

15 August 2011

**Web Posting**



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Published by the Maritime Security Council

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## SPECIAL WEB POSTING

**TOP STORIES:** OUTBOUND SECURITY SHOULD BE JUST AS IMPORTANT TO U.S.

LOCATION: UNITED STATES  
SOURCE: MARITIME ISAC  
DATE POSTED: AUG. 15, 2011

***ISAC Original***

**By Ron Thomason, VP, Strategic Programs for the MSC**

The objective of international trade and supply chain security programs is to create a secure operating environment for commerce. Although the system is commonly referred to as the global supply chain, U.S. Government policies and procedures often seem to be implemented with little regard for the truism "the chain is only as strong as its weakest link".

U.S. trade security regulations and programs have translated into a focus on increased screening of carriers and cargo entering into the U.S. by customs and law enforcement agencies, but with a lesser emphasis on cargo carriers and containers departing the U.S. for foreign ports of call. This inequity in the level of protection afforded to the security of cargo carriers and containers on their outbound leg represents a threat to the integrity of the overall system.

While the U.S. is rightly concerned about the ports and supply chain elements within its national territory, it cannot afford to ignore the same concerns that are mirrored by its partners in global trade. International trade is driven by variables such as cargo volume, velocity and costs. The goal is for cargo to move successfully through its supply chain corridor at an increased velocity, at a low cost and with the highest degree of confidence in the security of the cargo being delivered. A loss of confidence in the integrity of the supply chain at any point in the system may result in delays, increased inspections by security authorities, and potential increased costs to the carriers.

For example, reduced emphasis on execution of security protocols for empty containers being shipped from the U.S. to foreign ports can represent a weakening of the U.S. link in the global supply chain. As long as no credible threats or incidents can be traced back to an empty container originating in the U.S., confidence in the U.S. link of the supply chain should remain intact. However, just one or two incidents of security threats or contraband discovered in "empty" containers arriving from a U.S. port will likely raise serious questions regarding the integrity in that U.S. supply chain link. This will undoubtedly have a negative cascade effect on the operations and finances of all of the participants in that segment of the trade mobility corridor.

The recent downgrading of America's bond rating is the direct result of a general loss of global confidence in America's political will or ability to follow through on its obligations. Since the safety, security, and efficiency of America's trade mechanisms are key to its competitiveness within the global supply chain, perceived reluctance on the part of the U.S. government to uniformly apply protective security measures to outbound and inbound cargo containers could lead to increased scrutiny and disapproval of that component of America's status in the global business and financial communities.

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