

FBI meets with Cleveland casino officials to warn them about potential crime

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View full size Plain Dealer file While a Cleveland casino is expected to bring in plenty of revenue, local FBI officials hope to prevent a wave of crime arriving with it as well. CLEVELAND, Ohio -- The **FBI in Cleveland** isn't waiting for a casino to be built -- temporary or otherwise -- to make a pre-emptive strike.

Agents recently met with **Cavs owner and casino builder Dan Gilbert** and his staff to prepare them for the ways crime can creep into the casino scene.

"This isn't our first rodeo," said Cleveland FBI agent-in-charge Frank Figliuzzi. "The FBI around the country and around the world has a history with casino operations."

He said Gilbert and his security staff came to FBI headquarters on Lakeside Avenue "and they received a briefing on historical issues that we have seen arise in cities that have taken on casino gaming."

Figliuzzi said those issues include organized crime, union and labor issues and various corruption schemes that have arisen in other cities.

He added, "We want to make the players aware of what these things look like when and if they see them occurring, and sensitizing them to some of the issues that could occur early on, based on what the FBI around the country has seen."

Vigilance begins with the hiring process: "We've seen casinos compromised from within," Figliuzzi said.

The FBI is working with the U.S. attorney's office in Cleveland "to think about resources and proactive efforts we can take," Figliuzzi said, and the meeting with Gilbert and his staff was one of those.

Jennifer Kulczycki, spokeswoman for Dan Gilbert's Rock Ohio Ventures, confirmed the meeting with the FBI. "They had called, and we were receptive to that," she said. "We're interested in contributing and working together with the communities we're in."

Kulczycki said she wasn't at the meeting, "But the discussion was about things to be on the lookout for, and it was good advice, good information."

She also said that private discussions about the possibility of a temporary casino in Cleveland -- the old Higbee's building has been mentioned as a possible site -- are continuing, but that there hadn't been any new developments. Mayor Frank Jackson recently said he supports the idea.

Figliuzzi is also asking for the public's vigilance on casino matters, which he described as the best way "to make sure any operation is a clean operation." People with tips can call the FBI at 216-522-1400.

Before coming to Cleveland in 2007, Figliuzzi was the FBI's chief inspector, responsible for assessing FBI operations around the world. He has also run large FBI units in San Francisco, Miami and Washington, D.C.

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