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UNITED STATES ATTORNEY CHUCK ROSENBERG

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Jim Rybicki
Public Information Officer
Phone: (703) 842-4050 Fax: (703) 549-5202
E-Mail: usavae.press@usdoj.gov
Website: www.usdoj.gov/usao/vae

Racketeering Defendants Convicted and Others Charged with Additional Crimes in "Operation Underdog"

(Alexandria, VA) – Nicholas Kumar Bansal, 35, of Stafford, Virginia, and Steven Kumar Bansal, 32, of Kill Devil Hills, North Carolina, pled guilty yesterday to a racketeering conspiracy before United States District Judge Claude M. Hilton. Chuck Rosenberg, United States Attorney for the Eastern District of Virginia; Joseph Persichini, Jr., Assistant Director in Charge, Federal Bureau of Investigation; Charles Pine, Special Agent in Charge, Internal Revenue Service Criminal Investigation; and, Colonel David M. Rohrer, Chief of Police, Fairfax County Police Department, also announced that their father, Raj Kumar Bansal, 63, of Annandale, Virginia, along with Krishna Pillai Balakrishnan Nair, 64, of Alexandria, Virginia; Rajan Harjani, 48, of Springfield, Virginia; Sharon Rudolph Connelly, 66, of Springfield, Virginia; and, Donovan Anthony Moncrieffe, 39, of Alexandria, Virginia, were indicted by a federal grand jury on June 21, 2007, and appeared before Judge Hilton yesterday for their arraignments.

According to court documents, Nicholas and Steven Bansal admitted operating and managing an illegal gambling business and laundering more than \$2.5 million in profits of that business from 1995 through 2006. Additionally, both admitted engaging in a "loan sharking" operation and having "no show" jobs at businesses in Arlington and Springfield, Virginia. Nicholas Bansal also admitted that, in 2003, he arranged the robbery of a marijuana dealer who owed money to the leader of the gambling business. These are the eighth and ninth guilty pleas in this investigation, "Operation Underdog," including one other guilty plea to a racketeering conspiracy, three guilty pleas to conspiracy to commit money laundering, two guilty pleas to robbery of marijuana, and one guilty plea to marijuana distribution.

According to court documents, Raj Bansal, Nair, Harjani, Connelly, and Moncrieffe, all have been charged with a racketeering conspiracy and with being part of an enterprise engaged in an illegal gambling business, money laundering, robbery, extortion and witness tampering.

Bansal, Nair and Harjani were also charged with operating an illegal gambling business. All five defendants were charged with conspiracy to commit money laundering during that time. Bansal and Nair were charged with conspiracy to commit violations of Title 31 involving structured financial transactions, and Bansal was also charged with extortion, robbery, conspiracy to possess and distribute marijuana, and witness tampering.

The superseding indictment alleges the racketeering enterprise engaged in a pattern of criminal activity from 1993 through 2007, and makes numerous allegations about the roles of the defendants, including: Raj Bansal, who was the leader of the organization and directed its operations; Nair and Harjani, who operated Latino African Markets in Arlington and Alexandria, Virginia, and used those businesses to assist the organization with its gambling business and with laundering the profits; Connelly, the former Director of the Office of Inspector and Auditor at the United States Nuclear Regulatory Commission, who owned several businesses and used these to make mortgage loans to gamblers to help collect their gambling debts; and, Moncrieffe, who provided a "no show" job to Raj Bansal, and the gambling business used Moncrieffe's warehouse to host some of their gambling activities.

Court documents also show that the United States is seeking forfeiture of approximately \$7.8 million, and the assets of several businesses alleged to have been involved in the crimes, including: Poto, LLC; R & B Holding; Pro Lenders, LLC; Executive Loans, LLC; Sevtan, LLC; Friendly Trading Services, doing business as "Latino African Market;" Alpine Moving and Storage; Alpine Transfer, Inc.; Atlantic Movers, LLC; and, Premier Transport, LLC.

The Federal Bureau of Investigation, Internal Revenue Service Criminal Investigation, and the Fairfax County Police Department are investigating the case. Assistant United States Attorneys Daniel Grooms and Edmund Power are prosecuting the case on behalf of the United States.

Criminal indictments are only charges and not evidence of guilt. A defendant is presumed to be innocent until and unless proven guilty.

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