



**UNODC**

United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime

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WORLD CUSTOMS ORGANIZATION  
ORGANISATION MONDIALE DES DOUANES

# UNODC – WCO

## CONTAINER CONTROL PROGRAMME



## THE UNODC-WCO CONTAINER CONTROL PROGRAMME

The Container Control Programme (CCP) concept was initiated in 2003 by the Executive Director of United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime together with the Secretary General of the World Customs Organization. It was agreed that the WCO would act as the “Co-Executing Agency”. As a result the CCP was developed by UNODC and WCO for the purpose of assisting governments to create sustainable enforcement structures in selected sea ports to minimize the risk of maritime containers being exploited and used for illicit drug trafficking, transnational organized crime and other forms of black market activity.

The sheer volume of international maritime container traffic with **420 million containers shipped yearly** in the trade supply chain, the sophisticated and often ingenious concealment methods, along with the diverse routings adopted by illicit drug traffickers and other smugglers, invariably makes successful interdiction difficult. Seaports are notoriously difficult and at times dangerous places to work and law enforcement structures are often hampered by a lack of resources, inter-agency mistrust, complex port processes and systems, and other factors which are purposefully exploited by criminal organizations. The situation poses a very real and serious threat to the security of the international trade supply chain so important to sustainable development.

At the heart of this innovative approach is the creation of inter-agency port control units (PCUs) comprising analysts and search teams from different law enforcement agencies (e.g. Customs, Police) who are trained and equipped to work together to systematically target high risk containers for professional law enforcement scrutiny using risk analysis and other proactive techniques with minimum disruption to the free flow of legitimate trade. Adequate accommodation and access to relevant shipping information, as well management support, are just some of the key motivating factors that typically need to be addressed. It is important to point out that the CCP does not seek to change the statutory roles and responsibilities of any of the participating enforcement agencies, but rather to promote the interaction and teamwork necessary for effective interdiction.

### *UNODC's responsibilities:*

UNODC's role is the global administration and development of the CCP including fund raising, external relations and reporting, and the implementation and coordination arrangements of CCP activities in the participating countries through the respective UNODC Field Offices and in close cooperation with WCO.

Through its Programme Coordinator, UNODC develops all avenues of potential cooperation with international organizations and bilateral partners, international trade associations and UN agencies. National project managers appointed by UNODC play a key role in day-to-day implementation of CCP activities in each country, helping to build confidence and ensuring that problem areas are resolved without delay.

UNODC actively promotes the expansion of the CCP to other countries. The process of incorporation into the CCP is subject to certain standard preconditions being met by each new country.

***WCO responsibilities:***

WCO is responsible for the development, management and implementation of the training programme. WCO Members currently provide English, French, Portuguese and Spanish speaking trainers. This Members' in-kind contribution is critical for providing the CCP with high quality training and for controlling costs.

Training, which is based upon the relevant provisions of an array of international instruments and tools, is delivered by a team of experts with operational customs and police experience in container controls, investigation techniques, and international law enforcement cooperation. WCO Members provide the lead trainer who is in turn supplemented by topic-specific national and international experts including representatives from INTERPOL, the respective WCO Regional Intelligence Liaison Office (RILO) and other appropriate national, international and/or regional organizations.



(Courtesy of JPCU, Ghana)

The 6-week training component for PCU team members is divided into two parts. The first 3 weeks are set aside for in-depth theoretical training, with the remaining 3 weeks being devoted to the practical application of the various techniques for the selection/inspection of high risk containers and the important management systems, operational procedures and safeguards that are necessary. Teamwork and integrity are core values that are promoted throughout the training period and beyond, as well as the need to produce measurable results.

**ContainerCOMM**

ContainerCOMM is an internet based, secure, multifunctional communication system developed by WCO Secretariat under the framework of the CCP for the purpose of facilitating the encrypted exchange of sensitive information, particularly the movement of suspected high risk containers, between the Port Control Units (PCUs), other authorized Users in participating countries and, in the near future, the eleven Regional Intelligence Liaison Offices (RILOs) of the World Customs Organization.

This information is sent by way of three distinct types of pre-formatted messages, namely **WARNING** messages concerning the movement of suspected high-risk maritime containers,

**FEEDBACK** messages detailing the action taken, and **SEIZURE** messages providing the type and quantity of illicit goods seized and other relevant information.

ContainerCOMM, which requires no special installation, is provided free to participating CCP members. It is currently available in English, French, Russian and Spanish.

