

Prosecutors: Casino 'high rollers' from Sandy gambled \$346,000 in drug money

Written by Administrator

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Crime » Sandy couple charged with money laundering and felony tax evasion.

A pair of well-known West Wendover casino "high rollers" from Sandy, who spent more than \$384,000 at a Nevada casino over two years, were actually gambling proceeds generated from an illegal drug operation, according to documents filed Wednesday in 3rd District Court.

Robert Thomas Rust, 33, and his wife, Susana Montano Rust, 39, are charged in 3rd District Court with one count each of second-degree felony money laundering and third-degree felony tax evasion.

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A \$10,000 arrest warrant has been issued for each defendant.

The Rusts allegedly used slot machines at the Wendover Nugget Hotel and Casino to launder about \$384,569 in unexplained funds, according to charging documents.

Authorities claim the pair would drive their ill-gotten gains — believed to have been accumulated by operating a methamphetamine ring in Sandy — across the Nevada border to turn the cash into casino receipts, according to the charging documents.

Scott Reed, division chief of the AG's Criminal Justice Division, said running criminal proceeds through a casino and then claiming the results as "gambling winnings," which are taxable income, has always been a common method used in laundering money.

During January 2012 alone, investigators said Robert Rust spent up to \$150,000 at the casino, and his wife frequently traveled with him.

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Charging documents show there was no way the couple could have had so much legitimate money to burn. Robert Rust reported on his federal and state taxes that he worked at Panda Express making \$18,796.87 a year, and Susana Rust worked at Jani-King making \$8,113.45 a year, according to charging documents.

In addition to the casino funds, the two also had \$121,811 in cash deposits from an unknown income source, and tens of thousands of dollars in cash moving in and out of various bank accounts, investigators allege.

Prosecutors said the couple also laundered additional funds by spending \$36,000 in cash for two vehicles — including a Hummer for Robert Rust — up to \$4,000 a month on shopping trips for Susana Rust, and up to \$1,000 a month on clothing and jewelry for the pair.

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Authorities allege Robert Rust was dealing methamphetamine and his wife was aware of it. Neither has been charged with any drug counts.

Police said they conducted surveillance on the Rust home during which they noticed a lot of traffic coming and going. And police busted for drugs a confidential informant, who told them Rust was the distributor, according to charges. Investigators also stopped two other vehicles leaving the Rusts' home and found distribution-type quantities of meth both times, according to charges.

When police searched Robert Rust's Hummer, they found "owe sheets" detailing tens of thousands of dollars in transactions. Inside the Rusts' home, were guns, scales, \$8,774 in cash and numerous receipts for "substantial" amounts of money from various Nevada casinos.

Police also studied Western Union money transfers sent to Robert Rust from individuals with drug-related arrests from cities throughout Nevada.

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According to court documents, the Utah Attorney General's Office is seeking to seize \$37,154.37 and the Hummer, which they allege are proceeds from the unlawful drug distribution and are currently being stored at the West Valley Police Department.

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