

New charges slapped on 3 ex-ST Marine senior executives

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Singapore

THE shocking corruption scandal which rattled Singapore Technologies Marine (ST Marine) in December 2014 is back in the limelight.

On Wednesday, three former senior executives of the company – a unit of Temasek-linked defence conglomerate ST Engineering – were slapped with additional charges in the State courts.

The trio – Mok Kim Whang, 65, Tan Mong Seng, 64, and Han Yew Kwang, 58 – were among the group of seven former ST Marine senior executives previously prosecuted for offences related to corrupt payments in granting of ship-repair contracts.

The Corrupt Practices Investigation Bureau (CPIB) said the three men now face a total of 1,744 more charges.

Former ST Marine senior vice-president Mok now faces another 824 counts of engaging in a conspiracy to make fraudulent entertainment expenses claims amounting to S\$3.13 million; he also faces two charges of making S\$5,000 in fraudulent claims on his own, bringing the number of additional charges he faces to 826.

He was first charged in December 2014 with one count of engaging in a conspiracy to give a S\$43,721 bribe to Pyo Sei Jin, an agent of Hyundai Engineering and Construction Ltd.

Tan, who was President (Commercial Business) from January 2000 before leaving in June 2002 as chief operating officer and president (Commercial Business), was charged last July with conspiring to give the \$43,721 bribe to the same agent; he has also been charged with 445 counts of engaging in a conspiracy to make false entries in ST Marine petty cash vouchers for entertainment expenses amounting to more than

S\$1.64 million, when no such entertainment expenses were incurred.

The third accused, Han, was the chief operating officer of ST Marine from June 2002 to June 2007, and left the company in June 2014 as executive vice-president (Ship Building). He was initially charged last July on eight counts of engaging in a conspiracy to give a total of S\$790,772 in bribes to agents of ST Marine's customers; he now faces a further 473 counts involving false entertainment claims amounting to S\$1.86 million in 48 projects.

The CPIB said Singapore adopts a zero-tolerance approach towards corruption and the bureau "takes a serious view of any corrupt practices and will not hesitate to take action against any party involved in such acts".

Last July, former ST Marine Group Financial Controller Patrick Lee Swee Ching, 58, was fined S\$210,000 for falsifying accounts to cover up alleged corrupt payments made by his superiors; the payments were disguised as entertainment expenses.

He escaped a jail term as he had, among other things, cooperated during the investigations and pleaded guilty early.

Two other former ST Marine employees, group financial controller Ong Teck Liam and president See Leong Teck, as well as ST Aerospace president Chang Cheow Teck have also been charged. Their cases are still before the courts.

Under Section 477A of the Penal Code, an offender can be jailed up to 10 years or fined or be meted both a jail term and a fine.

On Wednesday, the bail amount for Mok was set higher at S\$250,000 because he has applied for permission to leave the country; the amount for the other two was S\$200,000 each.

A pre-trial conference has been set for Jan 20.