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INTER-AMERICAN DRUG ABUSE  
CONTROL COMMISSION

**CICAD**

Secretariat for Multidimensional Security

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## **GUIDELINES FOR STRENGTHENING CONTROL OF CONTAINERS**

Viña del Mar, Chile

## **I. Introduction**

The international maritime trade mobilizes millions of containers per year. Handling of the cargo should be done in an expedited manner, but not excluding a proper control by authorities. Control of containers should be made in an efficient way in order to succeed in the detection of diversion and illicit activities that might affect foreign trade in each country. Some of these activities are drug trafficking, terrorism, fraud, smuggling and so on. The control of the containers should also be done attending the existing asymmetries on the economical and technological matters of each country favoring the international cooperation of these ones.

Selectivity, document analysis, the identification of risk profiles, intelligent control systems (including non-intrusive technology) and information exchange, are tools designed to assist the port facilities, customs and police surveillance of countries, to establish control of containers in an effective way. These tools will enable the authorities in the ports of origin, transit and destination to coordinate joint operations to avoid delays and increases in the cost of international trade. They will also avoid the use of these containers for illicit activities, such as trafficking of stolen and counterfeit goods, weapons and explosives, dangerous chemicals, narcotics and human beings.

## **II. Purpose**

In Cartagena de Indias - Colombia during the roundtable discussion between August 18 and 20, 2008, at the Officers Club of the Navy of Colombia, officials from customs, maritime, health and police of Argentina, Chile, Brazil, Venezuela, El Salvador, Canada, Haiti, Mexico and Colombia, responsible for control of containers in the traffic of illicit substances in the seaports, concluded on the need to carry out non intrusive controls of containers based on the profile risk and new technologies. This recommendations don't have any mandatory effect therefore the respect for the sovereignty and internal legislations of each country should prevail.

## **2. SAFETY IN THE LOGISTICS CHAIN AND INFORMATION EXCHANGE**

Accurate and current information concerning import and export companies is valuable and important for the authorities in their control processes. It enables them to develop and outline risk analysis documentation and operations to target their activities and improve their controls over cargos. To do so it is necessary to:

A. Develop reliable information systems of foreign trade operators.

B. Enhance information exchange between different countries, in accordance with their respective laws, and according to international agreements.

## RECOMMENDATION

To enforce the use of the current information exchange agreements, it is suggested that each country establishes an e-mail point of contact for a group that could exchange information regarding, among other things, the identification of reliable operators from third countries.

This contact group would be informed by each of the countries involved in this initiative, and the coordinator of the activity in this case Argentina will forward the consolidated information to each participant and CICAD.

## **3. CONTAINERS. BACKGROUND AND ROUTING. RISK ASSESSMENT**

The Group considers it essential for the purposes of assessing the risks inherent in the control of containers, to be aware, of the tracking of the containers in the different countries.

The following information should be required:

1. Date of port of origin departure, transit, transshipment.
2. Place of origin of the cargo.
3. Seals at departure.
4. Length of stay in port.
5. Seal at arrival
6. Activities of the container within each country:
  - a) Cities where the container pass through.
  - b) Name of the company that leases the container for activities of foreign trade.
  - c) Places of Storage.
  - d) Sites where the capacity of the container is checked.

## RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the competent bodies in each country initiate communication with the private sector including owners of the containers, to expedite and increase the efficient provision of information and records on the movement of these containers. It is also suggested that competent agencies consult with shipping lines and other companies to obtain cargo manifest information in a more timely manner. This would provide more time for review, risk analysis and operational planning as part of the control process. In

suspicious cases or those where problems have been identified agencies should provide feedback to the countries involved with information on the cases, in accordance with national laws of the countries.

#### **4. TECHNOLOGY APPLIED TO THE CONTROL OF CONTAINERS**

Some participating control agencies commented on the usefulness and functionality of on-going monitoring of containers using cutting edge technology. This can help increase awareness when the containers are opened in transit in the logistical chain and they are in storage in the port indicating the date and times for each of the foregoing. This permits the control authorities at the ports to have a verification tool for the physical inspection. In relation to the above, we suggest that consideration be given to the use of the following:

1. Smart electronic stamp, which tells the exact location and real-time of the container and also provides alerts when undergoing any eventuality in its structure during the route.
2. Chambers of optical character recognition (OCR), located at strategic points of the country borders and principal routes of distribution, which captures automotive plates and identification of letters and numbers of containers, allowing assessing routes and detours.
3. Non-intrusive system, using X-rays, neutrons and gamma rays as a tool for verifying the cargo on the containers.

#### **RECOMMENDATION**

We suggest that the authorities of each country evaluate the possibility of implementing intelligent control mechanisms similar to those mentioned according to their possibilities.

At the same time, countries where this technology is in place should offer to collaborate with the implementation of this technology in other countries.

#### **5. FOREIGN TRADE INTERMEDIARIES. RESPONSIBILITIES**

Customs brokerage and clearance companies and others with similar functions should provide the competent agencies or authorities with the following information that would help control bodies to develop appropriate risk profiles.

1. Possible suspicious transactions or operators
2. Possible fictitious companies.

3. False documents.
4. New customers and those not normally involved in foreign trade.
5. Securing the documentation related to the foreign trade transaction.

## RECOMMENDATION

Customs brokerage clearance companies and all persons performing functions such as customs procedures in each country should commit, through existing internal regulations to cooperate with the relevant control services in obtaining the information mentioned above. It is also suggested, according to local laws of countries, to direct the legal mechanisms for achieving the indicated implementation.

## **6. Chemical precursor control and Information Gathering**

In addition to the controls currently in place to control precursors and essential chemical substances, the following actions are recommended:

1. Optimize the procedures for exchanging information both internally and with other countries to obtain favorable results in the efforts to prevent trafficking and diversion of such substances.
2. Implement internal computer systems with centralized databases.
3. Create and/or implement committees or working groups to strengthen the links between domestic institutions.

## **7. RISK PROFILE. WHAT TO LOOK FOR AND THE PROPER RESPONSE**

It is recognized that each country has the autonomy to:

1. Set risk profiles according to the document analysis software or set of "alarms" established for effective control of drug trafficking.
2. Establish policies for recognition and priority regarding notifications, announcements or intelligence reports when received from other countries.
3. Provide proper response to the issuing country regarding the efficiency of the alerts

## **8. CONTROL OF THE SECURITY OF SEALS ON CONTAINERS**

It is suggested that the containers that are being used for export, import, transit, cargo unload/reload, among others, be scrutinized through the following:

1. Random and selective checks to verify the integrity of seals and/or sealing locks. These seals can be cloned or altered in their structure or numbering, they can also be violated or opened and then rebuilt.