

Counterfeiter Chu Gets 97-Month Sentence

by Matthew Lynch Thursday July 30, 2009

A federal judge Tuesday sentenced three New York City residents to prison for their roles in a ring that smuggled hundreds of millions of dollars worth of counterfeit apparel and accessories through New Jersey's Newark-Elizabeth Marine Terminal.

The group's leader, Michael Chu, 72, received a 97-month term, while accomplices Robin Huff, 47, and Hsi Feng Li, 62, received 70 and 33 months, respectively.

Judge Denny Chin, of U.S. District Court in Manhattan, sentenced a fourth conspirator, Dick Ong, 58, of Bergenfield, N.J., to one year of probation.

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement agents arrested the four men and six other defendants in December 2007, following a yearlong investigation into the smuggling operation.

According to criminal complaints filed in the case, Chu orchestrated the import of more than 100 shipping containers containing fake Nike, Chanel and Burberry goods through Port Newark. Huff, a one-time licensed customs broker, then helped shepherd the containers through the port's security system.

Authorities said the fake items would have been worth more than \$200 million had they been genuine.

Last year, Chin sentenced Wing Ki Lee to 60 months in prison and two other defendants in the case to three years' probation. Three other co-conspirators are awaiting sentencing.

The Newark operation was not Chu's first brush with the law for counterfeiting. In a 2005 civil case in California, lawyers for VF Corp. alleged Chu had run a ring that imported more than 100,000 fake The North Face jackets. A judge later ordered Chu and his co-defendants to pay \$7 million in the case.