

Canadian man pleads guilty to poker charges

September 19 2012, by Larry Neumeister

(AP)—A Canadian man who once led the payment processing at two online poker companies pleaded guilty Wednesday to conspiracy and gambling charges, agreeing to cooperate in the government's crackdown on the businesses.

Nelson Burtnick, of Vancouver, entered the plea before a magistrate judge in U.S. District Court in Manhattan, where several others have already pleaded guilty to similar charges. He is among nearly a dozen people charged in a case that shut down U.S. operations of the three largest poker companies.

The 41-year-old Burtnick said he knew he was breaking the law when he disguised payments from U.S. customers of Full Tilt Poker and Pokerstars to make it seem that they were not gambling proceeds. Prosecutors said he committed the crimes between December 2006 and April 2011.

He said he and others at the companies found ways to disguise the flow of money out of U.S. banking institutions because they knew that U.S. laws did not permit banks to process gambling proceeds.

"This made servicing the company's U.S. customers extremely difficult," he said.

Prosecutors have said employees of the Internet poker companies made it appear to banks as if the gambling transactions originated at websites for golf stores and other businesses.

A plea agreement called for Burtnick to pay an unspecified amount of restitution and to forfeit all money derived from the crime, along with any unpaid salary from his employment at the companies.

His sentencing was set for Dec. 19 on charges that carry a potential penalty of up to 15 years in prison. Prosecutors indicated they would recommend leniency if Burtnick fully cooperates.

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