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D. ROSS CAMERON / AP

A yard superintendent's pickup is the only traffic at Marine Terminals shipping facility Friday in Oakland.

Dock workers locked out

Action came after shippers accused longshoremen's union of work slowdown.

The Associated Press

SAN FRANCISCO — The association representing shipping lines locked out longshoremen at all West Coast ports until Sunday morning as a labor dispute with the dock worker's union grew into a disruption that will curtail the flow of Asian goods across the country.

Friday's announcement of a "cooling-off" period in contract negotiations came after the Pacific Maritime Association, which represents shipping lines and terminal operators, accused the longshoremen's union of a work slowdown to gain leverage in the

increasingly acrimonious talks.

The association's board agreed Friday morning to keep the longshoremen from working, said president Joseph Miniace. The lockout began at 6 p.m..

"It's the very last thing we wanted to do. But the union forced us into this," Miniace said.

The association has released figures saying that a coastwide labor disruption could cost the U.S. economy about \$1 billion per day. The ports handle more than \$300 billion in imports and exports each year.

Union president James Spinoso said the association was acting unilaterally and that union negotiators wanted to keep talking.

"Miniace showed the same disrespect for the union he has since the

beginning of these talks," Spinoso said. "He is unilaterally taking the action of closing all ports and bears full responsibility for its effects on the American economy."

Friday evening, the two sides agreed to meet today at noon. But the antagonism had moved beyond the negotiating room.

During the evening, officials said they called police to escort workers from the Maersk terminal in Oakland. A dispute broke out after workers said superintendents had tried to do the union-protected job of lashing down containers on a vessel.

Word of the lockout prompted a federal mediator to fly to San Francisco. The Bush administration urged both sides to resolve the dispute, but said it would not intervene.