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□□□ **By Keir Radnedge, AIPS Football Commission Chairman**

ZURICH, May 27, 2015 -

**Sepp Blatter is facing potentially the greatest crisis ever to assail the scandal-assailed world football federation after an overnight hotel raid by police in Zurich and six arrests was coupled by notice that the United States Justice Department intends shortly to announce corruption charges against 14 people including ‘senior level officials’ at FIFA.**

Law enforcement sources in the US indicated that the indictments would be handed down in federal court in Brooklyn, New York, and that further arrests were imminent in addition to those made overnight, at the US request, by a Swiss police raid on the Baur au Lac hotel where FIFA grandees are staying ahead of congress on Friday.

The Bloomberg agency named FIFA vice-president Jeffrey Webb, head of CONCACAF and from the Cayman Islands, and former South American football president Eugenio Figueredo from Uruguay as among those arrested. Also being sought is the Trinidadian politician and one-time FIFA powerbroker, Jack Warner.

FIFA president Blatter himself was not arrested and is not understood among the immediate targets for US Justice though inquiries are ongoing.

All the concerns over the governance of the world game and Blatter's personal leadership will be revived by the co-ordinated police raid and the US action.

The US charges have emerged after a three-year FBI investigation although Swiss police sources suggest their own concerns go back as far as the early 1990s.

Legal action could not have come at a more embarrassing moment with Blatter apparently cruising towards a comfortable victory in Friday's election at FIFA Congress here. The timing was deliberate because of the mass presence of all the world's senior football officials in Zurich this week.

US media reports claimed that "current and officials seen as close to him are expected to be among those who face indictments." The names of those facing action were expected to be confirmed later at a news conference in New York.

One of the challenges for the the US authorities is establishing legal jurisdiction for alleged crimes that would have occurred outside the United States.

It is understood prosecutors believe the broad reach of U.S. tax and banking regulations aid their ability to bring the charges. In addition, U.S. authorities claim jurisdiction because the American television market, and billions paid by U.S. networks, is the largest for the World Cup.

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The FIFA ethics committee last December said last December was closing its investigation into alleged corruption in the 2018 and 2022 bidding process that awarded the World Cup to Russia and Qatar, respectively.

Investigations were launched by the US authorities after the scandal over the bidding process for the 2018 and 2022 World Cups and their award to Russia and Qatar respectively.

Around a dozen members of the FIFA executive committee which took that decision have since left the governing body, either because of disciplinary action or to escape the prospect of it.

American attorney Michael Garcia was hired as an independent ethics prosecutor to inquire into this and other scandals but quit last autumn in frustration that he believed FIFA was 'burying' his report.

In 2011, FIFA banned for life Mohamed bin Hammam, a Qatari member of the exco, for ethics code violations.

**\*\* sursa :--** <http://www.aipsmedia.com/index.php?page=news&cod=16520&tp=n#.VWWKN0bcDh5>