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TITLE 19--CUSTOMS DUTIES

CHAPTER 4--TARIFF ACT OF 1930

SUBTITLE III--ADMINISTRATIVE PROVISIONS

Part V--Enforcement Provisions

Sec. 1592. Penalties for fraud, gross negligence, and negligence

(a) Prohibition

(1) General rule

Without regard to whether the United States is or may be deprived of all or a portion of any lawful duty, tax, or fee thereby, no person, by fraud, gross negligence, or negligence--

(A) may enter, introduce, or attempt to enter or introduce any merchandise into the commerce of the United States by means of--

(i) any document or electronically transmitted data or information, written or oral statement, or act which is material and false, or

(ii) any omission which is material, or

(B) may aid or abet any other person to violate subparagraph (A).

(2) Exception

Clerical errors or mistakes of fact are not violations of paragraph (1) unless they are part of a pattern of negligent conduct. The mere nonintentional repetition by an electronic system of an initial clerical error does not constitute a pattern of negligent conduct.

(b) Procedures

(1) Pre-penalty notice

(A) In general

If the Customs Service has reasonable cause to believe that there has been a violation of subsection (a) of this section and determines that further proceedings are warranted, it shall issue to the person concerned a written notice of its intention to issue a claim for a monetary penalty. Such notice shall--

(i) describe the merchandise;

(ii) set forth the details of the entry or introduction, the attempted entry or introduction, or the aiding or procuring of the entry or introduction;

(iii) specify all laws and regulations allegedly violated;

(iv) disclose all the material facts which establish the alleged violation;

(v) state whether the alleged violation occurred as a

result of fraud, gross negligence, or negligence;

(vi) state the estimated loss of lawful duties, taxes, and fees, if any, and, taking into account all circumstances, the amount of the proposed monetary penalty; and

(vii) inform such person that he shall have a reasonable opportunity to make representations, both oral and written, as to why a claim for a monetary penalty should not be issued in the amount stated.

(B) Exceptions

The preceding subparagraph shall not apply if--

(i) the importation with respect to which the violation of subsection (a) of this section occurs is noncommercial in nature, or

(ii) the amount of the penalty in the penalty claim issued under paragraph (2) is \$1,000 or less.

(2) Penalty claim

After considering representations, if any, made by the person concerned pursuant to the notice issued under paragraph (1), the Customs Service shall determine whether any violation of subsection (a) of this section, as alleged in the notice, has occurred. If the Customs Service determines that there was no violation, it shall promptly issue a written statement of the determination to the person to whom the notice was sent. If the Customs Service determines that there was a violation, it shall issue a written penalty claim to such person. The written penalty claim shall specify all changes in the information provided under clauses (i) through (vi) of paragraph (1)(A). Such person shall have a reasonable opportunity under section 1618 of this title to make representations, both oral and written, seeking remission or mitigation of the monetary penalty. At the conclusion of any proceeding under such section 1618, the Customs Service shall provide to the person concerned a written statement which sets forth the final determination and the findings of fact and conclusions of law on which such determination is based.

(c) Maximum penalties

(1) Fraud

A fraudulent violation of subsection (a) of this section is punishable by a civil penalty in an amount not to exceed the domestic value of the merchandise.

(2) Gross negligence

A grossly negligent violation of subsection (a) of this section is punishable by a civil penalty in an amount not to exceed--

(A) the lesser of--

(i) the domestic value of the merchandise, or

(ii) four times the lawful duties, taxes, and fees of which the United States is or may be deprived, or

(B) if the violation did not affect the assessment of duties, 40 percent of the dutiable value of the merchandise.

(3) Negligence

A negligent violation of subsection (a) of this section is punishable by a civil penalty in an amount not to exceed--

(A) the lesser of--

- (i) the domestic value of the merchandise, or
- (ii) two times the lawful duties, taxes, and fees of which the United States is or may be deprived, or

(B) if the violation did not affect the assessment of duties, 20 percent of the dutiable value of the merchandise.

#### (4) Prior disclosure

If the person concerned discloses the circumstances of a violation of subsection (a) of this section before, or without knowledge of, the commencement of a formal investigation of such violation, with respect to such violation, merchandise shall not be seized and any monetary penalty to be assessed under subsection (c) of this section shall not exceed--

- (A) if the violation resulted from fraud--
  - (i) an amount equal to 100 percent of the lawful duties, taxes, and fees of which the United States is or may be deprived, so long as such person tenders the unpaid amount of the lawful duties, taxes, and fees at the time of disclosure, or within 30 days (or such longer period as the Customs Service may provide) after notice by the Customs Service of its calculation of such unpaid amount, or
  - (ii) if such violation did not affect the assessment of duties, 10 percent of the dutiable value; or

(B) if such violation resulted from negligence or gross negligence, the interest (computed from the date of liquidation at the prevailing rate of interest applied under section 6621 of title 26) on the amount of lawful duties, taxes, and fees of which the United States is or may be deprived so long as such person tenders the unpaid amount of the lawful duties, taxes, and fees at the time of disclosure, or within 30 days (or such longer period as the Customs Service may provide) after notice by the Customs Service of its calculation of such unpaid amount.

The person asserting lack of knowledge of the commencement of a formal investigation has the burden of proof in establishing such lack of knowledge. For purposes of this section, a formal investigation of a violation is considered to be commenced with regard to the disclosing party and the disclosed information on the date recorded in writing by the Customs Service as the date on which facts and circumstances were discovered or information was received which caused the Customs Service to believe that a possibility of a violation of subsection (a) of this section existed.