The system is already proving effective and has resulted in a number of cocaine seizures in Europe including 143 kg (photo) seized by Belgium Customs in the port of Antwerp as a direct result of a **WARNING** message sent from Ecuador. The presence of a duplicate set of seals (photo) suggests the modus operandi was “Rip Off”.



(Courtesy of Belgium Customs)

### Progress Reports by Country (status June 2009)

#### *Ecuador*

In 2005 Ecuador was the first pilot country to be incorporated into the CCP. Progress to date has been encouraging, particularly the extent to which the National Police (PNE), Customs Corporation (CAE) including its operational arm the Customs Surveillance Service (SVA) and the National Drug Control Commission (CONSEP) are working together as an inter-agency port control unit (PCU) producing measurable results in the sea port of Guayaquil.

The improvement in the real time exchange of information and law enforcement cooperation continued in 2008 with further cocaine seizures reported in Antwerp, Belgium as a direct result of alerts sent by the Guayaquil PCU via ContainerCOMM.

Since operations started in 2006, the PCU has intercepted more than 70 freight containers and seized precursor chemicals, almost 25 metric tons cocaine, several shipments of endangered/protected species, and other smuggled goods.

The cocaine seizures in Guayaquil clearly demonstrate the extent to which regional traffickers make it exceedingly difficult for the control agencies to identify not only a suspect high risk container, but also the method and/or location of the particular concealment. Even with supplied

information cocaine is difficult to find. Risk analysis and teamwork, however, have proven effective resulting in the discovery of several large concealments that would have previously gone undetected.

Practical training in 2008 focused on the proactive targeting and inspection of maritime containers not only for illicit drugs but also IPR infringements, protected/endangered species, and precursor chemicals. This was followed by a work study tour to Cartagena, Colombia specifically designed to give PCU operatives the opportunity to exchange ideas and techniques with colleagues faced with similar challenges in interdicting cocaine shipments in maritime containers, as well as to strengthen law enforcement cooperation between the two countries.

Although planned activities in Ecuador are now complete the CCP will continue to provide technical assistance, if requested, for the purpose of establishing similar controls based upon inter-agency cooperation and private sector support in other ports.

### ***Ghana***

For many years significant quantities of herbal cannabis, concealed in national produce exported from Port Tema, have been seized in European ports. This trend continued in 2008 with two reported seizures of 5,500 kg and 3,800 kg in Hamburg and Antwerp respectively; the cover loads in both cases were pineapples. Ghana is also one of the countries in West Africa vulnerable to the threat posed by the rapidly expanding trans-Atlantic cocaine trafficking route. Counterfeit medicines imported from the Far East through Port Tema, a major risk to the health and security of the population, are widely available in local markets. These medicines are not only ineffective and/or toxic, but promote the emergence of drug resistance due to the fact that they are often produced with sub-therapeutic doses of the active pharmaceutical ingredients. Ghana is also an important entry point for counterfeit cigarettes that are widely available in the country.

Following theoretical training an inter-agency PCU became operational in October 2008 within the container terminal at Port Tema. Staffing comprises officials from the Narcotics Control Board (NACOB), the National Police, the Bureau of National Investigation (BNI), Customs Excise and Preventive Service (CEPS) and the Ghana Ports and Harbour Authority (GPHA).

Practical training was also delivered in 2008 focusing on profiling and targeting high risk containers, and adopting procedures to harmonize the different competences and working procedures in consultation with the relevant port authorities. During training, profiling exercises by the students themselves resulted in the seizure of sub-standard medicines.



(Courtesy of PCU, Port Tema)

Less than one month after the conclusion of the practical training, the PCU intercepted 3 stolen luxury cars, an *Audi A8*, a *Mercedes S320*, and a *Porsche Cayenne* that had arrived in 2 maritime containers from Spain declared as personal effects. In addition, 72 kg of cocaine coming from Ecuador were seized.

The Container Control Programme PCU is the first of its kind in Ghana. Prior to its existence container profiling to uncover organized crime activities was not taking place. Customs was the only agency regularly controlling import containers, but primarily aimed at generating state revenue and preventing/detecting fiscal offences.

### ***Pakistan***

The two main counterpart agencies are Pakistan Customs (FBR) and the Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF). The priority sites chosen for CCP implementation are the container terminals in Karachi, Pakistan's largest and busiest sea port, and in Port Qasim. Once completed at these two sites, activities will be replicated at strategic inland dry ports located in Lahore, Faisalabad, Sambrial (Sialkot), Chamman (Quetta), Torkham (Peshawar), Multan and Sust.

