

Gambling on reservations targeted

SPOKANE, Wash. (AP) — The dispute over Nevada-style gambling on Washington state Indian reservations headed to court Monday, when the federal government asked a judge to prohibit slot machines at a Spokane tribal casino.

The civil lawsuit came nine days after the Spokane Indian Tribe opened its Two Rivers Resort Casino, featuring more than 100 electronic and lever-pull slot machines.

Neither casino manager Steve Williams, nor tribal executives Bruce Wynne or John Kieffer, were in their offices Monday afternoon. Attorney Scott Crowell, who represents the tribe in gambling issues, did not return a call for comment Monday.

In motions filed Monday, the government asked a federal judge to rule that the slot machines violate state and federal laws. It also seeks an injunction to enjoin the tribe from offering slots or other types of Nevada-style gambling.

The motion seeks forfeiture of the gaming machines.

Jim Connelly, U.S. Attorney for Eastern Washington, said the government will ask the court to expedite hearings.

State law enforcement and elected officials have pressured the Justice Department to shut down the slot operations that have spread across the Eastern Washington reservation and trust lands.

The state has no jurisdiction on the reservation, which is considered a sovereign nation.

Sen. Slade Gorton, R-Wash., this month wrote Attorney General Janet Reno seeking federal intervention.

Connelly said his office had been studying the legal issues for three or four months and was not pressured to act.

"This was not what I would call a response to any arm twisting by anybody," Connelly said. "We simply had to complete our investigation and get authorization from the Justice Department, which we did Friday."

State Gambling Commission Director Frank

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— Jim Connelly,
U.S. Attorney for Eastern Washington

Miller said state officials made a concerted plea for federal action to keep compacts already negotiated with 10 tribes from falling apart.

"We're pleased the U.S. attorney has finally brought an action," Miller said. "We are hopeful this will be resolved in the courts and in very expeditious manner."

Miller is still negotiating gambling compacts with nine other tribes.

The government cited a provision in the Indian Gaming Regulatory Act of 1988, which says state laws apply on Indian reservations for so-called Class III gambling when there is no compact with the state, assistant U.S. attorney Jim Shively said.

The tribe contends a federal court ruling last summer gave Washington state tribes the right to offer Nevada-style gambling activities without negotiating a tribe-state compact.

U.S. District Judge Fremming Nielsen, in a case involving the Colville Confederated Tribes, ruled last June that states could not constitutionally be forced to negotiate compacts with Indian tribes under the Indian Gaming Act.

The Spokanes interpreted that to mean a compact was not necessary to offer the Class III, or Nevada-style game, games. On March 19, they opened their 5,000-square-foot casino as part of a planned economic development on the southwestern corner of their 1-million-acre reservation.

The Colvilles, with a 1.3-million-acre reservation, have announced plans to open two casinos June 1. The Yakama Tribe also has announced casino plans.

Vietnam veterans unite at convention

SAN JOSE, Calif. (AP) — About 600 Vietnamese and American veterans of the Vietnam War gathered this weekend for a conference billed as the first large-scale meeting of the two groups.

"This is a meeting between friends," said Maj. Nguyen Quy An, a Vietnamese helicopter pilot who lost both arms saving U.S. soldiers.

The men, many in uniform, mustered at the Vet to Vet Conference at a high school where they talked, watched traditional Vietnamese dances, heard speeches and ate Vietnamese box lunches.

Carl Jensen, who was wounded by a mine in 1967, said he appreciated the dances and food.

"I wasn't exposed to much of the culture," he said of his war experience. "We were there to find the Viet Cong. We didn't get to see the dances, the sociology of the Vietnamese culture."

Despite the common bond of war, the two groups socialized separately at the event on Saturday.

"I wish there was a way that we could mesh together," said Jensen. "I hope that will happen with more gatherings."

The conference offered a chance for the veterans from both nations to discuss one another's trials and struggles "under the flag of freedom," said former South Vietnamese Army Maj. Nguyen Nhu Duoc, chairman of the San Jose chapter of the Association of Former Vietnamese Political Prisoners.

"It's a chance for us to share our emotional and psychological experiences from the war," he said. "We both spent our youths in uniform."

Duoc said some U.S. soldiers faced social rejection and psychological problems after the war while many Vietnamese soldiers languished in "re-education" camps.

Ken Cook, who did two tours of Vietnam while with the Navy, agreed the Vietnamese soldiers "went through more than we did."

"Maybe the United States lost the war, but the Vietnamese lost their country," he said.

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