



# Department of Justice

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## **SOUTH AMERICAN COMPANY AGREES TO PLEAD GUILTY TO PRICE FIXING ON OCEAN SHIPPING SERVICES FOR CARS AND TRUCKS**

### ***First Charges in the Department's Antitrust Investigation Involving Ocean Shipping Services; Conspiracy Affected Global Cargo Shipments, Including at Port of Baltimore***

WASHINGTON – Compañía Sud Americana de Vapores S.A. (CSAV), a Chilean corporation, has agreed to plead guilty and to pay an \$8.9 million criminal fine for its involvement in a conspiracy to fix prices, allocate customers and rig bids of international ocean shipping services for roll-on, roll-off cargo, such as cars and trucks, to and from the United States and elsewhere, the Department of Justice announced today.

According to a one-count felony charge filed today in U.S. District Court for the District of Maryland in Baltimore, CSAV engaged in a conspiracy to suppress and eliminate competition by allocating customers and routes, rigging bids and fixing prices for the sale of international ocean shipping services of roll-on, roll-off cargo to and from the United States and elsewhere, including the Port of Baltimore. CSAV participated in the conspiracy from at least January 2000 to September 2012. CSAV has also agreed to cooperate with the department's ongoing antitrust investigation. The plea agreement is subject to court approval.

Roll-on, roll-off cargo is non-containerized cargo that can be both rolled onto and rolled off of an ocean-going vessel. Examples of this cargo include new and used cars and trucks, as well as construction, mining and agricultural equipment.

"Today's charges are the first to be filed in the Antitrust Division's investigation into bid rigging and price fixing of ocean shipping services," said Bill Baer, Assistant Attorney General in charge of the Department of Justice's Antitrust Division. "Because of the growth in the automobile ocean shipping industry over the past 40 years, the conspiracy substantially affected interstate and foreign commerce. Prosecuting international price-fixing conspiracies remains a top priority for the division."

According to the charge, CSAV and its co-conspirators carried out the conspiracy by, among other things, agreeing – during meetings and communications – on prices, allocating customers, agreeing to refrain from bidding against one another and exchanging customer pricing information. The department said the companies then charged fees in accordance with those agreements for international ocean shipping services for certain roll-on, roll-off cargo to and from the United States and elsewhere at collusive and non-competitive prices.

CSAV is charged with price fixing in violation of the Sherman Act, which carries a maximum penalty of a \$100 million criminal fine for corporations. The maximum fine may be increased to twice the gain derived from the crime or twice the loss suffered by the victims of the crime, if either of those amounts is greater than the statutory maximum fine.

Today's charge is the result of an ongoing federal antitrust investigation into price fixing, bid rigging, and other anticompetitive conduct in the international ocean shipping industry, which is being conducted by the Antitrust Division's National Criminal Enforcement Section and the FBI's Baltimore Field Office, along with assistance from the U.S. Customs and Border Protection, Office of Internal Affairs, Washington Field Office/Special Investigations Unit. Anyone with information in connection with this investigation is urged to call the Antitrust Division's National Criminal Enforcement Section at 202-307-6694, visit [www.justice.gov/atr/contact/newcase.html](http://www.justice.gov/atr/contact/newcase.html), or call the FBI's Baltimore Field Office at 410-265-8080.

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