

NEWS RELEASE



OFFICE OF THE UNITED STATES ATTORNEY SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA

San Diego, California

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For Immediate Release

TWIN BROTHERS HEAD TO JAIL FOR DEFRAUDING SPORTS FANS

NEWS RELEASE SUMMARY – January 17, 2014

SAN DIEGO, CA - United States Attorney Laura E. Duffy announced that Judge John A. Houston imposed custodial sentences on twin brothers Anthony Donald Casias and Leo Ronald Casias, Jr. for defrauding local sports fans through their company, “L & T Sports Events, Inc.” Anthony Casias received a sentence of 36 months in custody and 3 years of Supervised Release. Leo Casias was sentenced to 33 months in custody and 3 years of Supervised Release.

According to court documents, clients of L&T Sports paid in advance for travel, lodging, transportation, and game tickets to out-of-town sporting events, such as San Diego Chargers “away” games, other NFL games, and collegiate sporting events. The brothers told sports fans that in return for their payments to L&T Sports, the company would purchase flights, game tickets and hotel accommodations. The defendants even promised clients that L&T Sports obtained tickets in specific seating areas (for example, “lower level corner end zone” or “club level” seating), accommodations at specified hotels, and seats on specific airline flights, to reassure clients that the services clients paid for would be provided when the clients arrived at the game destinations.

For example, the brother's victims included over a dozen local fans who arranged to watch the San Diego Chargers play the Chicago Bears in Chicago, Illinois in November 2011. These clients paid in advance for flights, hotels, and football game tickets. Although L&T Sports provided the airline tickets to Chicago; they provided little else. As a result, their customers showed up in Chicago without hotel rooms or game tickets for which they had already paid for in advance. Fortunately, some committed fans were able to find hotel accommodations and purchase tickets from local ticket brokers so they could watch the Chargers play.

Similar disappointments befell other customers. For example, one fan paid the Casias brothers in advance so that he could take his son to watch the Chargers play the Oakland Raiders at the Coliseum. Once again, L&T Sports provided a one-way flight but nothing else. Stranded in the Bay Area on New Year's Eve 2011 with no hotel room, no game tickets, and no flight home, the two disappointed fans ended up driving back down to San Diego in a rental car and watching the game on TV.

Tony and Leo Casias did not limit their fraud to local sports fans. Residents of South Dakota, Philadelphia, and Colorado also arranged trips to see football games, only to find their money taken and no hotels, game tickets, and/or flights home provided. The Casias brothers even arranged trips to the annual NFL game in London, England, offering special extensions to Paris and Rome. Some clients were stranded overseas with no hotel rooms, game tickets, or flight home. What is worse, according to sentencing documents, the Casias brothers used those clients' credit cards to rack up other charges while those clients were overseas in Europe.

For example, the United States provided evidence in court hearings that Tony and Leo Casias made unauthorized credit card charges on at least 4 individuals' credit cards. They typically got authorization from the credit card holder to make limited charges – say, to pay the costs of a client's trip, or a \$400.00 loan – but then used those credit cards without authorization to pay for travel services for other clients, or, in some cases, to make their own car payments, pay their cell phone bills, and, adding insult to injury, pay for their own delinquent Chargers season tickets.

Public records indicate that the Casias brothers were convicted in the early 1990's for a similar scheme involving travel services to middle school students. In that case, the brothers offered educational trips to the East coast, and required students to pay in advance. Defendants collected over \$275,000 in advance payment from schools, students, and parents, but used the funds to pay for prior business and personal debts instead of paying for the trips. One parent chaperone from that memorable trip informed the sentencing court in a letter that she accompanied 193 junior-high aged children on a trip to Washington D.C. The students held multiple fundraisers and had to complete projects, research, and presentations before they could go on the trip. She called it "craven" that Leo and Tony Casias accompanied the group to the airport to see them off, knowing that the students would soon be stranded on the east coast thousands of miles from home, with no hotel rooms, local transportation, or return flights home. She recalls that the students ended up staying on cots in military barracks.

In addressing the defendants, Judge Houston chastised them for what he described as their "continuous fraud and manipulation to people you thought were less than you...You are not Madoff. This was not a sophisticated scheme. This was an old fashioned, salt of the earth swindle. [These were] good people [including] your mother's rosary group . . . You were heartless. You just didn't care."

The defendants will next appear in court on February 8, 2014, before Judge Houston for a hearing to determine the amount of restitution they will owe to victims.

DEFENDANTS

Criminal Case No. 12CR4966-JAH

Anthony “Tony” Donald Casias
36 months in custody

San Diego, California

Leo Ronald Casias, Jr.
33 months in custody

San Diego, California

SUMMARY OF CHARGE

Count 1: Title 18, United States Code, Section 1349 - Conspiracy to Commit Wire Fraud. Maximum penalties: 20 years’ imprisonment, \$250,000 fine, \$100 special assessment, 3 years of supervised release, mandatory restitution to victims.

INVESTIGATING AGENCY

Federal Bureau of Investigation