

## Feds confiscate \$2.5 worth of Chinese honey from Houston port

Dylan Baddour, Houston Chronicle | January 28, 2015

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Agents with customs and border protection spent five days loading 660 barrels of confiscated honey from a warehouse near the Port of Houston.

1 of 16



For the second time in two years, U.S. Immigrations and Customs Enforcement confiscated falsely-labeled Chinese honey from the Port of Houston.

Agents allege merchants lied about the honey's origin to evade hefty taxes, but investigations were ongoing to determine who was responsible.

About 450,000 pounds of Chinese honey, worth \$2.45 million, were seized between January 23 and 27 and will be destroyed.

"They were bringing in honey and declaring that it was coming from Latvia and it wasn't. The documents they were using were false," said Brian Moskowitz, special agent with **Homeland Security Investigations**, a branch of ICE.

Chinese honey is subject to a 221 percent import tax in the U.S., meant to keep American honey competitive on the domestic market. Brokers of Chinese honey may try to disguise the origin of their import to evade the tax. In November 2013, agents at the Houston port **seized \$4.2 million of Chinese honey** falsely labeled as Indian and Malaysian and arrested one Houston area man.

"This is a scheme that seems to be pretty prevalent and Houston seems to be the hub of honey imports at this time," said Moskowitz.

In this most recent case, HIS agents in Frankfurt, Germany, worked with Latvian officials to determine that certificates of origin associated with the seized honey were fake.

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Chinese honey has been subject to high import tax since 2001, when the **U.S. Department of Commerce determined** that Chinese producers were selling their products at less than production costs and underselling American producers—a practice known as "dumping."

Other Chinese products subject to the anti-dumping tax include garlic, shrimp, wire hangers, steel and magnesium.

"We do this to ensure those who play by the rules are not harmed by those who don't. If a foreign company is trying to undercut American business then we're there to make sure that doesn't happen," said Moskowitz.

