

# NEWS

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***Ralph J. Marra, Jr., Acting U.S. Attorney***

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## Long Time Gambino Soldier Pleads Guilty to Racketeering Charge

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(More)

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NEWARK – A long time soldier in the Gambino Crime Family pleaded guilty today to a federal racketeering charge, Acting U.S. Attorney Ralph J. Marra announced.

Charles Muccigrosso, 69, a.k.a. “Buddy Musk,” of Toms River, pleaded guilty before U.S. District Judge Stanley R. Chesler, to Count One of an Indictment that charges him with RICO conspiracy. Judge Chesler scheduled sentencing for Aug. 25.

Also today, Christopher Doscher, 30, of East Hanover, pleaded guilty before Judge Chesler to Count Four of the Indictment, which charged him with conducting an illegal gambling business. Doscher is also scheduled to be sentenced on Aug. 25.

Muccigrosso and Doscher were arrested on the morning of May 8, 2008. Later that same day, authorities announced that one of the Gambino Crime Family’s highest-ranking members in New Jersey, and 22 other made members and associates, including a made member of the Lucchese Crime Family, were named in a racketeering Indictment charging them with running an enterprise that engaged in illegal gambling, extortion, fraud schemes and labor racketeering.

The lead defendant, Andrew Merola, a.k.a. “Andrew Knapik,” 42, of East Hanover and Toms River, allegedly had ultimate authority in the management and supervision of a crew of the Gambino Crime Family, according to the 30-count Indictment.

At his plea hearing, Muccigrosso admitted that between February 2002 and March 2008, he was associated with other individuals in an enterprise known as the Gambino Crime Family (“GCF”), which operated principally in New Jersey and New York. Muccigrosso admitted that he conducted the affairs of the GCF through a pattern of illegal activity that included the commission of the racketeering acts. Muccigrosso admitted that the purpose of the GCF was to make money for its associates through participation in these criminal activities.

In pleading guilty, Muccigrosso admitted committing two specific racketeering acts: conspiracy to commit wire fraud as part of a bar code scheme intended to defraud stores such as Lowes, Home Depot and others; and wire fraud involving no-show/low-show construction jobs he and Merola held at a Goethal’s Bridge project.

Muccigrosso admitted that he and another individual, which the Indictment identifies as Merola, defrauded Kiska Construction, their employer at a construction project at the Goethal’s Bridge. Muccigrosso admitted that he and the other individual were paid for full-time employment, when in fact, they alternated work weeks with each other, so that each of them only was at work part-time. According to the Indictment, John Cataldo, 44, of Nutley, who was the Local 825 Business Organizer, and Joseph Schepisi, 39, of Scarsdale, N.Y., a foreman for Kiska Construction, allegedly assisted in the scheme.

In a separate scheme, Muccigrosso admitted that he and others, which the Indictment identifies as Merola, Ralph Cicalese, 56, of Roseland, Kyle Ragusa, 41, of East Hanover, John Tizio, 48, of West Orange, India Fugate, 28, of Newark, Vincent Fichera, 47, of Toms

River, and others, fraudulently purchased store merchandise at a greatly reduced price from stores, including Lowe's Home Improvement, Home Depot, Best Buy, Circuit City and others, by creating, and using, bar code labels which falsely represented the true price of the merchandise.

At his plea hearing, Doscher admitted that from February 2002 until May 2007 he conducted, financed, managed and supervised an illegal gambling operation that utilized an offshore wire room service that would take the bets from bettors who called in on phone numbers they were provided.

Cicalese pleaded guilty before Judge Chesler on May 20 to one count of RICO conspiracy. Judge Chesler scheduled Cicalese's sentencing for Aug. 25.

The charge to which Muccigrosso pleaded guilty carries a statutory maximum penalty of 20 years in prison, a \$250,000 maximum fine, an order of restitution, and costs of prosecution. The charge to which Doscher pleaded guilty carries a statutory maximum penalty of 5 years in prison, a \$250,000 maximum fine, an order of restitution, and costs of prosecution.

In determining an actual sentence, Judge Chesler will consult the advisory U.S. Sentencing Guidelines, which provide appropriate sentencing ranges that take into account the severity and characteristics of the offense, the defendant's criminal history, if any, and other factors. The judge, however, is not bound by those guidelines in determining a sentence.

Parole has been abolished in the federal system. Defendants who are given custodial terms must serve nearly all that time.

Marra credited Special Agents with the FBI, under the direction of Special Agent in Charge Weysan Dun; the U.S. Department of Labor OIG, under the direction of Inspector General Gordon S. Heddell, the Internal Revenue Service Criminal Investigation Division, under the direction of Special Agent in Charge William P. Offord; Troopers with the N.J. State Police, under the direction of Colonel Joseph R. Fuentes, Superintendent; and the Union County Prosecutor's Office, under the direction of Prosecutor Theodore Romankow, with the investigation leading to the federal Indictment and the guilty plea.

The case is being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney Ronald D. Wigler of the Criminal Division's Strike Force Unit, in Newark.

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Defense Attorneys:

Muccigrosso - Vincent C. Scoca, Esq. Bloomfield

Doscher - George J. Abdy, Esq. Totowa