



UNITED STATES ATTORNEY'S OFFICE
Southern District of New York

U.S. ATTORNEY PREET BHARARA

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CONTACT: Ellen Davis, Jerika Richardson,
Carly Sullivan
(212) 637-2600

**DIRECTOR OF PAYMENT PROCESSING FOR ABSOLUTE POKER
PLEADS GUILTY IN MANHATTAN FEDERAL COURT TO INTERNET
GAMBLING AND FRAUD OFFENSES**

Preet Bharara, the United States Attorney for the Southern District of New York, announced that BRENT BECKLEY, the director of payment processing for Absolute Poker, pled guilty today in Manhattan federal court to conspiracy to engage in unlawful internet gambling and conspiracy to commit bank fraud and wire fraud, in connection with a scheme to deceive U.S. banks and financial institutions, using them to process tens of millions of dollars in payments for Absolute Poker. BECKLEY, a United States citizen who had been residing in Costa Rica, where Absolute Poker is based, returned to the United States voluntarily yesterday in connection with a Superseding Indictment unsealed on April 15, 2011, that charged him and 10 others with crimes relating to the illegal operation of three internet poker companies. BECKLEY pled guilty before United States Magistrate Judge Ronald Ellis.

According to the Superseding Indictment, other documents previously filed in the case, and statements made in court:

In late 2006, Congress enacted the Unlawful Internet Gambling Enforcement Act ("UIGEA"), making it a crime to "knowingly accept" most forms of payment "in connection with the participation of another person in unlawful Internet gambling." Following the passage of the UIGEA, leading internet gambling businesses withdrew from the United States market; Absolute Poker, however, did not. Along with several other internet poker companies, Absolute Poker continued to operate in defiance of the UIGEA. Because United States banks were largely unwilling to process payments for an illegal activity such as internet gambling, Absolute Poker allegedly used fraudulent methods to avoid these restrictions and to receive tens of millions of dollars from United States residents who gambled online. As the head of payment processing for Absolute Poker, Beckley oversaw these deceptive processing methods.

For example, because most United States credit card issuers block internet gambling transactions, BECKLEY disguised Absolute Poker transactions so that they would appear to be from other, non-gambling online merchants, such as online flower shops or pet supply stores that would be approved despite credit card company policy. To accomplish this deceit, BECKLEY relied on co-conspirators who allegedly created shell companies, complete with phony websites, to use as covers for Absolute Poker transactions. An Absolute Poker report from the fall of 2007 identified approximately 20 phony internet shopping companies being used by the gambling company to disguise credit card transactions, such as www.petfoodstore.biz and www.bedding-superstore.tv.

BECKLEY surrendered to law enforcement agents yesterday and was released on bail following an appearance before Judge Ellis.

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BECKLEY, 31, faces a maximum sentence of 35 years in prison. He is scheduled to be sentenced by United States District Judge Lewis A. Kaplan on April 19, 2012, at 4:00 p.m.

Four additional defendants charged in the Superseding Indictment have appeared in the United States to date, including Bradley Franzen, Ira Rubin, Chad Elie, and John Campos. Franzen pled guilty on May 23, 2011, and awaits sentencing. Trial for the remaining defendants, who are presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty, is set for March 12, 2012, before Judge Kaplan.

Mr. Bharara thanked the FBI for its outstanding work in the investigation, which he noted is ongoing. Mr. Bharara also thanked Immigration and Customs Enforcement's Homeland Security Investigations New York and New Jersey offices for their continued assistance in the investigation.

This matter being handled by the Office's Complex Frauds and Asset Forfeiture Units. Assistant U.S. Attorneys Arlo Devlin-Brown, Niketh Velamoor, and Nicole Friedlander are in charge of the criminal case, and Assistant U. S. Attorneys Sharon Cohen Levin, Jason Cowley, and Michael Lockard are in charge of related civil money laundering and forfeiture actions.

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