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U.S. says six freight forwarders plead guilty

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WASHINGTON (Reuters) - Six international freight forwarding companies have agreed to plead guilty to price fixing and pay a total of \$50.3 million in criminal fines, the U.S. Justice Department said on Thursday.

In the latest plea agreements in a long-running probe, BAX Global has agreed to pay a fine of \$19.7 million; Panalpina World Transport (Holding) Ltd will pay \$11.9 million; Kuehne + Nagel will pay \$9,865,044; EGL Inc will pay \$4.5 million; Schenker, a part of the Deutsche Bahn Group will pay \$3.5 million; and Geologistics International Management (Bermuda) will pay \$687,960.

The companies arrange cargo delivery for customers.

"The department's investigation uncovered six different conspiracies harming businesses and consumers in the United States and across the globe," said Christine Varney, who heads the Justice Department's antitrust division.

"Our investigation continues," she said.

Panalpina said the deal meant it would not face further prosecution in the United States but said that probes were underway in the European Union, Switzerland and Brazil.

New Zealand reached a similar settlement in early September with Schenker, Bax Global, Kuehne + Nagel, Panalpina and EGL Geologistics.

Antitrust enforcers in the United States and elsewhere also have price-fixing probes underway in the air cargo business.

Eighteen airlines have pleaded guilty or agreed to do so in connection with the investigation, including British Airways, Korean Air Lines, Qantas Airways, Japan Airlines, Cathay Pacific Airways, Air France, EL AL Israel Airlines Ltd, Nippon Cargo Airlines Co Ltd and China Airlines.

(Reporting by [Diane Bartz](#) and [Jeremy Pelofsky](#); Editing by [Tim Dobbyn](#), [Bernard Orr](#))

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