



WORLD CUSTOMS ORGANIZATION
ORGANISATION MONDIALE DES DOUANES

Operation Global Shield Asia Pacific Security Project II (GS APSP III)

FINAL REPORT

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Part I: EXECUTION OF OPERATION GS APSP III

1. Introduction

The United Nations Security Council has identified terrorism as a threat to international peace and security. Responding to this threat, United Nations Security Council Resolutions 1373 (2001) reaffirmed by Security Council Resolutions 1624 (2005), 2178 (2014) and 2253 (2015) obligate States towards the elimination of the supply of weapons to terrorists.

Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs) are used in the majority of terrorist attacks and cause the most civilian harm of any weapon category. According to Action on Armed Violence (AOAV), between 2011 and 2015 more than 105,000 deaths and injuries have been recorded as a result of IED incidents. Of these incidents more than 85% were civilians. In addition, billions of euros worth of damage to economies was also incurred in countries affected by IED incidents. While IEDs are a global threat, five out of the ten countries most affected by IEDs lie in the MENA region.

Programme Global Shield, launched by the WCO in 2010 with its partners INTERPOL and UNODC, is leveraging Customs ability to mitigate the IED threat by monitoring the licit movement of explosive precursor chemicals and other IED components and counter illicit trafficking and diversion. Operation Global Shield North of Africa, Near and Middle East (GS MENA) aimed at expanding the focus of Programme Global Shield from its initial geographical core region in the Central Asia, India and Pakistan region to the WCO MENA region.

The Operation GS APSP III and all related activities were funded by the Special Project Fund of the Government of Japan.

This report is structured following a chronological order, aiming to provide the reader with an insight of the different stages of Operation GS APSP III, the challenges and the outcomes.

2. Objectives

- Provide a cogent operational context through which Customs can play a meaningful role in counter terrorism by restricting the access to IED precursor chemicals and components;
- Improve cooperation amongst Customs administrations, and between Customs administrations and other law enforcement and intelligence agencies including Police at the national level and enhancement of operational cooperation through the Regional Intelligence Liaison Office (RILO) network and with INTERPOL;
- Improve the intelligence and situational awareness of the risk picture as it relates to IED precursor chemicals and components and identify intelligence gaps;
- Detect, intercept and seize illicit shipments of commodities used to manufacture IEDs and support subsequent investigations with an aim to identify, disrupt and dismantle transnational illicit networks;
- Monitor the licit movement of IED precursor chemicals and components;
- Enhance coordination at the national and sub-regional level between public and private partners in line with the mission of the Operation.

3. Targets and Locations

3.1. Targeted Goods

The operation focused on the following high risk precursor chemicals and components identified by industry experts as posing the greatest threat for use in IEDs. In addition to the 13 precursor chemicals and one metal (Aluminium powder, flakes and paste), detonators and transmitting devices currently monitored under PGS, the operation also included aluminium paste (HS 3212 90) and commercial drones (HS 8525.80). Aluminium paste, like aluminium powder or flakes, can enhance the explosion capability of IEDs while commercially available drones can be used for delivery of IEDs or as an IED itself set to detonate when picked up or examined. Both have been extensively used by ISIL in Syria and Iraq and there is a high probability that terrorist and/or violent extremist groups may replicate the use of these components in other countries.

3.1.1. Precursor chemicals

Chemical	CAS number	HS Code
Ammonium Nitrate	6484-52-2	3102 30
Nitromethane	75-52-5	2904 20
Sodium Nitrate	7631-99-4	3102 50
Potassium Nitrate	7757-79-1	2834 21
Sodium Chlorate	7775-09-9	2829 11
Potassium Chlorate	3811-04-9	2829 19
Potassium Perchlorate	7778-74-7	2829 90
Acetone	67-64-1, 7217-25-6	2914 11
Hydrogen Peroxide	7722-84-1	2847 00
Nitric Acid	7697-37-2, 43625-06-5, 13587-52-5	2808 00
Urea	57-13-6	3102 10
Aluminium Powder and Flakes	7429-90-5	7603 20 – 7603 10
Aluminium Paste	7429-90-5	3212 90
Calcium Ammonium Nitrate (double salt)	15245-12-2	3102 60

3.1.2. Other IED components

Component		HS Code
Detonators, detonating cord, blasting caps, safety fuses, igniters		3603 00
Transmitting devices		8526.92
Drones		8525.80

3.2. Transport Modes and Locations

Although most long-range targeting methods for precursor chemicals and explosive components are associated to the sea ports in the maritime environment, land border and air ports-of-entry were also included in the operation as they are equally important as seaports in the detection of these commodities and their associated criminal organizations.

Based on the national/regional trade flow assessment, it was expected that participants should align their operational activity with the modes and locations presenting the biggest risk in relation to movements of the targeted IED precursor chemicals and components.

