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ELEVENTH MEMBER OF CASINO-CHEATING CRIMINAL ENTERPRISE PLEADS GUILTY TO RACKETEERING CONSPIRACY TARGETING CASINOS ACROSS THE UNITED STATES

WASHINGTON – Son Hong Johnson, 45, pleaded guilty today in San Diego to conspiring to participate in a racketeering enterprise, the “Tran Organization,” in a scheme to cheat casinos across the country out of millions of dollars, Acting Assistant Attorney General for the Criminal Division Matthew Friedrich, U.S. Attorney for the Southern District of California Karen P. Hewitt and U.S. Attorney for the Western District of Washington Jeffrey C. Sullivan announced today. Johnson also pleaded guilty to conspiring to commit theft from the Emerald Queen Casino, an Indian tribal gaming establishment near Tacoma, Wash.

A three-count indictment was returned in San Diego on May 22, 2007, and unsealed on May 24, 2007, charging Johnson and 13 others each with one count of conspiracy to participate in the affairs of a racketeering enterprise; one count of conspiracy to commit several offenses against the U.S., including conspiracy to steal money and other property from Indian tribal casinos; and one count of conspiracy to commit money laundering. As part of his plea agreement, Johnson agreed to have a separate indictment against him transferred to San Diego for plea purposes. The separate indictment, returned on May 24, 2007, in the Western District of Washington, charged Johnson and seven others for alleged violations related to card-cheating activity at the Emerald Queen Casino.

The San Diego indictment also charged five separate individuals each with one count of conspiracy to commit several offenses against the U.S., including conspiracy to steal money and other property from Indian tribal casinos; and one count of conspiracy to commit money laundering.

In his plea agreement, Johnson admitted that on numerous occasions between approximately March 2003 and July 2006, he participated in gambling cheats together with other alleged members of the Tran Organization at casinos, such as: Emerald Queen Casino in Tacoma; Foxwoods Resort Casino in Ledyard, Conn.; Mohegan Sun Resort Casino in Uncasville, Conn.; Resorts East Chicago Hotel and Casino, East Chicago, Ind.; and Horseshoe Casino and Hotel, in Tunica, Miss.

Also in the plea agreement, Johnson admitted that he and his co-conspirators unlawfully obtained up to \$7 million during card cheats. For forfeiture purposes, he agreed to a personal money judgment in the amount of \$155,000, which will be entered by way of a preliminary order of forfeiture. He also acknowledged that the restitution that he may be ordered to pay by the court at sentencing is not limited by the forfeiture amount.

According to the indictment, the defendants and others executed a “false shuffle” cheating scheme at some of the listed casinos during blackjack and mini-baccarat games. The indictment alleges that members of the criminal organization bribed casino card dealers and supervisors to perform false shuffles during card games, thereby creating “slugs” of un-shuffled cards. According to the indictment, after tracking the order of cards dealt in a card game, a member of the organization would signal to the card dealer to perform a “false shuffle,” and then members of the group would bet on the known order of

cards when the slug appeared on the table. By doing so, members of the conspiracy repeatedly won thousands of dollars during card games – up to \$868,000 on one occasion.

The indictment also alleges that the members of the organization used sophisticated mechanisms for tracking the order of cards during games, including hidden transmitter devices and specially created software that would predict the order in which cards would reappear during mini-baccarat and blackjack games.

An indictment is merely an allegation and is not evidence of guilt. A defendant is entitled to a fair trial in which it will be the government's burden to prove guilt beyond a reasonable doubt.

Johnson's sentencing is scheduled for Dec. 8, 2008, in San Diego, before District Judge John A. Houston, in U.S. District Court for the Southern District of California. At sentencing, Johnson faces a maximum sentence of 20 years in prison on the racketeering conspiracy charge and a maximum of five years in prison on the conspiracy charge relating to theft from an Indian tribal gaming establishment.

Johnson is the eleventh defendant to plead guilty in the San Diego indictment. Phuong Quoc Truong, Anh Phuong Tran, Martin Lee Aronson, Liem Thanh Lam, George Michael Lee, Barry Wellford, Willy Tran, Tuan Mong Le, Duc Cong Nguyen and Han Truong Nguyen have all pleaded guilty to charges against them related to this scheme. Han Truong Nguyen was sentenced on May 12, 2008, to 27 months in prison and ordered to pay \$1,896,659 in restitution, payable to designated victims in the case. Nguyen was also ordered to serve three years of supervised release. The remaining defendants who pleaded guilty are awaiting sentencing.

The case is being investigated by the FBI's San Diego Field Office; the Internal Revenue Service-Criminal Investigation; the San Diego Sheriff's Department; and the California Department of Justice's Bureau of Gambling Control. The investigation has received assistance from federal, state, tribal and foreign authorities, including: the Ontario Provincial Police; the National Indian Gaming Commission; the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Western District of Washington; FBI Resident Agencies in Gulfport, Miss., Tacoma, and Toledo, Ohio; the Indiana State Police; the Rumsey Rancheria Tribal Gaming Agency; the Sycuan Gaming Commission; the Barona Gaming Commission; the Mississippi Gaming Commission; the Washington State Gambling Commission; and others. The prosecution of the case is led by the Criminal Division's Organized Crime and Racketeering Section (OCRS). Department of Justice Trial Attorneys Joseph K. Wheatley, Robert S. Tully and Gavin A. Corn are prosecuting the indictment in San Diego. Assistant U.S. Attorney J. Tate London of the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Western District of Washington, is prosecuting the case in Seattle related to alleged cheating at the Emerald Queen Casino.

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