Air Cargo Security

Fact sheet

Introduction

The global economy depends on air cargo as a facilitator of trade and the provision of essential healthcare products and services. Over 62 million metric tons of air cargo are transported annually, accounting for approximately 33% of world trade by value. Air cargo is the main facilitator of e-commerce and serves as the crucial global lifeline for humanitarian efforts and distribution of essential healthcare products, time sensitive pharma and temperature-controlled vaccines.

The enduring security, viability and integrity of the global air cargo system and supply chains is therefore essential for our collective, ongoing security, economic prosperity, and wellbeing.

IATA's Cargo Security Strategy

IATA's broad cargo security strategy integrates the following key priorities:

1. Globally harmonized air cargo security measures, enshrined into appropriate international framework;
2. Prioritization and advocacy for a globally harmonized cargo security regime over the implementation of extraterritorial cargo security measures and programs;
3. Risk-based air cargo security framework, underpinned by appropriate pre-decisional consultation and commensurate to the level of risk;
4. An appropriate balance between robust security outcomes and maintaining global flows of air cargo, and;
5. Evolving threats to air cargo/supply chains are appropriately considered and addressed at the global level.

Air Cargo Security Context

Over the last 30 years, acts of terror and foreign interference targeting civil aviation interests have caused wholesale change in both passenger and cargo security requirements. The 1998 Lockerbie incident resulted in the UK development of the supply chain security principle - the application of security controls throughout the supply chain combined with enhanced regulation over supply chain entities. The events of September 11, 2001, exposed vulnerabilities across the aviation system and led to the establishment of new/enhanced cargo screening requirements and advance cargo information tracking protocols. The 2010 Yemen incident brought about more focus on in-bound air cargo, resulting in some countries requiring earlier submission of cargo data and enhanced cooperation between customs and aviation security authorities. In 2017, the threat to civil aviation via the air cargo supply chain was demonstrated by the Australia incident involving the shipment of IED components in air cargo. Most recently, in July 2024, unstable Improvised Incendiary Devices (IID) were deliberately sent inside parcels via air cargo, resulting in contained fires on the tarmac and a logistics facility in Europe.

These incidents demonstrate the constantly evolving threat landscape impacting air cargo and supply chains, and the need for robust, risk-based, and flexible compensatory measures to mitigate the emerging risks.

Over time, air cargo security requirements have evolved in a mostly reactive manner to counter the shifting threat landscape. Whilst the revised measures have generally improved security outcomes, they have resulted in a patchwork of inconsistent and often redundant requirements. This in turn has impacted industry with greatly increased cost, decreased facilitation and reduced capacity to respond to emerging threats.

Proposed Solution

IATA fully supports the implementation of risk-based security measures that strike a balance between good security outcomes whilst maintaining global air cargo flows. This includes a global approach to risk-based supply chain security leveraging the use of cargo data, and the introduction of new technologies. The application of long-term, extraterritorial, additional cargo security requirements imposed by individual States generates an imbalance, confusion, inconsistencies, disparity and impedes cargo facilitation and trade. Moreover, long term extraterritorial measures circumvent globally accepted ICAO Standards, Recommended Practices and international guidance. IATA notes where immediate threat concerns are present, States are required to take remedial action, in coordination with industry, as necessary[1].

IATA advocates for a globally harmonized approach enshrined in appropriate international framework, underpinned by tangible threat information and implementation of risk-based, proportionate, and flexible security measures to mitigate emerging risks.

To ensure these priorities are considered, IATA has established the Cargo Security Working Group (CSWG) and a Cargo Border Management Board (CBMB) subgroup. The objectives of the CSWG are to review all matters related to cargo security and ensure critical coordination between government and industry. The CSWG strives to ensure cargo security requirements are, wherever practicable, compatible with the interests and constraints of the airline industry and aligned with:

- International aviation security standards, recommended practices, and guidance (e.g. ICAO Annex 17-*Security*, ICAO Annex 9-*Facilitation*, and Doc. 8973, Aviation Security Manual);
- National and regional aviation security regulations and amendments;
- IATA Security Management System (SeMS) Manual;
- IATA Operational Safety Audit (IOSA);
- IATA Cargo Border Management Strategy.

