



THE UNITED STATES ATTORNEY'S OFFICE
WESTERN DISTRICT *of* VIRGINIA

U.S. Attorneys » Western District of Virginia » News

Department of Justice

U.S. Attorney's Office

Western District of Virginia

SHARE 

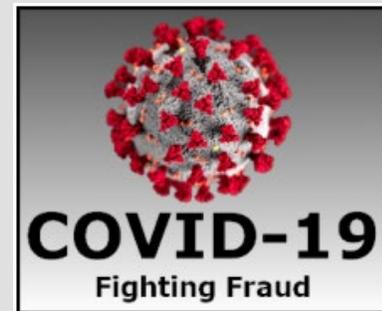
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Friday, June 9, 2017

Cockfighting Pit That Operated For More Than 30 Years Destroyed; Men Who Owned the Property Sentenced

Defendants Forfeited \$100,000; Paid to Destroy Big Blue Cockfighting Venue

Abingdon, VIRGINIA – The 8,000 square-foot facility known as the Big Blue Sportsman's Club in McDowell, Kentucky, which had hosted cockfights for more than 30 years, was razed following the guilty pleas of the property's two owners in March. Those two individuals, Shirley Ray Slone and Vernon Kelly Slone, have been sentenced in Federal Court, Acting United States Attorney Rick A. Mountcastle and Virginia Attorney General Mark Herring announced.





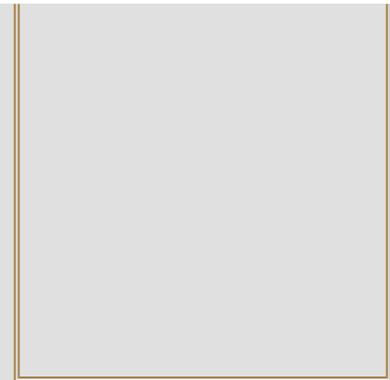
Yesterday in the United States District Court for the Western District of Virginia in Abingdon, Shirley Ray Slone, 73, and Vernon Kelly Slone, 69, both of McDowell, Kentucky, who had forfeited \$100,000 as part of their plea agreements, were sentenced to probation for a term of one year. At a previously hearing, each pled guilty to one count of conspiracy to cause others to attend a cockfight. In addition, the pair agreed to pay for the complete destruction of the 8,000 square-foot facility known as the Big Blue Sportsman’s Club. The demolition of pit was completed in early May.

Shirley and Vernon Slone owned the property in McDowell, Kentucky that housed the Big Blue Sportsman’s Club, a 5,000-member club that hosted cockfights for more than 30 years. The facility, a 8,000 square-foot building that featured arena-style seating, multiple fighting pits and a restaurant, was the site of a law enforcement raid in 2014. Federal charges relating to cockfighting, gambling and narcotics arose out of the investigation. According to testimony presented in today’s hearing, the Slones began hosting cockfights at Big Blue in 1977 and quit operating the facility in the early 1990s. They then leased the facility to others for use as a cockfighting pit. The individuals who rented the facility paid the Slones \$3 for each person who attended a cockfight.

Seven other individuals were previously convicted and sentenced for their roles in the Big Blue cockfighting conspiracy, as follows:

<u>Defendant</u>	<u>Imprisonment:</u>
Russell D. Peaks	24 months
Jonathan Robinson	12 months
Wesley Dean Robinson	6 months
Joshua Stumbo	10 months
Sonya Stumbo	10 months
Walter Stumbo	18 months
Jimmy Crate Willis	probation

Assistant United States Attorney Randy Ramseyer and Special Assistant United States Attorney/Virginia Assistant Attorney General Michelle Welch prosecuted these cases



**RESOURCES
for
VICTIMS and
WITNESSES**

[LEARN MORE](#)



**Community
Outreach**

[LEARN MORE](#)

**Resources for Law
Enforcement**

**LAW ENFORCEMENT
COORDINATING
COMMITTEE**

[LEARN MORE](#)

**ANTI-TERRORISM
ADVISORY COUNCIL**

[LEARN MORE](#)

on behalf of the United States. The case was investigated by the United States Department of Agriculture – Office of Inspector General, the Virginia Alcohol Beverage Control Bureau of Law Enforcement, and the Spotsylvania County Sheriff’s Office. In addition, the following agencies assisted with arrests, search warrants and other related proceedings: Virginia Animal Fighting Task Force; Virginia State Police Tactical Team; Southwest Virginia Regional Task Force; Botetourt County Commonwealth’s Attorney’s Office; Wise County, Virginia, Sheriff’s Office and Commonwealth’s Attorney’s Office; Virginia State Veterinarian’s Office; United States Homeland Security Investigations; Kentucky State Police; the United States Attorney’s Office for the Eastern District of Kentucky; and the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals.

Component(s):

USAO - Virginia, Western

Updated June 9, 2017

**RESOURCES
for the
PUBLIC and MEDIA**



LEARN MORE

- HOME
- ABOUT
- MEET THE U.S. ATTORNEY
- NEWS
- DIVISIONS
- PROGRAMS
- JOBS
- CONTACT

- About the Office
- About the District

MEET THE U.S. ATTORNEY

Media Press Events

- Civil Division
- Criminal Division
- Executive Division

- Law Enforcement
- National Security
- Project Safe Childhood
- Project Safe Neighborhoods
- Victim Witness Assistance

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE

- Accessibility
- Justice.gov
- FOIA
- USA.gov
- Privacy Policy
- Legal Policies & Disclaimers