

Memorandum

To: Paula Henstridge,
From: Diana Hoffman, SITC Supervisor
cc: Scott Sanner, WR SITC Manager
Debra Shambaugh, WR Program Manager
Date: July 28, 2004

Nomination of Multi-Agency Smuggled Citrus Bud Wood Group for Plant Protection & Quarantine Deputy Administrator's Safeguarding Award

1. Name, Address, Job Title, and Phone Number of Nominee (if a group is being submitted, provide the contact information for the group leader and the names and affiliation of all members of the group):

USDA-APHIS-PPQ-SITC:

William Kibby and Stacy Tyralla (Nor Cal SITC Officers)
John Nelson (Nor Cal SITC Supervisor)
Diana Hoffman (Los Angeles-Pacific SITC Supervisor)
Jeff Marszal and Christine Sparks (LA-Pacific SITC Officers)
Group leaders - Nicholas Porzio and Stephen Gardner
(LA-Pacific SITC Officers) 323-228-9034

USDA DMA: Keith Miller

USDA -APHIS-PPQ Western Region: Debra Shambaugh, Regional Program Manager

USDA IES: Lupe Aguilar, Investigator

DHS: Michael Perry, Officer, DHS-CBP-AI
Sophie Ma, DHS-CBP-AI Technician
Mike Appio, DHS ICE Investigator

California Dept. of Food & Agriculture:
Michelle Dennis, Pest Exclusion Associate Biologist
Ann Kiser, CDFA ACIT Investigator
Magally Williams, Plant Pathologist

Ventura County Agricultural Commissioner's Office - Lou Ortali, Biologist

2. Describe the action that enhanced safeguarding.

Northern California international mail interception by DHS CBP of citrus canker infested smuggled bud wood from Japan leads to SITC-CDFCA-Ventura County discovery of almost 4,000 smuggled citrus plants in citrus producing area of California.

In early April, 2004 Bill Kibby and Stacy Tyralla, Northern California SITC Officers, were notified by Michael Perry, Officer, DHS-CBP-AI, that two express mail shipments of over 350 pieces of smuggled Citrus cuttings (bud wood), were intercepted at the Daly City CA International Mail Center. The cuttings were mis-manifested as 'candy and chocolates' and 'books and chocolates'. Officer Perry recognized the importance of the citrus interception, since the packages were destined to Ventura County, a California citrus growing area. Sophie Ma, DHS-CBP-AI Technician, provided a written translation of the Japanese language labels attached to the cuttings. A week later, Officer Perry notified Nor Cal SITC that a third shipment of citrus cuttings had been intercepted at the same postal facility. Samples of bud wood with symptoms of disease were submitted to the PPQ Identifiers. The specimen was returned with a symptomatic pathology identification of *Xanthomonas axonopodis pv citri*, and confirmed by Riverdale as positive for citrus canker.

Meanwhile, Nor Cal SITC contacted Los Angeles-Pacific SITC with the trace forward information that the packages were destined for two addresses in Ventura County. SITC Officers Nick Porzio and Steve Gardner conducted the field work and surveys. CDFCA and Ventura County Agriculture were asked to participate in joint inspections. LA-P SITC also contacted USDA-DMA Analyst Keith Miller to look for potential affiliations to commercial enterprise or alternate addresses. Miller identified a link to a nursery/landscape company. Ventura County Ag. Biologist Ortali discovered the growing site for additional smuggled citrus bud wood was in a prime citrus production area, and was not previously registered with the County as a nursery or for pesticide use. A USDA-SITC, CDFCA and Ventura County joint agency inspection of the farm found over 3,600 grafts that were previously smuggled in from Japan.

Reviewing the database that Los Angeles-Pacific SITC developed for mail interceptions from LA-HON-SFO, SITC Supervisor Hoffman found a shipment of propagative material from Japan was also intercepted at the Los Angeles Mail Facility in 2003 for the same receiver. DHS-CBP-ICE Investigator Mike Appio found a link between the third NorCal mail package and the sender of the first two packages. Based on the joint investigation, 140 smuggled citrus plants were found on two additional private properties.

