

Two importers of motorcycles, ATVs arrested

Vehicles from China at heart of criminal case

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Two top executives at Ontario importer Goldenvale Inc. on Thursday were arrested and charged with illegally importing motorcycles, ATVs and related vehicles from China.

Authorities arrested Goldenvale President and owner Kening N. Ma, 49, and vice President Shirley Hyunae Ji, 44, on a 70-count criminal complaint that alleges they profited from false certificates of origin.

They were arrested at 9:30 a.m. at the company's location in the 2000 block of South Turner Avenue, according to the San Bernardino County Sheriff's Department.

Ma and Ji were booked into West Valley Detention Center in Rancho Cucamonga where they were being held without bail. They were expected to be arraigned today.

Prosecutors said dozens of victims purchased vehicles from Goldenvale that were not certified by the state Air Resources Board. The amount paid by victims ranged from several hundred dollars up to \$4,000 for each vehicle, prosecutors said.

The vehicles are illegal to operate in California, said Deputy District Attorney Douglas Poston.

"The District Attorney takes the security of the consumers of this county and the sanctity of the environment very seriously, and the number of felony counts in this case demonstrates that," Poston said.

Ma and Ji are named in a complaint filed in San Bernardino Superior Court. Ma faces one count of conspiracy, 33 counts of grand theft, 30 counts of possessing a false or blank vehicle registration and six counts of money laundering, according to court records.

Ji is named in the counts alleging conspiracy, grand theft and money laundering.

The certificates of origin are like birthcertificates for motor vehicles, Poston explained. The documents allow consumers to register their vehicles with the state Department of Motor Vehicles.

In this case, the certificates of origin show a manufacturer name that did not manufacture the vehicles, authorities said. The vehicles also were never certified by the Air Resources Board, thus allowing pollutants into the air, say prosecutors.

"The importation of illegal Chinese-manufactured products, such as motorcycles, is a practice that is harmful both to the environment and to the consumer," Poston said.

Paul E. Jacobs, chief of Mobile Sources Enforcement for California EPA Air Resources Board, said his agency referred the case to the San Bernardino County District Attorney's Office because a majority of violations occurred in that county. The two agencies worked together in a joint investigation.

"These arrests culminated a multi-year investigation of illegal activities," Jacobs said. "They (Ma and Ji) were selling vehicles that were not certified to California's stringent pollution standards, the most stringent in the world."