

ST Marine graft case: Former financial controller fined \$300k

She is last of seven ex-senior executives to be convicted in massive corruption scandal

Ng Huiwen

Singapore Technologies (ST) Marine's former group financial controller Ong Teck Liam was fined \$300,000 yesterday for her role in one of the largest graft scandals in corporate Singapore history.

The 61-year-old was the last of seven former ST Marine senior executives to be convicted in the scandal that broke in 2014.

At least \$24.9 million in bribes – falsely claimed as entertainment expenses when no such expenses were incurred – were paid between 2000 and 2011 by ST Marine in return for ship repair contracts.

Ong had earlier pleaded guilty to 10 charges of conspiring with four other senior executives to facilitate the payment of bribes – totalling \$48,887 – to employees of ST Marine's customers.

Another 108 similar charges were taken into consideration for sentencing.

The court had heard that Ong, who took up the post of group financial controller in 2007 until her retirement in 2012, was asked to sign a set of cash cheques that were supposedly for reimbursement of entertainment expenses.

However, she noticed that there were no supporting receipts for the claims and queried staff from the finance department about it.

This was an anomaly as such claims would normally require supporting receipts before they could be processed.

A senior member in the department then let on that these were not genuine claims for entertainment expenses, but in fact "cash commissions" paid to obtain sales for ST Marine.

She was also told that the practice of using false petty cash vouchers had been going on in the company for a number of years.

Ong was later given a written document, prepared in 2004, detailing the finance department's role in processing these claims.

The document contained specific instructions on how to avoid detection while doing so, including that claimed amounts should not be in exact or round figures.

The prosecution had called for a jail term of six months, citing Ong's integral role in continuing the illicit practice.

However, Ong's lawyer, Senior Counsel Lok Vi Ming, said in mitigation that his client had played a far less active role compared to



Ong Teck Liam had earlier pleaded guilty to 10 charges of conspiring with four others to facilitate the payment of bribes. ST PHOTO: WONG KWAI CHOW

the other senior executives, including her predecessor Patrick Lee Swee Ching.

Unlike Lee, Ong was not present at the meetings where the bribery arrangement was first conceived. He added that his client is suffering from major depressive disorder.

ST Marine is a wholly owned sub-

siary of ST Engineering that provides shipbuilding, ship conversion and ship repair services.

For each count of falsifying accounts under Section 477A, Ong could have been jailed for up to 10 years, fined or both.

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\$24.9m

Amount in bribes – falsely claimed as entertainment expenses when no such expenses were incurred – paid by ST Marine in return for ship repair contracts between 2000 and 2011.

Six other former top execs convicted in scandal



SEE LEONG TECK, 66
Ex-ST Marine chief executive officer and president

Ten months in jail and \$100,000 fine (one count each of corruption, falsification of accounts and failure to act honestly and use reasonable diligence in the discharge of the duties of his office)



MOK KIM WHANG, 66
Ex-ST Marine senior vice-president

Five months in jail and \$100,000 fine (one count of corruption and 49 counts of falsification of accounts)



PATRICK LEE SWEE CHING, 60
Ex-ST Marine group financial controller

\$210,000 fine (seven counts of falsification of accounts)



HAN YEW KWANG, 59
Ex-ST Marine chief operating officer and deputy president

Six months in jail and \$80,000 fine (one count of corruption and 49 counts of falsification of accounts)



TAN MONG SENG, 65
Ex-ST Marine president of commercial business

Four months in jail (101 counts of abetment by conspiracy in relation to the falsification of accounts)



CHANG CHEOW TECK, 56
Ex-ST Marine president

Fourteen days' short detention order (one count of failure to act honestly and use reasonable diligence in the discharge of the duties of his office)