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By PHILLIP RAWLS

MONTGOMERY, Ala.

A federal prosecutor revealed Thursday that investigators tapped the phone calls of two casino owners and a casino lobbyist before issuing indictments in Alabama's gambling probe.

Justice Department prosecutor Peter Ainsworth said in a court

hearing that investigators recorded thousands of phone calls involving VictoryLand owner Milton McGregor, Country Crossing developer Ronnie Gilley and that casino's lobbyist Jarrod Massey.

Those three and eight others were arrested Oct. 4, accused of buying and selling votes on pro-gambling legislation. The indictment recounted phone conversations between some of them, but it did not reveal publicly which parties' phones were tapped. The first public disclosure came Thursday.

Prosecutors have given defense attorneys tape recordings of 3,000 intercepted calls they say are pertinent to the bribery and conspiracy charges against the defendants. A federal judge will hold a hearing Wednesday on whether prosecutors must turn over several thousand more.

Ainsworth said more than 1,000 of the calls were between defendants and their attorneys or their spouses, and 7,800 were not pertinent to the investigation.

"It might have been a conversation about a golf game or Saturday's football game," he said.

In addition to the tapes of 3,000 phone calls, defense attorneys said they have received more than 100,000 pages of documents from prosecutors. Turning over that information is required of prosecutors so defense attorneys can prepare for a trial scheduled April 4.

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The federal investigation coincided with Gov. Bob Riley's gambling task force working to shut down all non-Indian casinos in Alabama. McGregor's VictoryLand in Shorter and Gilley's Country Crossing in Dothan closed their electronic bingo casinos to prevent raids by Riley's task force.

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