

# Ex-tribe chief behind gambling venture, lawyers say

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Emboldened by his role in enriching a once-impooverished tribe through low-stakes gambling, Seminole chairman James Billie helped orchestrate an offshore gam-

ing operation that funneled millions in tribal money to Belize, defense attorneys in a federal embezzlement trial argued Tuesday.

Attorneys for Tim Cox, Dan Wisher and Michael Crumpton deny their clients set up a rogue operation for the purpose of plun-

dering nearly \$3 million in tribal funds. They said Billie, the strong-willed leader of the tribe until his ouster last year, authorized the Belize venture and that no tribal money was stolen.

The defense sought to bolster its argument with the help of Billie's

nemesis, Jim Shore, the tribe's long-time general counsel. Shore battled Billie until the latter was suspended last year as chairman amid a probe into the Seminoles' finances.

Tuesday's testimony shed light

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