

 [Printer Friendly Version](#)  [E-Mail This Article](#)

Published on Friday, March 19, 2004 by the Long Island, NY [Newsday](#)

Bush Campaign Gear Made in Burma

His campaign store sells a pullover from nation whose products he has banned from being sold in the U.S.

by Lauren Weber

The official merchandise Web site for President George W. Bush's re-election campaign has sold clothing made in Burma, whose goods were banned by Bush from the U.S. last year to punish its military dictatorship.

The merchandise sold on www.georgewbushstore.com includes a \$49.95 fleece pullover, embroidered with the Bush-Cheney '04 logo and bearing a label stating it was made in Burma, now Myanmar. The jacket was sent to Newsday as part of an order that included a shirt made in Mexico and a hat not bearing a country-of-origin label.

The Bush merchandise is handled by Spalding Group, a 20-year-old supplier of campaign products and services in Louisville, Ky., that says it worked for the last five Republican presidential nominees.

Ted Jackson, Spalding's president, said, "We have found only one other in our inventory that was made in Burma. The others were made in the U.S.A." He said the company had about 60 of the fleece pullovers in its warehouse, and that a supplier included the Burma product by mistake.

Bush campaign officials did not return calls seeking comment. The imports are potentially an issue because outsourcing has become a hot political topic in the election.

Bush last July signed into law the Burmese Freedom and Democracy Act, saying "The United States will not waver from its commitment to the cause of democracy and human rights in Burma."

Violators of the import ban are subject to fines and jail, according to the U.S. Treasury Department.

Burmese textile workers earn as little as 7 cents per hour, according to the National Labor Committee, a human rights group.

"If it is true, it is very contradictory because the sanctions were imposed by the Bush administration," said Bo Hla-Tint, a spokesman for the Burmese government-in-exile in Washington, D.C.

Spalding, which works exclusively with Republican candidates at both local and national levels, tries to order American-made products, Jackson said. "Our first effort is always to source things from the U.S., but not a lot of garments are made in the U. S. Friday," he said. He said all embroidery is done in the United States.

The Bush-Cheney fleece pullovers were imported to the United States by Denver-based Colorado Trading & Clothing. President Jeff Schmitt said Thursday the pullovers were included in one of the last shipments brought in from Burma last year before Sept. 1, when the import ban went into effect. "It's a terrible irony" that the Burmese jacket landed at Newsday, he said.

Schmitt said Colorado Trading employs an agent in Asia who conducts checks of factory conditions.

Human rights watcher Charles Kernaghan, director of the National Labor Committee, said the slip-up showed a lack of conviction on the administration's part. "Given the debate about outsourcing, it's amazing that the campaign would be selling stuff made in the most brutal country on earth, known for things like child labor and sexual slavery," he said. "It shows a crude indifference to this issue."

The National Basketball Association recently vowed to stop selling Burmese-made sweatshirts after a campaign by the NLC.

Last week, Newsday ordered a hat, T-shirt and fleece pullover or jacket from both the Bush and Kerry campaign stores. The Bush merchandise - which totaled \$81.85 - arrived this week. The Kerry products, worth \$62, have yet to arrive because the fleece jacket was on back order, according to Financial Innovations, the company that licenses and sells Kerry merchandise on the Web site www.kerrygear.com.

The campaigns receive no profits from the merchandise because of federal election regulations.

The Kerry merchandise was made in the United States, according to Mark Weiner, the president of Financial Innovations. The company, whose employees belong to the Communications Workers of America Union, sources most of its merchandise from union factories.

"It's becoming more difficult to find American-made union product, especially in textiles, but you just have to look. We pay more money for them, so we make a smaller profit margin," said Paul McConnell, Financial Innovations' vice president.

Copyright © 2004, Newsday, Inc.

###

 Printer Friendly Version  E-Mail This Article

FAIR USE NOTICE

This site contains copyrighted material the use of which has not always been specifically authorized by the copyright owner. We are making such material available in our efforts to advance understanding of environmental, political, human rights, economic, democracy, scientific, and social justice issues, etc. We believe this constitutes a 'fair use' of any such copyrighted material as provided for in section 107 of the US Copyright Law. In accordance with Title 17 U.S.C. Section 107, the material on this site is distributed without profit to those who have expressed a prior interest in receiving the included information for research and educational purposes. For more information go to: <http://www.law.cornell.edu/uscode/17/107.shtml>. If you wish to use copyrighted material from this site for purposes of your own that go beyond 'fair use', you must obtain permission from the copyright owner.

Common Dreams [NewsCenter](#)

A non-profit news service providing breaking news & views for the progressive community.

[Home](#) | [Newswire](#) | [About Us](#) | [Donate](#) | [Sign-Up](#) | [Archives](#)

© Copyrighted 1997-2003
www.commondreams.org