

Shanghai Court Rejects Rio Tinto Appeal

SHANGHAI (AP) -- Shanghai's Higher People's Court has rejected appeals by three former employees of mining giant Rio Tinto of sentences for corruption and stealing commercial secrets, saying Monday that their cases were handled appropriately.

Chinese citizens Wang Yong, Ge Minqiang and Liu Caikui, sentenced to jail terms of seven years to 14 years, were convicted in a high-profile case that also resulted in an Australian former employee of Rio Tinto, Stern Hu, getting a 10-year jail prison sentence.

All four had pleaded guilty. Hu did not appeal.

Court staff confirmed that the appeals were rejected but would give no further details. They said a news release by the official Xinhua News Agency stood for the official notice of the decision.

It said that according to the court's verdict, "the facts affirmed by the Shanghai No. 1 Intermediate People's Court were clear, the convictions and the sentences were appropriate and trial procedures were legal."

Rio Tinto is a key supplier of iron ore to China, the world's biggest steel producer. The company initially rejected the charges against its employees but after they were convicted dismissed them, saying the crimes were not connected with Rio Tinto's official business dealings.

Hu, the former manager of Rio Tinto's China iron ore business, and his three coworkers were detained in July during contentious price talks with state-owned steel mills.

The trial in late March found Hu and the others guilty of taking millions of yuan (dollars) in bribes and improperly obtaining commercial secrets from Chinese steel companies that they used to push up prices that China paid for iron ore imports.

In 2009, more than 20 Chinese steel mills paid an extra 1.02 billion yuan (\$149.3 million) for iron ore because of their crimes, the Xinhua report cited the court as saying.

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