CDFCA ACIT Investigator Ann Kiser led the investigation, coordinated the interviews and arranged for a court translator, and IES Investigator Lupe Aguilar participated in interviews of the owner and property managers. OGC provided legal resources, and based on their advisement LA-Pacific SITC Officers Porzio and Gardner issued Emergency Action Notifications for the destruction by incineration of almost 4,000 plants from the nursery and two private properties. LA-Pacific SITC Officers, CDFCA Biologist Dennis and County Biologist Ortali worked for several days to oversee the burning of the field and the removal and burning of quarantined citrus trees from several private parties. Counting sprouts, breaking apart kerosene soaked wood, dirt and

root balls, the team continued all facets of the work, through shoveling ash into a wheelbarrow, and seeing it buried in a pit dug on the farm.

The investigation for prosecution is still under way

3. How did the action enhance safeguarding?

This group's work demonstrated collaborative action and information sharing to identify pathway risk that required attentiveness and swift intervention. The multi-agency group enhanced safeguarding America's plant resources by discovering and eradicating a serious plant disease risk presented by smuggled nursery stock that was grafted and planted in a prime citrus growing region in California. Through their action, important plant resources were safeguarded in a region of the United States that are at highest risk for invasions

4. How does it demonstrate innovation or initiative?

This joint-agency and multi-unit operation demonstrated the Safeguarding Review goal of a seamless process by which safeguarding activities mesh to form a barrier to the establishment of invasive plant pests.

This operation was successful based on the initiative and follow-up of the individuals involved. The participants considered risk and pathways, and shared information appropriately to further the safeguarding mission. It took several months to piece it together, yet turned out to be far bigger than any one element might have appeared on its own.

From the CBP discovery and sharing of information, the SITC officers took a lead, and pursued it. They communicated information along the way to parties who needed to know, and involved collaborators. Responsibility for the quarantine actions was shared back and forth between State and Federal agencies, to ensure safeguarding and to optimize statutory authority on the case at various times in its development through final destruction of the smuggled plants. The SITC Officers, CDFA and Ventura County Agriculture Biologists exhibited extra effort to ensure destruction measures

5. Which of the four areas of the Safeguarding Review does the activity support?

- pest detection and response
- exclusion of pests (including offshore mitigation)

6. What recommendation or safeguarding principle does the action support?

This operation showed how collaborative partnership of APHIS-PPQ and stakeholders can maximize resources to identify and mitigate risk from breaches in the safeguarding system at ports of entry and international mail facilities. Our work resulted in development of investigations to pursue appropriate legal recourse. The investigations are conducted and prosecuted by Federal and State investigators.

7. Provide any information that demonstrates the outcome/success of the activity.

The joint agency work to develop and work this case through conclusion resulted in mitigation of the pest risk from economic and environmental harm. Based on Florida's citrus canker quarantine history, and the environmental and economic damage of over \$600 million since 1995 as an example of the potential harm to California's agriculture, citrus grafts from citrus canker country of origin could have devastating consequences.

A recent outcome from this case is the increased collaboration of DHS-CBP and USDA-APHIS-PPQ-SITC at the international mail facilities in the San Francisco area. Targeting information is provided by SITC for destination zip codes, descriptions or shippers. DHS-CBP provides SITC with information on interceptions, and that is followed up by SITC in the destination area. Information is developed to determine if this is a commercial entity, or to assess if there might be additional risk associated with the interception and pathway.

LA-Pacific SITC has created an International Mail Interception Database, and worked diligently in the past two years to enter over 6,000 PPQ 287 records from international mail facilities in Los Angeles, San Francisco and Honolulu that occurred since 2002. This archive is a great resource to look at interception patterns, as demonstrated in this case. This information has been provided to each port, so they have acquired the information in a data format from tissue copy papers for their use. DHS-CBP Honolulu and San Francisco have requested the database template and will now do their own data entry. DHS-CBP at those ports agreed to share the interception information with their local SITC units. It is our hope that this process may serve as a model for national implementation and information sharing.

State and Federal investigations are in progress and may result in substantial penalties. This case stands to serve as a benchmark of safeguarding, collaboration and protecting America's resources.