4. Legal Basis

The international legal framework set by United Nations Security Council Resolution 2253 (2015) obligates States towards the elimination of the supply of all kind of weapons to terrorists. In addition, United Nations General Assembly resolution 70/46 (2015) “...encourages States to consider supporting Programme Global Shield.” and the Report of the United Nations Secretary General A/71/189 (2016) highlights Programme Global Shield as providing an excellent Infrastructure for international cooperation and that it would benefit from further support by member States. However, national enforcement actions depend upon national legislation and regulations. It was decided that the national laws and rules would determine the scope of Customs activity. The parameters afforded by national legislation were identified in most of the national implementation plans for the Operation.

The Customs administrations were advised to take action on the basis of its national legislation, in place, and international conventions, as applicable. In the absence of specific national regulation, international or regional agreement or legislation regarding IEDs or IED precursor chemicals, the administrations were advised to conduct investigations based on the following violations/crimes:

- False Markings on the chemical (or on the packings);
- Untrue or false declaration;
- Falsification, Misrepresentation or Fraud;
- Concealment in a compartment or commingled amongst legitimate cargo;
- Under valuation and Over valuation;
- Smuggling/Undocumented trade;
- False weight, i.e. more or less than being claimed; or
- Any other suspicious activity.

5. Organizational Rules

5.1. Organizers

The Asia Pacific Security Project, which falls under the Compliance and Facilitation Directorate of the WCO was the initiator of the Operation.

5.2. Participating Member Customs Administrations

Customs Administrations of Bangladesh, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Thailand and Vietnam participated in the Operation GS APSP III.

5.3. Operation Communication Tool

CENcomm was used as the communication tool for Operation GS APSP III. Participating members were requested to nominate National Contact Points (NCP) to whom access to the closed group was granted to.

5.4. Coordination Unit

Staff from the WCO APSP Bangkok Office were designated to man the Operational Coordination Unit (OCU) which oversaw the Operation.

5.5. Working Language

The working language for the Operation was English.

6. Implementing the Operation

1.1. Pre-operational phase

6.1.1 Coordination Meeting

Operation GS APSP III was preceded by a sub-regional Coordination Meeting held in Bangkok, Thailand in 24 April 2019. To facilitate chemical identification during the Operation, the WCO made disposable field test kits and electronic devices for chemical analysis available for most of the participating Member Administrations to use during the operational period.

6.1.2 Nominations of National Contact Points from Participating Countries

It was agreed in the Pre-Operation Coordination Meeting in Bangkok that all participating countries would nominate a National Contact Point (NCP) by 2 May 2019. In practice, nomination of NCPs was acceptable after the deadline.

6.1.3 Development of National Implementation Plan

Based on the national/regional trade flow assessment, participants were requested to align their operational activity with the modes and locations presenting the biggest risk in relation to movements of explosive precursor chemicals and other IED components. Based on the risk assessment, it was agreed that the participating administration would produce respective National Implementation Plans which should include legislative basis for control of IED precursor chemicals and components, other government agency contacts and coordination mechanism and roles and responsibilities of different actors at national level. Most of the participants did not include any other agency, authority or private sector entities in the operation while some associated national security and other authorities.

6.1.4 Awareness Raising Event

Most administrations organized awareness raising events at the Head Quarter and, in some countries, at the Customs Stations to discuss the IED precursor chemicals and detonators, identification of chemicals, potential license and user permit fraud cases, use of technical devices, roles and responsibilities of frontline officers, communication protocol, reporting mechanism etc.

6.1.5 Operational Coordination Unit (OCU)

The Operation Coordination Unit (OCU) was set up at the WCO Asia Pacific Security Project's Bangkok Office and manned with WCO project experts.

6.1.6 Communications and information sharing

For Operation GS APSP III the existing 'Precursor Training' Closed User Group on CENcomm was used. CENcomm accounts were created for NCP's and they were given NCP level access to the CENcomm. In addition, documents such as the operations plan, participants list and other details relevant to the operation were shared in the Library for easy access by the participants.

6.2 High Intensity Period

6.2.1 Duration

The High Intensity Phase of the Operation commenced on 16 May and was due to conclude on 30 May 2019. The OCU in the WCO Bangkok office was fully staffed throughout this time.

Myanmar Customs requested to extend their High Intensity Period by another two weeks which was agreed by OCU.

6.2.2 Operation Co-ordination

The NCPs responsibilities were to carry out the work in the following areas at the national level:

To interface between frontline officers and the OCU, to manage information exchange at the national level, to liaise with other enforcement agencies at the national level and to validate and input formatted messages for seizures of all commodities detected as a result of operation work as well as warnings. NCPs were also to update the OCU on a daily basis as to operation activity is conducted.

Of the nine participating countries only Indonesia and Myanmar reported on a daily basis, while Thailand, Cambodia and Vietnam reported at intermittent times.

Seizures were reported by Thailand (5), Myanmar (1) and Bangladesh (1).