#### (5) Prior disclosure regarding NAFTA claims

An importer shall not be subject to penalties under subsection (a) of this section for making an incorrect claim for preferential tariff treatment under section 3332 of this title if the importer--

- (A) has reason to believe that the NAFTA Certificate of Origin (as defined in section 1508(b)(1) of this title) on which the claim was based contains incorrect information; and
- (B) in accordance with regulations issued by the Secretary, voluntarily and promptly makes a corrected declaration and pays any duties owing.

#### (6) Prior disclosure regarding claims under the United States-Chile Free Trade Agreement

An importer shall not be subject to penalties under subsection (a) of this section for making an incorrect claim that a good qualifies as an originating good under section 202 of the United States-Chile Free Trade Agreement Implementation Act if the

importer, in accordance with regulations issued by the Secretary of the Treasury, voluntarily makes a corrected declaration and pays any duties owing.

(7) Prior disclosure regarding claims under the United States-Singapore Free Trade Agreement

(A) An importer shall not be subject to penalties under subsection (a) of this section for making an incorrect claim that a good qualifies as an originating good under section 202 of the United States-Singapore Free Trade Agreement Implementation Act if the importer, in accordance with regulations issued by the Secretary of the Treasury, voluntarily and promptly makes a corrected declaration and pays any duties owing.

(B) In the regulations referred to in subparagraph (A), the Secretary of the Treasury is authorized to prescribe time periods for making a corrected declaration and paying duties owing under subparagraph (A), if such periods are not shorter than 1 year following the date on which the importer makes the incorrect claim that a good qualifies as an originating good.

(8) Prior disclosure regarding claims under the United States-Australia free trade agreement

(A) In general

An importer shall not be subject to penalties under subsection (a) of this section for making an incorrect claim that a good qualifies as an originating good under section 203 of the United States-Australia Free Trade Agreement Implementation Act if the importer, in accordance with regulations issued by the Secretary of the Treasury, voluntarily and promptly makes a corrected declaration and pays any duties owing.

(B) Time periods for making corrections

In the regulations referred to in subparagraph (A), the Secretary of the Treasury is authorized to prescribe time periods for making a corrected declaration and paying duties owing under subparagraph (A), if such periods are not shorter than 1 year following the date on which the importer makes the incorrect claim.

(9) Prior disclosure regarding claims under the Dominican Republic-Central America-United States Free Trade Agreement

An importer shall not be subject to penalties under subsection (a) of this section for making an incorrect claim that a good qualifies as an originating good under section 4033 of this title if the importer, in accordance with regulations issued by the Secretary of the Treasury, promptly and voluntarily makes a corrected declaration and pays any duties owing.

(10) Seizure

If the Secretary has reasonable cause to believe that a person has violated the provisions of subsection (a) of this section and that such person is insolvent or beyond the jurisdiction of the United States or that seizure is otherwise essential to protect the revenue of the United States or to prevent the introduction of prohibited or restricted merchandise into the customs territory of the United States, then such merchandise may be seized and, upon assessment of a monetary penalty, forfeited unless the monetary

penalty is paid within the time specified by law. Within a reasonable time after any such seizure is made, the Secretary shall issue to the person concerned a written statement containing the reasons for the seizure. After seizure of merchandise under this subsection, the Secretary may, in the case of restricted merchandise, and shall, in the case of any other merchandise (other than prohibited merchandise), return such merchandise upon the deposit of security not to exceed the maximum monetary penalty which may be assessed under subsection (c) of this section.

**(d) Deprivation of lawful duties, taxes, or fees**

Notwithstanding section 1514 of this title, if the United States has been deprived of lawful duties, taxes, or fees as a result of a violation of subsection (a) of this section, the Customs Service shall require that such lawful duties, taxes, and fees be restored, whether or not a monetary penalty is assessed.

**(e) Court of International Trade proceedings**

Notwithstanding any other provision of law, in any proceeding commenced by the United States in the Court of International Trade for the recovery of any monetary penalty claimed under this section--

(1) all issues, including the amount of the penalty, shall be tried de novo;

(2) if the monetary penalty is based on fraud, the United States shall have the burden of proof to establish the alleged violation by clear and convincing evidence;

(3) if the monetary penalty is based on gross negligence, the United States shall have the burden of proof to establish all the elements of the alleged violation; and

(4) if the monetary penalty is based on negligence, the United States shall have the burden of proof to establish the act or omission constituting the violation, and the alleged violator shall have the burden of proof that the act or omission did not occur as a result of negligence.

**(f) False certifications regarding exports to NAFTA countries**

**(1) In general**

Subject to paragraph (3), it is unlawful for any person to certify falsely, by fraud, gross negligence, or negligence, in a NAFTA Certificate of Origin (as defined in section 1508(b)(1) of this title) that a good to be exported to a NAFTA country (as defined in section 3301(4) of this title) qualifies under the rules of origin set out in section 3332 of this title.

**(2) Applicable provisions**

The procedures and penalties of this section that apply to a violation of subsection (a) of this section also apply to a violation of paragraph (1), except that--

(A) subsection (d) of this section does not apply, and

(B) subsection (c)(5) of this section applies only if the person voluntarily and promptly provides, to all persons to whom the person provided the NAFTA Certificate of Origin, written notice of the falsity of the Certificate.

**(3) Exception**

A person may not be considered to have violated paragraph (1) if--

(A) the information was correct at the time it was provided in a NAFTA Certificate of Origin but was later rendered