IATA is also a member of the ICAO Aviation Security Panel, Working Group on Air Cargo Security (WGACS). Through active participation and engagement on the WGACS, IATA aims to ensure industry views and priorities are appropriately aligned and considered at the international level.

Pre-Loading Advance Cargo Information (PLACI)

Since the 2010 Yemen incident, several States have developed PLACI programs to combat the constantly evolving threat to air cargo and supply chains. PLACI programs are based on a risk-management approach, where the importing country requires advance filing of shipment data to assess whether an intervention may be necessary prior to loading the goods onto the aircraft. This approach focuses on supervision and monitoring of the flow of goods into the country, to anticipate high-risk cargo and facilitate legitimate trade whilst ensuring safety and security threats are appropriately mitigated.

States should carefully consider whether there is a sufficient threat to their territory to justify implementation of a PLACI regime, which requires significant investments in financial, information technology and human resources.

Below is the list of current PLACI regimes that are either implemented or in pilot stage:

- United States – Air Cargo Advance Screening (ACAS)
- European Union – Import Control System (ICS2)
- Canada – Pre-load Air Cargo Targeting (PACT)
- United Kingdom – Pre-Load Data Informed Cargo Targeting (PreDICT)
- United Arab Emirates – National Advance Information Center (NAIC)

IATA continues to work with industry, regulators, and international organizations to ensure PLACI programs are aligned through global standards to achieve the best overall security results whilst minimizing impacts on the air cargo industry. PLACI global standards are now enshrined in the World Customs Organization (WCO) SAFE Framework of Standards (SAFE) and supported through the IATA PLACI Manual.

Mutual Recognition

[1] Section 4.1, IATA's Annual Security Report, 2023

In 2012, the United States and European Union entered into a mutual recognition agreement to recognize each other's air cargo security regimes. The mutual recognition avoids duplicative security controls, improves cargo facilitation, and saves time, money are resources. IATA supports the concept of mutual recognition. However, effective implementation of globally harmonized, risk-based air cargo security measures, supported by appropriate international standards and recommended practices would ideally negate the need for separate mutual recognition agreements between specific States or regions.

EU ACC3

In 2011, the European Union (and Switzerland and Norway) implemented the 'Air Cargo or Mail Carrier operating into the Union from a Third Country Airport' (ACC3) program which aims to ensure all cargo and mail is physically screened according to EU standards. Airlines carrying cargo into the EU from a non-EU airport must be designated with ACC3 status and must ensure all cargo and mail is physically screened according to EU standards (or comes from an EU validated secure supply-chain). ACC3 status can be obtained through an assessment and validation process (ACC3 is not required for certain lower risk jurisdictions).

IATA supports the ACC3 program concept. However, once again, the effective implementation of globally harmonized, risk-based air cargo security measures, supported by appropriate international standards and recommended practices would ideally avoid the need for separate validation and designation programs.

Policy and Resources

IATA offers and implements a range of policies, resolutions, recommended practices, manuals, training, certification programs and guidance to support air cargo security, including the below:

Industry Resolutions (Reso) and Recommended Practices (RP)	IATA Training	IATA Manuals
CSC[2] Reso 651 (e-CSD)	Air Cargo Security	IOSA Standards Manual (ISM)
CSC[2] RP 1630 (safeguarding against acts of unlawful interference, CSD),	Security Management Systems (SeMS)	Standard Procedures for Preloading Advance Cargo Information (PLACI) Manual
CSC[2] Reso 656. Reso 657, RP 1675 (Cargo-XML/cargo data exchange)	Aviation Security Management/Aviation Security Management Advanced	Security Management System (SeMS) Manual
CSC[2] RP 1691 (PLACI compliance procedures)	ACC3Aviation Security Independent Validator	Airport Handling Manual (AHM)
CSC[2] RP 1688 (mail e-CSD)	ACC3/RA3/KC3 Cargo Security Manager	IATA Cargo Handling Manual (IHCM)
CAC[3] 833a (measures for consolidated consignments)	Aviation Security Awareness – Cargo, Mail and Catering	Cargo-XML Toolkit (CXML)

[2] CSC: IATA Cargo Services Conference
[3] CAC: IATA Cargo Agency Conference