Despite the ongoing security situation in Pakistan, progress to date in implementing a wide range of CCP activities in both Karachi Port and Port Qasim has been encouraging and include theoretical training for both ANF and FBR; delivery of inspection tools, portable devices to determine the identity of hazardous and toxic chemicals, vehicles, as well as the completion of the first on-site practical training.

### **Seizures:**

**3 separate cannabis seizures: 267 kg, 2,300 kg, and one of 5,000 kg concealed behind the false wall of a container (see photo); 14,000 kg acetic anhydride, a precursor used in the illicit production of heroin; 4,500 kg acetyl chloride, a hazardous and difficult substance to handle which is a precursor to acetic anhydride and can be used directly to convert morphine into heroin. Seizures of acetic anhydride are rare in this region, this being the first since 2001. Such an amount (14,000 kg) could have been used in the production of at least 5,600 kg heroin.**



(Courtesy of ANF, Pakistan)

### ***Senegal***

Like Ghana, Senegal is considered a potential transit country for cocaine shipments to Europe as well as an entry point for counterfeit products from the Far East, particularly medicines and other pharmaceutical products as well as cigarettes and tobacco. Although there were no reported seizures in 2008 the PCU remains vigilant, is an effective deterrent, and will benefit from plans to expand the CCP to the nearby Cape Verde islands in 2009.

### ***Turkmenistan***

Turkmenistan is the first country in the Caspian Sea region to become part of the CCP. Opium and heroin enter from neighboring Afghanistan and the Islamic Republic of Iran for trans-shipment along the “Northern Route” to markets in the Russian Federation and Europe. According to officials figures released by the Government more than 3 tons of illicit drugs (mostly opium) were seized in Turkmenistan in 2006 and a similar amount in 2007. It is also believed to be a trans-shipment country for some of the precursor chemicals needed in the process of converting opium into morphine and heroin. Weapons, radioactive materials, counterfeit products, protected/endangered species, as well as items of cultural heritage are also potentially being smuggled through the Caspian Sea region.

CCP activities began in 2008 with a preliminary assessment mission followed by theoretical training in the port of Turkmenbashi attended by law enforcement officials from State Customs Service (SCS), State Drug Control Service (SDCS), State Border Service (SBS), Ministry of National Security, Ministry of Internal Affairs, Transport Police and the National Sea and River Authority.

The integration of Turkmenistan into the CCP is a positive development and will be the catalyst for enhanced law enforcement cooperation and interdiction in the Caspian Sea region. Accordingly, CCP activities will complement and support the UNODC/Paris Pact Rainbow Strategy Action Plan, the Central Asian Regional Information and Coordination Centre (CARICC), as well as the EU Border Management Programme in Central Asia (BOMCA).

***Future segments***

The CCP has received a pledge for funding of activities in Afghanistan (Dry Ports), Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan and Iran from the European Commission.

In addition, preliminary discussions were initiated with a view to introducing the CCP in a number of countries in Central and South America (Panama, Costa Rica, Brazil) and West Africa (Togo, Benin, Cote d'Ivoire), currently without funding. Panama will be a significant contributor to the control of the global containerized trade supply chain. The CCP will be given access to the manifest information for containers transiting the Panama Canal through the cooperation with the Panama Government, the Panama Canal authorities and the Panama Customs authorities.

**International Support**

Current CCP donor countries are Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Norway, Spain and the United Kingdom (UK). In addition the CCP has received in-kind contributions from Argentina, Belgium, Chile, Colombia, Czech Republic, Ecuador, France, Germany, Ghana, Norway, Spain, United Arab Emirates (UAE) and the UK.

International and not-for-profit organizations actively supporting CCP implementation include the Business Alliance for Secure Commerce (BASC), International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL), International Federation of the Phonographic Industry (IFPI) and the UN Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute (UNICRI)

***Overview of all Results***

After the establishment of the first operational inter-agency unit the CCP have had the following results:

- **COCAINE: approx. 28.4 tons**
- **CANNABIS: approx. 7.5 tons**
- **PRECURSOR CHEMICALS: approx. 76 tons**
- **SHARK FINS: 9 tons (endangered species)**
- **7 containers with household electrical goods and clothes valued to US \$ 1.2 million**
- **2 containers with alcohol**
- **3 containers with counterfeit goods (Intellectual Property Rights)**
- **45 containers with protected wood (1.545 tons)**
- **4.5 million counterfeit cigarettes**
- **3 stolen luxury cars**
- **Several containers of misdeclared goods**



(Illegal wood – total seizure 1,500 tons)

(Courtesy of CGSA, Ecuador)



(Precursor Chemicals seized – total seizure 76 tons)

(Shark fins – total seizure 9 tons)

(Courtesy of CGSA, Ecuador)

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