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Ex-FIFA VP Ordered To Pay \$6.7M For Bribery Scheme Role

By **Bonnie Eslinger**

Law360 (February 1, 2018, 4:08 PM EST) -- A New York federal court on Wednesday ordered Jeffrey Webb, a former FIFA vice president who headed the soccer association's governing body in North and Central America and the Caribbean, to forfeit \$6.7 million for his role in the international sport's massive bribery scandal.

Webb had previously pled guilty to racketeering conspiracy, wire fraud conspiracy and money laundering conspiracy, according to the federal government.

Webb agreed to the forfeiture, "which represents monies the defendant received as a result of his participation in bribery, fraud, embezzlement and money laundering" in connection with his role as an official with FIFA; the Confederation of North, Central American and Caribbean Association Football; and other soccer organizations, according to the Wednesday order.

Signed by U.S. District Judge Pamela K. Chen, the order states that the money needs to be paid by July, 32 months after Webb's November 2015 plea agreement with the government.

Web was **among the first** high-ranking FIFA officials arrested three years ago in connection with an entrenched practice involving soccer officials and corporate executives in which hundreds of millions of dollars in bribes and kickbacks was exchanged for lucrative media and marketing rights to international soccer tournaments and other valuable rights, according to prosecutors.

As part of the federal government's sprawling case, two South American soccer presidents were convicted in December of racketeering conspiracy, the culmination of the extensive effort by the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Eastern District of New York to **root out corruption** at the highest levels of international soccer.

The conspiracy involved dozens of media rights contracts that the sport's governing elite in the Americas negotiated over more than two decades. In each regional organization — CONCACAF in North and Central America and the Caribbean, and CONMEBOL in South America — similar dynamics were at play, according to prosecutors.

Since the early years of the scheme, in the 1980s and 1990s, Webb and other former officials established the practice of bribery in the awarding of rights contracts to sports marketing companies, prosecutors say. Around 2010, a new faction emerged within CONMEBOL, according to the government.

Webb was one of eight guilty pleas in the case announced by the Department of Justice in

December 2015, along with the arrests of then-CONCACAF President Alfredo Hawit and CONMEBOL President Juan Angel Napout, and charges against more than a **dozen other defendants**.

Napout is one of the two defendants convicted in December of racketeering conspiracy. Last month, he and Jose Maria Marin, 85, a former Brazilian soccer federation president, asked Judge Chen **to reverse** their convictions or grant them a new trial, arguing the prosecutors failed to prove their bribery allegations in the trial, which was the first stemming from the FIFA investigation.

A federal **jury convicted** Napout and Marin after a week of deliberations following the five-week trial. Napout was found not guilty of both money laundering conspiracy charges he faced, while Marin was found not guilty of one count of the money laundering conspiracy charges against him. Both men were found guilty of multiple wire fraud conspiracy charges related to the acceptance of bribe payments. A third defendant, Manuel Burga, 60, the former president of the Peruvian soccer association, was acquitted of racketeering conspiracy, the only charge he faced due to limits on his extradition. Prosecutors told the court last week that they want to keep open other charges against him despite the acquittal.

Counsel for Webb was not immediately reachable for comment on Thursday. A press representative for the DOJ said the agency had no comment on Wednesday's order.

Webb is represented by Ernie Gao of Clifford Chance LLP.

The government is represented by M. Kristin Mace, Samuel P. Nitze, Keith D. Edelman and Paul A. Tuchmann of the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Eastern District of New York.

The case is U.S. v. Napout et al., case number 1:15-cr-00252, in the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of New York.

-- Additional reporting by Sindhu Sundar and Zachary Zagger. Editing by Aaron Pelc.