

Guns Banned From Indian Casino in California

Written by Administrator
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CORNING, Calif. — A federal judge has banned guns from a Native American casino in Northern California that is at the center of an escalating tribal dispute, citing a potential threat to public safety.

Judge Kimberly J. Mueller of District Court last week imposed a temporary restraining order that prohibits disputing factions of the Paskenta Band of Nomlaki Indians from deploying armed guards or carrying firearms within 100 yards of the tribe's [Rolling Hills Casino](#) here. The order remains in effect until July 2.

The judge stopped short of closing the \$100-million-a-year casino, as one faction had requested until the battle over who controls the tribe and its resources is resolved. The office of Attorney General Kamala Harris filed for the restraining order early last week to prevent any public safety threat after both sides hired armed personnel on the casino grounds. The weapons ban extends to tribal properties around the casino, including hotels and a recreational vehicle park.

The two rival security groups faced off on casino grounds on June 9, and deputies from the Tehama County Sheriff's Department had to intervene, Assistant Sheriff Phil Johnston said. Deputies spent a week at the casino trying to keep the peace, he said.

Sheriff Dave Hencratt said Friday that his department had removed a command post, as he hoped the factions would be able to reach a conclusion. He said, however, that the department would enforce the restraining order if necessary.

"We all want this to be resolved peacefully," Sheriff Hencratt said.

Tensions arose in April when the tribe's general council voted to remove more than 70 members from the tribe's rolls. The dispute centers on who qualifies for membership and the \$54,000 a year in casino payments, as well as trust funds and scholarships for children.

Those taken off the rolls included three members of tribe's governing body. They were recently

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reinstated — even though they have been barred from entering the casino under orders from the tribal chairman.

The federal Bureau of Indian Affairs said on June 9 that it recognized the three ousted council members as part of the tribe's governing body. A fourth tribal council member, who is said to have vacated his seat and joined the ranks of the three removed council members, is also being recognized by the federal agency.

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