

NEWS

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Cherry Hill Man Pleads Guilty to Interstate Travel in Aid of Racketeering

(More)

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CAMDEN – A Cherry Hill man pleaded guilty today to interstate travel in aid of racketeering for traveling to Philadelphia to threaten a man who he believed owed an illegal sports gambling debt, U.S. Attorney Christopher J. Christie announced.

Vincent Filipelli, 53, pleaded guilty before U.S. District Judge Noel L. Hillman, who continued the defendant's detention without bail and scheduled sentencing for Aug. 17.

Filipelli was arrested on federal and state charges on Oct. 24, 2006, by Special Agents of the FBI's Philadelphia Division and the New Jersey State Police Organized Crime Bureau. A grand jury returned a one-count federal Indictment on Nov. 1, 2006. Filipelli has been held without bail since his arrest.

At his plea hearing, Filipelli admitted that he traveled from New Jersey to Pennsylvania with the intent of receiving money from another individual, who had been induced to pay the money through actual and threatened force, violence and fear. Filipelli admitted the payment was for the purpose of furthering an unlawful activity, namely a gambling enterprise.

According to a federal Complaint filed on Oct. 23, 2006, an investigation of Filipelli, a Philadelphia La Cosa Nostra Family member, began in August 2005. According to the Complaint, Filipelli was the focus of an illegal sports gambling investigation, which utilized two undercover N.J. State Police detectives. Filipelli admitted that he, believing that one of the detectives was an individual who owed him a gambling debt, threatened to put the undercover detective in the hospital for a year if the debt was not paid.

The charge in the Indictment carries a maximum penalty of 20 years in prison and a fine of \$250,000 or twice the aggregate loss to the victims or gain to the defendants.

In determining an actual sentence, Judge Hillman 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.

Christie credited Special Agents of the FBI's Philadelphia Division, under the direction of Special Agent in Charge J.P. Weis, and the New Jersey State Police, under the direction of Colonel Joseph R. Fuentes, Superintendent, with the investigation of Filipelli.

The government is represented by Assistant U.S. Attorneys Steven D'Aguanno and Jacqueline Carle of the U.S. Attorney's Office Criminal Division in Camden.

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Defense Attorney: Donald F. Manno, Esq. Cherry Hill