

Security Project Fund for Asia/Pacific (Customs Counter-terrorism Initiative for South East Asia)

- *Launching of a new security initiative by the WCO for Customs administrations in the Asia/Pacific, specifically focusing on South East Asia.*
- *The Government of Japan financially supports the initiative with a contribution totaling over seven (7) million US dollars.*

A New Initiative

Global terrorism poses a variety of challenges, not only to the security and safety of people, but also to economic development and political stability, making it imperative for Customs administrations to further strengthen their efforts to secure borders and protect the international trade supply chain.

At the G7 Summit held in Ise-Shima, Japan on 26 and 27 May 2016, the Leaders adopted the “G7 Action Plan on Countering Terrorism and Violent Extremism,” which made specific mention of the WCO Security Programme as a means of enhancing border security and assisting WCO Members to counter the threat posed by terrorists and other criminal organizations.

Terrorist attacks in Jakarta, Indonesia in January 2016 and in Dhaka, Bangladesh in July 2016, highlighted the threats posed specifically in South East Asia: the use of small arms, light weapons and “homemade” explosives; the widespread availability of small arms, including explosive precursors; the exploitation of international supply chains to traffic such weapons; and the utilization of international airports by foreign terrorist fighters (FTFs) and others to move in and out of conflict areas and to commission acts of terrorism.

In line with the G7 Action Plan, to further expand the reach of the WCO Security Programme, the WCO, with financial support from the Government of Japan, has decided to launch a new initiative for Customs administrations in the Asia/Pacific region, specifically focusing on border security related challenges in South East Asia.

The Initiative in detail

- The continued use of the WCO’s ***Programme Global Shield (PGS)*** as a vehicle to reduce terrorist organizations’ ability to obtain improvised explosive devices (IEDs), including the diversion of chemicals and other parts used in their manufacture;
- The utilization of ***advance passenger information (API)*** and ***passenger name records (PNR)*** to perform effective risk analysis on passengers in order to stem the flow of FTFs and other terrorist groups;
- A reduction in the ability of all terrorists to obtain ***small arms and light weapons (SALW)***.

WCO Security Programme

The Security Programme is the WCO's response mechanism to assist its Member administrations with their border security related challenges. The Programme consists of five commodity based/thematic areas:

- Programme Global Shield, aimed at countering IEDs;
- The SALW Project, aimed at countering their misuse;
- Passenger Controls/FTFs, supported by the use of API/PNR;
- Strategic Trade Controls, which combine capacity building and operational activities;
- Terrorist Financing, aimed at combating illicit trade and money laundering, including cash couriers and trade-based money laundering.

Recent successes of the WCO Security Programme

- **Operation Chimera**, which focused on express courier and mail services, targeted the illicit trafficking of small arms and light weapons, including cash and bearer negotiable instruments (BNIs). Among the key seizures was a record interception of 450 million US dollars made by Customs officers in Toluca, Mexico, while Customs officers in Abu Dhabi foiled two attempts to smuggle nearly 10 million Saudi riyals (2.5 million US dollars) into the United Arab Emirates.
- **Programme Global Shield**, which targets IEDs, has resulted in the seizure of over 1000 metric tons of chemicals and multiple IED components since its inception in 2010, thus preventing the manufacture of thousands of IEDs and many death casualties.

Key Instruments and Tools of the WCO

- **Punta Cana Resolution (December 2015)**, addressed the role and contribution of Customs in the context of border security and counter-terrorism.

<http://www.wcoomd.org/en/media/newsroom/2015/december/wco-issues-the-punta-cana-resolution.aspx>

- **Counter-Terrorism Strategy (July 2016)**, aimed at enhancing the capacity of Customs administrations to manage border security related threats.