Note to Editors: Press release e-version posted on www.queensda.org.