



**CYRUS R. VANCE, JR.**  
DISTRICT ATTORNEY

DISTRICT ATTORNEY – NEW YORK COUNTY

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
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**DISTRICT ATTORNEY VANCE ANNOUNCES INDICTMENT OF  
CAPTAIN AND MEMBERS OF A CREW OF THE  
BONANNO ORGANIZED CRIME FAMILY**

*Indictment Charges Capo, Three Soldiers, and Five Associates of Bonanno Family With Enterprise Corruption, Extortion, Loansharking, Gambling, Drug Dealing, Gun Possession and Sale, and Perjury*

*Two Crew Members Accused of Taking Advantage of Their Leadership Positions Within Teamsters Local*

Manhattan District Attorney Cyrus R. Vance, Jr., today announced the arrests and indictment of a crew of the Bonanno crime family, one of five longtime organized crime families that comprise a nationwide criminal network variously known as “La Cosa Nostra,” the “Mafia,” and the “Mob.” Nine defendants are charged in New York State Supreme Court with Enterprise Corruption, under New York State’s Organized Crime Control Act, and related crimes for their roles in a crew that sought to make money through a wide array of illegal activities, including extortion, loansharking, gambling, drug dealing, and possession of firearms for use or sale.<sup>1</sup> Two defendants are accused of taking advantage of their leadership positions within Local 917, a union of the International Brotherhood of Teamsters, in order to solicit union members as clients of their illicit enterprise; they are additionally charged with Perjury.

The indictment details 299 pattern criminal acts underlying the Enterprise Corruption. The charges are the result of an approximately two-year-long investigation conducted jointly by the District Attorney’s Office’s Rackets Bureau and the NYPD’s Organized Crime Investigation Division (OCID), using a variety of law enforcement investigative techniques, including undercover police work, surveillance, court-ordered eavesdropping, and the execution of search warrants for both physical and Internet evidence. Members of the alleged criminal enterprise include NICHOLAS SANTORA, VITO BADAMO, ERNEST AIELLO, ANTHONY SANTORO, a/k/a “Skinny,” DOMINICK SIANO, NICHOLAS BERNHARD, SCOTT O’NEILL, and ANTHONY URBAN.

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<sup>1</sup>The charges contained in the indictment are merely allegations, and the defendants are presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty.

“Today’s indictment is the absolute heartland of what organized crime prosecutions are about – prosecuting in one fell swoop the diversified rackets of organized crime families,” said District Attorney Vance. “The charges against this Bonanno crew and their captain, Nicholas Santora, make clear that traditional organized crime refuses to go away. This crew’s use of a union president in its corrupt activities is detrimental to honest union workers everywhere. I would like to thank our partners in the NYPD, U.S. Attorney’s Office, and the U.S. Department of Labor for their assistance with this case.”

Police Commissioner Raymond W. Kelly said: “The organized crime activity described in the indictment is as old as the Bonnano crime family, and as relatively new as on-line betting and trafficking in highly addictive Oxycodone. Either way, it’s corrosive to society and lines the pockets of those who use or sanction violence to enrich themselves. I want to commend the outstanding work of the detectives and prosecutors who brought this case to fruition.”

Deputy Inspector General Daniel Petrole of the U.S. Department of Labor’s Office of Inspector General said: “Today’s indictments reflect the Office of Inspector General’s commitment to continue working with our law enforcement partners to investigate union officials who allegedly misuse their positions for personal gain.”

### **The Criminal Enterprise**

According to the indictment and court filings, between approximately March 2010 and February 2012, SANTORA served as the captain – alternately known as a “capo” – for a crew of the Bonanno organized crime family operating in the New York area and elsewhere. AIELLO and BADAMO functioned as acting capos, or otherwise as senior members, who reported to SANTORA. Crews consist of “soldiers” and “associates,” whose purpose is, in part, to insulate and protect the capo; SANTORO functioned as one such soldier beneath AIELLO and BADAMO, while SIANO, BERNHARD, O’NEILL, and URBAN served as associates in this crew.

