

# ATI, six firms charged with smuggling

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The Bureau of Customs (BOC) said over the weekend it has filed smuggling complaints against Manila South Harbor's operator, as well as several importers and Customs brokers from six corporations, for alleged connivance in the illegal release of 105 shipping containers.

The BOC said the illegal withdrawal of the shipments is a violation of Sections 1401 (unlawful importation or exportation) and Section 1424 (removing goods from customs custody) of Republic Act 10863, the Customs Modernization and Tariff Act of 2016.

The charges against Asian Terminals Inc. (ATI) assistant vice president for South Harbor operations Steve Realuyo and shift manager Darwin Dalmacio were filed on Friday before the Department of Justice through the Bureau's Action Team Against Smugglers.

ATI, in a statement, said it "has not seen a copy of the reported complaint" and deferred issuing a comment.

Similar charges were also filed against the owners, officials and Customs brokers of Premier Oak Lumber and Wood Products Corp., Spectrum Highlands Marketing Corp., Mega abundance steel Indent Trading Corp., Abundancegain Indent Trading Corp., Paragon Platinum International Trading Corp., and Imperialfoods and Agricultural Prod.

"We will make sure that importers, brokers and arrastre operators who blatantly violated Customs rules and regulations will face legal action and revocation of Customs accreditation," Commissioner Isidro Lapeña said.

Among the respondents from Premier Oak are Juden Eslao, president; Gerly Ebias, director; Severino Aycocho, director; Meldy Sayon, treasurer; and brokers Homaidi Sarip Ibrahim, Mohammad Salman Cosain Amerol and Malik Nooman Regaro Molok.

Also charged were Spectrum president Rhea Tolosa, director Meldy Sayon and Amerol.

Mega abundance steel president Erin Jorge Sumile; vice president Mark Leo Magpayo; directors Arwind Jay Caparros and Leonard Sucaldito and brokers Ibrahim, Molok, Amerol and Bernadine Miranda were also named in the complaint.

Among the respondents from Abundancegain were president Abraham Torrecampo, vice president Allan Cajuban, director Jake Tordesillas, treasurer Mark Leo Magpayo and Amerol.

The BOC also filed charges against Paragon corporate secretary Erin Jorge Sumile and Molok; Imperialfoods president Bernardo Lu Chong, treasurer William Tan, director Emerson Tan, director Alexander Lao and Miranda.

Lapeña accused the officials of ATI and the six firms of conniving to have the 105 containers released without being examined, despite alert orders issued against the shipments.

He said the shipments, which have a total dutiable value of P69.68 million, were allegedly released by ATI without authorization from him. The containers were later found in two warehouses in Meycauayan, Bulacan.

Lapeña warned that BOC personnel involved in the unlawful activity will also be charged.