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Are you one of *America's most wanted*?

If you're in the online gambling business and planning a trip to the US in the near future, whether for business or pleasure, you may need to take more than your blackberry, chinos and sun block.

As everybody knows, there are currently no federal laws specifically addressing online gambling, but the US authorities are mobilising right now, armed with the decidedly sketchy Wire Wager Act.

So, even if your company has never taken a single wager over the phone, rather than the wife perhaps your attorney should accompany you on your next trip... just in case you find yourself on racketeering, conspiracy and fraud charges!

Ok, this is highly unlikely

Martin Owens, an attorney who specializes in online and interactive gaming law, says "first, online gambling is a business that has progressed from nothing 10 years ago, to a \$12 billion global industry, still growing. And it has done this in the teeth of all the opposition that the authorities could throw at it. The occasional arrest or threat of prosecution will not change that"

With the BETonSPORTS case in mind, the stance the US authorities appear to be taking is worrying indeed. If the 'powers that be' are looking to aggressively pursue gambling companies operating across international borders, the online gambling community needs to sit up and start taking the situation seriously.

"The arrest of David Carruthers represents a giant step backward in American gaming policy. It serves only to daunt and intimidate precisely that segment of the industry, which is attempting to bring online gambling into a harmonious and useful relationship with the licensed gaming regimes already in place," continues Attorney at Law, Martin Owens, "grabbing Carruthers does nothing at all against the true pirates of the industry- to the contrary, it reinforces their position."

Mark Grossman, Technology lawyer and the author of the "TechLaw" column, which has appeared as a weekly feature in the Miami Herald adds to this sentiment:

"I don't think this [arrest] spells doom and gloom for the industry. This has always been an industry where those in the business understood the legal risks inherent in their operation. For years now, the government has been aggressive in the public positions they have taken about the legality of online gaming operations. The fact is that the laws are ambiguous and Congress, after years of trying to pass news laws that address the ambiguities, has not been able get anything approved by both houses of Congress. So does the latest arrest spell the end of the industry? Of course not. However, I suppose that there will be fewer layovers in Dallas by executives involved in an online gaming business."

That said, the short-term impact is undoubtedly one of investor confidence. Anita Yaa Agyeman, Director of the October Bullet Business www.bulletbusiness.com Poker Summit - North America says "few companies can prosper and grow with repeated assaults on their stock price – stability is key to longer-term growth and while question marks remain as to the legality of online operations investors will be jumpy and the industry is compromised."

The primary problem is that nobody is sure how the situation is likely to play out. Some are blasé, after all, the industry has always found a way to survive in the past. But the gambling business today is more high profile and profitable than it has ever been *and* more legitimate. But the problems that come with finding a legal leg to stand on in the internet gambling space look like they are here to stay for a while yet.

"There is a genuine controversy here, based on the fact that Internet gambling is legal under the laws of at least 70 countries at the same time that the United States purports to ban it," comments Martin Owens. "I say purports because that is not a clear law or decision. At the time of this writing, there is as yet no federal law on the books unequivocally banning i-Gambling, and no federal court decision to that effect. The issue of whether or not American state or federal jurisdiction is invoked simply by the act of

an American contacting an offshore gambling site has not even been intelligently addressed, never mind decided”.

“Bullet Business www.bulletbusiness.com is researching the issues carefully at this time and will be bringing together key thought leaders and industry players at all our shows later this year to discuss the industry’s best responses’ says Anita Yaa Agyeman.

“As the big Bullet Business shows are in Montreal Canada and London England there shouldn’t be a problem for anybody looking to join in with debate” she says - smiling.

The Bullet Business Poker Summit North America runs October 3 and 4. Full information can be found at www.bulletbusiness.com/na/pr

The Bullet Business Poker Summit Europe runs in December. Full information will be available shortly at www.bulletbusiness.com/europe

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