

## Predatory gambling attracts danger

By Guy C. Clark |

6/18/2012

The New Mexico horse-racing scandal of this month is the FBI investigation and arrests surrounding the Mexican Zetas drug cartel money-laundering operation working out of, among other horse-racing venues, the Ruidoso racetrack/casino.

The scandal last month was the revelation that New Mexico racetracks kill and maim more horses per race than any other tracks in the nation. Poor regulation and cover-ups were prime factors in this outrageous pattern.

The scandal for the previous month, and still ongoing, is the arrest of city officials of racetrack/casino town Sunland Park for bribery, extortion, embezzlement and other charges.

The severity of the offenses seems to be escalating, as well. Ripping off city funds to pay hookers, as well as an illegal sting video featuring a topless lap-dancer are the most colorful aspects of the Sunland Park fiasco. The neglect and the lack of proper regulation and oversight that led to the dead and maimed horses are an outrage that tugs at the heart-strings of most decent people. The Zeta drug cartel deals in death and addiction, the same sort of negative impacts of casino gambling, although on a larger scale.

It is interesting that we don't see this sort of pattern of corruption in mining towns, like Grants, or in Intel town, Rio Rancho, and other "company" towns. There's just something about towns that are built around and infected by casino-style gambling that promotes corruption and lawlessness. An "industry" based on deceit and exploitation of people's weaknesses sets the tone for the community where it squats.

The New Mexico government needs to rethink its policy of predatory gambling and close down racetrack/casinos, and the tribes need to look closer at the damage tribal casinos are inflicting on their own people and their neighbors, and do the same.

*Guy C. Clark, chairman of Stop Predatory Gambling New Mexico, lives in Albuquerque.*