



*United States Attorney
District of New Jersey*

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GAMBINO ASSOCIATE SENTENCED TO FEDERAL PRISON FOR RACKETEERING

NEWARK, N.J. – A top associate in the Gambino Crime Family was sentenced today to 59 months in prison on a federal racketeering charge, U.S. Attorney Paul J. Fishman announced.

Ralph Cicalese, 57, of Roseland, N.J., previously pleaded guilty before United States District Judge Stanley R. Chesler to one count of an Indictment that charged him with racketeering conspiracy. Judge Chesler also imposed the sentence today in Newark federal court.

According to documents filed in this case and statements made in court:

Between February 2002 and March 2008, Cicalese was associated with other individuals in an enterprise known as the Gambino Crime Family (GCF), which operated principally in New Jersey and New York. Cicalese admitted that he conducted the affairs of the GCF through a pattern of illegal activity that included the commission of racketeering offenses. He also admitted that the purpose of the GCF was to make money for its associates through participation in those criminal activities.

Cicalese committed numerous specific racketeering acts that included conducting an illegal gambling operation; the extortionate collection of payments due on extended credit; conspiring to commit wire fraud involving a bar code scheme to defraud stores such as Lowe's, Home Depot and others; conspiring to extort lunch truck vendors; and receiving unlawful labor payments or bribes.

With respect to the illegal gambling operation, bets were placed over an Internet website that operated overseas and by telephone calls placed to a toll-free telephone number. Bets were placed on sporting events as well as casino-style games. Gambling agents who were delinquent in making their payments to Cicalese and his co-conspirators faced threats of violence to ensure collection of their gambling debts to the enterprise.

In sentencing Cicalese, Judge Chesler stated: "You have undermined everything that you stood for as a law enforcement officer and became a career criminal." During his law enforcement career, Cicalese served as an investigator in the Morris and Essex County Prosecutor's Offices, and was also a Newark police officer.

Gennaro Forte, 36, of Caldwell, N.J. – a gambling agent who worked in the same illegal gambling operation – was also sentenced today, to two years of probation – including six months

of home detention – for operating an illegal gambling business. He had previously pleaded guilty to the charge before Judge Chesler.

Forte admitted that between February 2002 and May 2007, he was involved in conducting an illegal gambling operation using an offshore wire service. More specifically, Forte admitted that he was one of the gambling agents who was responsible for a group or bettors to whom he provided a toll free telephone number as well as a code name or number in order for the bettors to place bets. He then collected money from those bettors who lost and paid those who won.

The government is represented by Assistant U.S. Attorney Bohdan Vitvitsky of the United States Attorney's Office Criminal Division in Newark.

U.S. Attorney Fishman credited special agents with the FBI, under the direction of Special Agent in Charge Michael B. Ward, and special agents of the New York Regional Office of the U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Inspector General, under the direction of Special Agent in Charge Marjorie Franzman, with the investigation leading to today's sentences. Fishman also thanked special agents with IRS – Criminal Investigation, under the direction of Special Agent in Charge Victor W. Lessoff; troopers with the N.J. State Police, under the direction of Colonel Rick Fuentes, Superintendent; and the Union County Prosecutor's Office, under the direction of Prosecutor Theodore J. Romankow, for their participation in the investigation.

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Defense counsel:

Cicalese: Stephen Turano, Esq.; Newark, N.J.

Forte: Donald R. Belsole, Esq.; Morristown, N.J.