

24 charged with scheme to cheat casinos

by UPI

SEATTLE - Federal prosecutors Thursday charged 24 people with bribing employees to cheat casinos across the United States.

The group allegedly targeted 18 casinos, 12 of them operated by Indian tribes. Some of the defendants also face charges in Canada.

Two indictments were unsealed in Seattle and one in San Diego. Many of the defendants were named in both jurisdictions.

The Justice Department said the defendants were involved in a criminal enterprise that defrauded casinos of millions of dollars.

One of the Seattle indictments charges that members of the group conspired in 2003 to cheat the Emerald Queen Casino near Fife, Wash., of more than \$1 million. The suspects allegedly bribed dealers at mini-baccarat tables to perform "false shuffles" that created "slugs" of cards in known order.

The Nooksack River Casino near Deming, Wash., was allegedly cheated of \$90,000 with a similar scheme.

Jacob Nickels -- son of Seattle Mayor Greg Nickels, who worked as a dealer at the casino -- was charged with accepting a \$5,000 bribe.

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