

Gotti guys arrested in Vegas strong-arm

By GREG B. SMITH

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The mob family run by John Gotti dispatched a team of hit men to Las Vegas in a daring bid to take over the city's private exotic dancing industry, prosecutors charged yesterday.

The bold cross-country killing mission was thwarted last weekend by arrests in Manhattan's Pete's Tavern and in Las Vegas, where five hoods were nabbed after kidnapping a man in the "out-calling" business, an indictment said.

Out-calling is the name for a multi-million-dollar Las Vegas industry in which dancers perform privately in hotel rooms. Though legal, it often masks prostitution.

Agents moved in because they feared the gangsters were poised to kill, Assistant U.S. Attorney Robert Buehler said in court yesterday.

Prosecutors argue that the six men nabbed were acting on orders from the Gambino crime family, which they claim Gotti runs from the Marion, Ill., prison cell where he is serving a life term.

They said it would be highly unlikely for Gotti underlings to make such a brazen move without his approval.

Those arrested include alleged Gambino associate Mario Stefano and Vincent (Vinnie Aspirins) Congiusti,

an accused hit man who has boasted of torturing his victims by drilling into their skulls, according to court papers.

The drama began to unfold in November 1997, when a New York exotic dancing operator tried to expand to Las Vegas — and was beaten by a member of law enforcement and told to get out of town, according to court papers.

In August, the operator was contacted by Stefano, who

said he would make it possible for the man to operate in Las Vegas for \$10,000. Stefano said he would dispatch two hit men to Las Vegas from Tampa, Fla., to "bang heads," according to the indictment.

Stefano had no idea the man was wearing a hidden microphone as part of an FBI probe, according to court papers.

On Oct. 5, Stefano met with the man at Pete's Tavern on Irving Place and told him Congiusti and a cohort were head-

ing to Vegas, the indictment said.

On Friday, the FBI swept into the office of alleged mob-connected Las Vegas out-call operator Christiano DeCarlo, and found him, Congiusti, alleged co-hit man Anton Nelson and two other Las Vegas thugs threatening a man affiliated with a competitor. All five were arrested.

Stefano, 64, was arrested at Pete's Tavern on Monday, the papers said.

Gotti's name was not mentioned in the indictment, but his son, John A. (Junior) Gotti, was, with the FBI alleging that the younger Gotti loaned \$100,000 to one of the alleged mobsters whom authorities connected to the Vegas move.

Still, prosecutors left no doubt who they thought was behind the plot, saying it "appears from investigations conducted by the FBI that the Gambino La Cosa Nostra family is behind the attempt to gain control of the Las Vegas out-call industry."

An attorney for both Gottis, Bruce Cutler, said yesterday, "I don't know anything about it, and I certainly don't give it any credence."

Stefano's attorney, public defender Yuan Chung Lee, yesterday portrayed his client as a senior citizen who takes care of his ailing sister. He was jailed pending a hearing today.

Aspirins gives headaches

When the Gambino crime family needs to take care of a headache, prosecutors say they know just who to call — Vinnie Aspirins.

His real name is Vincent Congiusti, one of six arrested in a plot for the family to take over exotic dancing in Las Vegas.

Gambino associate Mario Stefano claimed Congiusti once used a drill "to drill holes into an individual's head," court papers allege.

Congiusti's cohort in the Las Vegas plot, Anton Nelson, whose nickname is "Angel of Mercy," is an expert in explosives and once

said he blew up the office of his dentist "because he was angry," prosecutors charge.

The duo arrived in Las Vegas on Oct. 7 and staked out the homes and offices of several out-calling operators. After kidnapping an associate of one of the Las Vegas exotic dancing operators, they were arrested Friday, prosecutors said.

When the FBI searched Congiusti's rental car, they discovered two bulletproof vests, a rifle and a penlike device that converted to an ice pick, said Assistant U.S. Attorney Robert Buehler.

And a cordless drill.

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