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PRESS RELEASE

Former 21st Century Fox Executive and Argentina-Based Sports Marketing Company Full Play Group S.A., Convicted of Bribing Soccer Officials in FIFA Case

Thursday, March 9, 2023

For Immediate Release

U.S. Attorney's Office, Eastern District of New York

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The Defendants Wanted Control Over Lucrative Soccer Broadcast Rights and to Expand Fox Sports' Reach into South America

Former 21st-Century Fox Executive Hernan Lopez and Argentine sports marketing company Full Play Group S.A., were convicted today by a federal jury in Brooklyn on all counts of a superseding indictment charging them with wire fraud and money laundering conspiracies for their participation in schemes to bribe executives of soccer's highest governing bodies — FIFA, CONMEBOL, and, in Full Play's case, CONCACAF — for the media and broadcasting rights to lucrative soccer tournaments. The verdict followed a seven-week trial before United States District Judge Pamela K. Chen. When sentenced, Lopez faces up to 40 years in prison and millions of dollars in penalties to be determined by Judge Chen. Full Play faces millions of dollars in financial penalties. Co-defendant Carlos Martinez was acquitted on both counts.

Breon Peace, United States Attorney for the Eastern District of New York; Michael J. Driscoll, Assistant Director-in-Charge, Federal Bureau of Investigation, New York Field Office (FBI); and Tyler Hatcher, Special Agent-in-Charge, Internal Revenue Service Criminal Investigation, Los Angeles Field Office (IRS-CI), announced the verdict.

"Today's verdict is a resounding victory for justice and for soccer fans around the world. The defendants cheated by bribing soccer officials to act in their own greedy interests rather than in the best interests of the sport," stated United States Attorney Peace. "The verdict today reflects this Office's ongoing commitment to rooting out corruption at the highest levels. Companies and individuals alike should understand that, regardless of their wealth or power, they will be brought to justice if they use the U.S. financial system to further corrupt ends."

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Mr. Peace extended his thanks to the agents and other investigative personnel at the FBI New York Eurasian Joint Organized Crime Squad, the FBI's Integrity in Sport and Gaming Initiative and the IRS-CI Los Angeles Field Office, as well as their colleagues and law enforcement partners in the United States and abroad.

"The many bribery schemes that the beautiful game has endured are brought one step closer to justice by the convictions of Mr. Lopez and Full Play Group S.A.. Soccer fans around the world had a front row seat to these schemes as we watched tournaments by FIFA, CONMEBOL, and, in Full Play's case, CONCACAF, through the media and broadcasting rights procured by fraud," stated IRS-CI Special Agent-in-Charge Hatcher. "The defendants hid their corrupt acts behind middlemen, offshore bank accounts, and a facade of respectability, but they could not hide from justice. The IRS and our partners at the FBI and the Department of Justice work tirelessly to expose these corrupt acts, and today these defendants were held accountable for their actions."

The international soccer federation known as FIFA is comprised of six continental confederations, including the Confederation of North, Central American and Caribbean Association Football (CONCACAF), headquartered in the United States, and the Confederación Sudamericana de Fútbol (CONMEBOL).

As proven at trial, the defendants used their positions in the world of international soccer to engage in schemes involving the solicitation, offer, acceptance, payment and receipt of bribes and kickbacks, principally to obtain lucrative broadcast rights to various international soccer tournaments and events.

Full Play, a sports marketing company incorporated in Uruguay, based in Buenos Aires, Argentina, and owned by father-and-son defendants Hugo Jinkis and Mariano Jinkis, participated in numerous schemes to pay bribes to officials of CONMEBOL and CONCACAF in exchange for media and marketing rights to various soccer events, including World Cup qualifier and friendly matches, the Copa Libertadores, and multiple editions of the Copa América, a national team tournament administered by CONMEBOL. Hugo and Mariano Jinkis, charged in the first indictment in the case unsealed on May 27, 2015, remain fugitives.

Lopez, a formerly high-ranking executive of Fox subsidiaries responsible for developing and carrying out Fox's sports broadcasting businesses in Latin America, joined Full Play and other co-conspirators in a scheme involving the annual payment of millions of dollars in bribes to officials of CONMEBOL in exchange for the lucrative broadcasting rights to the Copa Libertadores, the region's most popular club tournament, among other events. Lopez also relied on loyalty secured through the payment of bribes to certain CONMEBOL officials to advance the business interests of Fox, including to obtain confidential bidding information for the rights to broadcast the 2018 and 2022 World Cup tournaments in the United States, rights that Fox successfully obtained.

Today's conviction is the latest accomplishment in the investigation of corruption in international soccer being led by the U.S. Attorney's Office of the Eastern District of New York, the FBI's New York Field Office and the IRS-CI Los Angeles Field Office. Criminal charges have been brought against more than 50 defendants from more than 20 countries, resulting to date in guilty pleas by more than 30 individual and corporate defendants and trial convictions of 3 individuals and 1 corporation. In addition, 2 corporations have resolved via deferred prosecution agreements and 3 corporations have resolved via non-prosecution agreements. Each has agreed to pay substantial financial penalties.

The government's case was prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorneys Kaitlin T. Farrell, Robert T. Polemeni, Victor Zapana and Eric Silverberg, with key assistance provided by Assistant United States Attorneys Kristin Mace and Brian D. Morris, paralegals Matthew Flink, Jordi Martinez and Kavya Kannan, and the Justice Department's Office of International Affairs and Organized Crime and Gang Section.

The Defendants:

HERNAN LOPEZ

Age: 52

Los Angeles, California

FULL PLAY GROUP S.A.
Buenos Aires, Argentina

E.D.N.Y. Docket No. 15-CR-252 (S-3) (PKC)

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March 15, 2023

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