Bosnia and Herzegovina: joint risk analysis on cross-border traffic

The application of risk management processes to the cross-border movement of goods and people in Bosnia and Herzegovina has gone through some remarkable changes over recent years. From a fragmented approach on the fringes of some border management agencies’ operational processes, it is now well on its way to becoming an integral element in the country’s comprehensive approach to border management.

Between 2006 and 2009, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) led an EC funded project to assist the country in the design and implementation of a national strategy and action plan on integrated border management. Risk analysis formed one of the components of the project, reflecting the authorities’ awareness of the friction between on the one hand, the necessity to establish effective border control and on the other hand, the limited physical means at the relevant agencies’ disposal.

The Balkans region is, and always has been, an important transit point for goods and people to and from the EU. Additionally, Bosnia and Herzegovina is increasingly a source and destination country for cross-border traffic as well. The sheer volume of traffic makes it practically impossible to carry out 100% checks. However, the process of determining what to check and what to skip was in many respects still in its infancy.

From the outset of the project there was a clear consensus among the stakeholders (Indirect Taxation Authority, Border Police, State Veterinary Office, State Plant Health Protection Agency, and the Service for Foreigners’ Affairs) that inter-agency cooperation would add significant value to the process of risk analysis. However, the form of this interagency cooperation was less well understood. The Ministry of Security and the heads of the border management agencies also gradually grew accustomed to the thought of going beyond a mere exchange of liaison officers. The convening of senior-level study visits to Rotterdam harbor, to the WCO, and to Heathrow’s Joint Border Operation Center assisted the development of both a shared understanding and the necessary conceptual buy-in for the idea of centralization and the partial amalgamation of the analytical functions of the border management agencies into a single Joint Analysis Centre (JAC). The agencies then established the JAC, through an inter-agency MOU, as a department within the Border Police, but staffed by all agencies on a secondment basis.

The objective of the JAC is to supply participating agencies with actionable operational level information as well as with strategic level information on general trends and developments in cross-border traffic. The work plan of the JAC is agreed periodically between the participating border management agencies. The agencies provide the JAC with an updated replica of their corporate data through each agency’s Local Analysis Center (LAC) data warehouse. For example, information from a single agency’s various internal databases is first funneled to its own LAC where it is processed for the organization’s own analytical purposes. It is then (partially or wholly) replicated for analysis of possible inter-agency relations or trends in data by the JAC. This required an extensive and ongoing process of standardization and normalization of data in order to be able to establish links between fields from the databases of the different organizations, or even from within one organization.

Confidentiality and privacy of data is protected by synchronized anonymization of fields holding personally identifiable information, in addition to physical, procedural and organizational measures. The analysts at the JAC are therefore at no point presented with names, addresses or telephone numbers of persons of interest, but merely with the fact that the codes representing the names match between different databases. If that link is deemed to be of operational significance, then authorized investigators may request the release of the corresponding personal information from the relevant agencies. This may result in an updated entry on a watchlist or even a proposal for an inter-
Mexico Customs reports its progress on applying risk analysis to core processes

As a Customs administration, one of Mexico’s main priorities is to contribute to the strengthening of national security by combating criminal organizations. This, in turn, reflects a major objective of the 2007-2012 National Development Plan: to cripple the illicit profits of these organizations.

In recent years, the Mexican Tax Administration Service and Mexico Customs have dedicated considerable financial and human resources to enhancing their programmes to detect illicit goods at ports of entry through a risk analysis and intelligence strategy.

A valuable source to generate intelligence is the advance information Mexico Customs receives on incoming maritime shipments. Furthermore, Mexico is committed to the implementation of Pillar 1 of the WCO SAFE Framework of Standards, which entails the use of advance information and risk management systems by WCO Members.

A good example of the effective use of risk analysis, based on advance information to target pirated and counterfeit goods, is the recent seizures that were carried out at the Ports of Lazaro Cardenas, Manzanillo, Ensenada, Veracruz and Altamira in 2009; in these cases, the ports were alerted to the arrival of suspicious shipments by the intelligence unit at Customs headquarters.

Also in 2009, in 94 of 504 targeted containers, risk was confirmed and the goods seized. They contained approximately 1,053 tons of merchandise, representing more than 50% of all pirated goods seized by Mexico Customs (33 million pirated units). These unprecedented seizures in 2009 were the direct result of the use of Customs intelligence and the application of risk analysis as well as the actions taken by the Mexican government.

The Tax Administration Service and Mexico Customs are permanently committed to enhancing their procedures, infrastructure and technology in order to efficiently fight illicit trade.

More information
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Counterfeit brands in electronic goods (Duracell, Motorola, Sony, Sony Ericsson)

Counterfeit brands in apparel and accessories (Lacoste, Puma, Abercrombie, Tous, Mont Blanc, Hugo Boss)

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