The OCU's responsibilities and obligations were:

To maintain regular contact with the NCPs and encourage their active participation, to retrieve useful information from seizure cases and disseminate out to all NCPs as early as possible, to assist with and ensure access to CENcomm worked reliably for the NCPs.

6.3 Post Operational Phase

Participating members were given one week to input further cases that had been investigated during the operational phase into a CENcomm message.

Part II: OUTCOMES OF THE OPERATION

7. Overview

Nine member administrations expressed their participation in Operation GS APSP III, six seizure cases were reported through CENcomm and another seizure was reported through email. All five seizures reported by Thailand were made at the Mail Centers, three of them were detected on outbound (export) cargo, one on inbound traffic while the other was on in-transit postal cargo. The seizure reported by Bangladesh lacked details, despite repeated requests. The largest seizure was made by Myanmar Customs. They seized 5,500 kilograms of Ammonium Nitrate at Yepu checkpoint, along Myanmar-China border.

8. Results and Analysis

The cases reported are as follows:

Route:	Lao PDR – Thailand - Israel
Location:	Suvarnabhumi International Airport Mail Centre, Thailand
Date of seizure:	16.05.2019
Commodity:	Psy. Drug (Methamphetamine)
Qty:	322 g
Concealment:	Postal
Detection method:	Risk Profiling (concealed in Vitamin can)
Technical aids:	X-Ray, Raman Spectrometer
Route:	Thailand - Israel
Location:	Suvarnabhumi International Airport Mail Centre, Thailand
Date of seizure:	16.05.2019
Commodity:	Psy. Drug (Methamphetamine)
Qty:	478 g
Concealment:	Postal (concealed in fried seaweed bags)
Detection method:	Risk Profiling
Technical aids:	X-Ray, Raman Spectrometer
Route:	Thailand - Israel
Location:	Suvarnabhumi International Airport Mail Centre, Thailand
Date of seizure:	16.05.2019
Commodity:	Psy. Drug (Methamphetamine)
Qty:	476 g
Concealment:	Postal (concealed in fried seaweed bags)
Detection method:	Risk Profiling
Technical aids:	X-Ray, Raman Spectrometer
Route:	France - Thailand
Location:	Bangkok Mail Centre, Thailand
Date of seizure:	19.05.2019
Commodity:	Psy. Drug (MDMA - ecstasy) and 6 Bullets (parts of ammunition)
Qty:	2000 tablets
Concealment:	Postal (concealed in paper and foil bags)
Detection method:	Unknown

Technical aids: Narcotic Test and X-Ray

Route: China - Myanmar
Location: Yepu Checkpoint, Myanmar
Date of seizure: 21.05.2019
Commodity: Ammonium Nitrate
Qty: 5500 kilogram
Concealment: In Truck/Lorry
Detection method: Routine Inspection
Technical aids: Raman Spectrometer

Route: Thailand - Israel
Location: Suvarnabhumi International Airport Mail Centre, Thailand
Date of seizure: 28.05.2019
Commodity: Psy. Drug (Methamphetamine)
Qty: 192 g
Concealment: Postal (concealed in plastic bags, under food)
Detection method: Risk Profiling
Technical aids: X-Ray, Raman Spectrometer

Route: India - Bangladesh
Location: Custom House, Benapole, Jessore, Bangladesh
Date of seizure: 11.06.2019
Commodity: Potassium Nitrate
Qty: Unknown
Declared as: Sodium Dicarboxate
Concealment: In truck (not concealed)
Detection method: Risk profiling
Technical aids: Raman Spectrometer

9. Conclusion

One of the main objectives of GS APSP III was to provide an operational context through which customs can play a meaningful role in counter terrorism by restricting access to IED pre-cursor chemicals and components. Nine Customs administrations in the South East Asia were invited to join the Operation to test and exercise their capabilities called upon by United Nations Security Council Resolutions and to promote and enhance global cooperation in the field of security.

Targeting specific strategic goods like chemicals and other IED components such as detonators and commercial drones pose significant challenges to customs administrations. The dual use, the high volume in trade in general and technical challenges related to the identification of chemicals in particular make it difficult to detect illicit trade. In addition, effectively monitoring strategic goods involves a number of stakeholders including customs, police and other national security agencies, authorities and the private sector whereas the need for close cooperation at the national level in addition to cooperation at the international level. Both, the targeting of the specific type of goods during GS APSP III and the cooperation at the national and regional level have proven to be challenging.

Finally, the insignificant number of seizures reported (3) does not entirely reflect the success of the operation which also includes cooperation at the local and regional level, raising awareness on IED precursor chemicals and components and national experience gained by exercising control functions on this specific type of goods. Another important lesson for future operations of this kind is the need for more specific guidance for targeting and identification of commodities and further efforts to enhance interagency cooperation. In addition, further awareness need to be created and PGS training agenda and materials may be included to the national training curriculum of the participating countries. Not the least, interactions between participating Customs officials from member countries are key to success of similar operations.