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April 18, 2011, 12:13 PM ET

Poker Crackdown: Time to Fold ‘Em?

By Colleen DeBaise

In a move that’s roiling the online poker community, federal prosecutors have filed [fraud charges](#) against the founders of online poker websites Full Tilt Poker, PokerStars and Absolute Poker, among others.



It’s the first big crackdown on online poker sites — and the legal action could disrupt a cottage industry that’s sprung up around the popular game. Aside from site operators, a number of companies offer data programs, calculators, software and other tools that cater to the online poker-player audience.

PokerScout, a website that tracks online poker, estimates that 1.8 million people played poker for money in the U.S. last year, representing \$16 billion in wagers.

The government claims that the sites are skirting U.S. laws related to gambling, and blocked players in the U.S. from accessing Full Tilt Poker, along with other online poker sites. (Here’s the [rather foreboding message](#) that greets visitors to the site.)

In a statement, Full Tilt Poker defended its business as legal, adding that it’s committed to preserving “the integrity of the game.” Read more about the charges in this WSJ article, “[Online Poker Players Face Big Life Changes](#).”

Readers, is the U.S. government correct in its action — or too heavy-handed? How will the case impact the online poker industry?