During the period charged in the indictment, BERNHARD was president of Local 917, a union of the International Brotherhood of Teamsters. Local 917 consists of approximately 1,900 workers in the liquor, automotive, parking, and other industries in the New York area. BADAMO and SANTORO actively promoted BERNHARD’s election in November 2010, and the latter is charged with using his leadership position to benefit himself and the Bonanno crew. Furthermore, BERNHARD is charged with deploying O’NEILL, the union’s assistant shop steward, in the enterprise’s loansharking and gambling activities. Members of Local 917 borrowed money and placed bets in the crew’s loansharking and gambling operations.

The common purpose of the Bonanno crew was to make money through illegal activities, including extortion, loansharking, gambling, drug dealing, and possession of firearms either for use or sale. The money flowed upwards; that is, the associates were obligated to give part of their earnings to their soldier, the soldiers shared that money with the capo, and then those above the capo were to receive their share of the illicit gains. As alleged in the indictment, the defendants sought to evade detection by law enforcement through surreptitious conduct and coded communication in order to conceal their identities and illegal activities. The defendants and others were willing to resort to violence or physical force, or threats of violence or physical force, to further their money-making schemes or to resolve disputes.

## **Extortion & Loansharking**

According to the indictment and court filings, between March 2010 and January 2012, a victim of the loansharking operation borrowed \$15,000 from the Bonanno crew through three different loans, each carrying a usurious interest rate of more than 200 percent, which far exceeds the statutory 25 percent interest rate per year or the equivalent for other time periods. When the victim fell behind in his payments on the third loan, he was threatened in a way that he feared future physical harm. Loansharking records were recovered from BERNHARD's home upon execution of a search warrant.

## **Gambling**

According to the indictment and court filings, the crew engaged in illegal gambling by means of a "wire room" in Costa Rica, through which bettors were able to place bets online for various sporting events, including professional football, baseball, basketball, hockey, and soccer leagues. The betting was monitored by several defendants, who also collected the illegal gambling proceeds. Between July 2011 and February 2012, nearly \$7 million in illegal bets were wagered on 227 days.

## **Drugs**

According to the indictment and court filings, the crew made money by selling marijuana and narcotic drugs such as oxycodone. They also conspired to sell as many as 300,000 tablets of Viagra and Cialis, both prescription medications, for between \$5 and \$20 per tablet. Following the execution of search warrants, nearly ten pounds of marijuana and two dozen manufacturer-boxed tablets of Viagra were recovered from SANTORO's home; more than eight pounds of marijuana and more than 500 pills of oxycodone were recovered from URBAN's home; and approximately 40 grams of marijuana were recovered from SIANO's home and car. Drug paraphernalia was additionally recovered from each of these homes.

## **Guns**

According to the indictment and court filings, BERNHARD and SANTORO frequently spoke of their fondness for guns and willingness to use them, such as when a bettor or borrower of money was late in making payments. The search warrant recoveries showed that they had the means to enforce debt collections or other family business by use of firearms. Twenty pistols and revolvers were recovered from BERNHARD's home, and seven firearms were recovered from SANTORO's home. One of the pistols recovered from SANTORO's home was sold to him by URBAN, and another of SANTORO's pistols was defaced to remove the serial number. Both BERNHARD and SANTORO each additionally possessed hundreds of rounds of ammunition, and BERNHARD was also found to have brass knuckles.

## **Money Collection and Distribution**

According to the indictment and court filings, intercepted telephone conversations and police surveillances of meetings among the defendants revealed a distinct pattern of collection and distribution of money from the crew's illegal activities. SANTORO and BERNHARD collected money from SIANO, URBAN, and O'NEILL. SANTORO and BERNHARD passed a portion of the money to AIELLO and BADAMO, the latter of whom gave the money to SANTORA. Approximately \$250,000 in cash was recovered from

the homes and bank safe deposit boxes of BERNHARD, O'NEILL, SANTORO, SIANO, and URBAN.

## **Perjury**

Finally, BERNHARD and O'NEILL are charged with Perjury in the First Degree for giving intentionally false testimony under oath before an Independent Review Board established in 1989 pursuant to a federal court decree to monitor the Teamsters for organized crime, corruption, and other criminality among or against its membership. BERNHARD is accused of perjuring himself when asked whether he was ever arrested in the past, and whether he was familiar with another one of the defendants. O'NEILL is accused of committing perjury when asked if he ever collected loan payments for someone else.

Assistant District Attorneys Brian D. Foley and Gary J. Galperin, Senior Investigative Counsel to the Rackets Bureau, are handling the prosecution of the case, under the supervision of Eric Seidel, Chief of the Organized Crime Unit; Daniel D. Brownell, Chief of the Rackets Bureau; and Executive Assistant District Attorney David Szuchman, Chief of the Investigation Division. Assistant District Attorneys Deborah Hickey, Senior Investigative Counsel, Noah D. Genel, Senior Investigative Counsel, and Brian P. Weinberg assisted with the investigation. Assistant District Attorney Madeleine Guilmain is handling the asset forfeiture aspect of the case, under the supervision of Assistant District Attorney Duncan Levin, Chief of the Asset Forfeiture Unit.

Trial Preparation Assistants Ana Baldrige, Olivia Clements, Rachel Schorr and Gerard Quinn; former Trial Preparation Assistants Sara Arrow, Dan Taylor, and Mariel Villareal; Financial Investigator William Tamparo and Crimes Against Revenue Program consultant Bing Fonseca-Sabune provided valuable assistance on the investigation.

District Attorney Vance thanked NYPD Commissioner Raymond W. Kelly, Chief Anthony J. Izzo of the Organized Crime Control Bureau, OCID Deputy Chief Brian H. O'Neill, and OCID Detectives Angelo Barone, Joshua Vanderpool, and Salvatore Leotta, under the supervision of Captain John Dusanenko, Lieutenant Edward Barry, and Sergeant Jose Torrellas. Retired Detectives John Mullen and Andrew Varga assisted with the case.

District Attorney Vance also thanked Loretta E. Lynch, U.S. Attorney for the Eastern District of New York, and Assistant U.S. Attorney Nicole Argentieri; the FBI's New York Field Office; Special Investigator Donald F. Schwally of the Chief Investigator's Office, Independent Review Board; and the U.S. Department of Labor, including Assistant Special Agent-in-Charge Jonathan R. Mellone and Special Agent Michael Gross.

ERNEST AIELLO, D.O.B. 6/8/79  
Bronx, NY

### **Charges:**

- Enterprise Corruption, a class B felony, 1 count
- Grand Larceny in the Second Degree, a class C felony, 1 count
- Criminal Usury in the First Degree, a class C felony, 1 count

VITO BADAMO, D.O.B. 8/1/62  
Brooklyn, NY

Charges:

- Enterprise Corruption, a class B felony, 1 count
- Grand Larceny in the Second Degree, a class C felony, 1 count
- Criminal Usury in the First Degree, a class C felony, 1 count

NICHOLAS BERNHARD, D.O.B. 9/13/61  
Congers, NY

Charges:

- Enterprise Corruption, a class B felony, 1 count
- Grand Larceny in the Second Degree, a class C felony, 1 count
- Criminal Usury in the First Degree, a class C felony, 1 count
- Perjury in the First Degree, a class D felony, 2 counts

SCOTT O'NEILL, D.O.B. 1/20/65  
Howard Beach, NY

Charges:

- Enterprise Corruption, a class B felony, 1 count
- Grand Larceny in the Second Degree, a class C felony, 1 count
- Criminal Usury in the First Degree, a class C felony, 1 count
- Perjury in the First Degree, a class D felony, 1 count

NICHOLAS SANTORA, D.O.B. 6/21/42  
Deer Park, NY

Charges:

- Enterprise Corruption, a class B felony, 1 count
- Grand Larceny in the Second Degree, a class C felony, 1 count
- Criminal Usury in the First Degree, a class C felony, 1 count

ANTHONY SANTORO, a/k/a "Skinny," D.O.B. 7/28/63  
Staten Island, NY

Charges:

- Enterprise Corruption, a class B felony, 1 count
- Grand Larceny in the Second Degree, a class C felony, 1 count
- Criminal Usury in the First Degree, a class C felony, 1 count

DOMINICK SIANO, D.O.B. 4/25/90  
Howard Beach, NY

Charge:

- Enterprise Corruption, a class B felony, 1 count

ANTHONY URBAN, D.O.B. 7/25/63  
Staten Island, NY

Charge:

- Enterprise Corruption, a class B felony

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