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Event Summary

In-Transit Security: Vision and the Path Forward International Cooperation to Protect Global Trade (CSIS – July 11, 2007)

Event Information

Date: July 11, 2007

Host: Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), Washington DC

CBP Former Commissioner Bonner's Remarks

Former Commissioner Robert C. Bonner proposed the Container Security Initiative (CSI) five years ago to establish a “global green lane” for safer commerce. Bonner stated his continued support of the CSI’s continued vigilance in protecting U.S. ports in an age of increasing trade volume (10-11 million containers arrive annually at U.S. ports of entry, and that figure is expected to increase at a rate of 5-6% per year). In his opinion, proper security measures, facilitated by the use of new “smart box” technology or Container Security Devices (CSDs), will prevent containers from becoming

the “potential Trojan horse[s] of global terrorism.” He emphasized that the actions and support of members of the private sector would determine the program’s effectiveness. As members of the Customs-Trade Partnership Against Terrorism (C-TPAT), many importers already require their foreign suppliers to comply with C-TPAT security guidelines, which in turn increases the efficiency of their container transportation processes.

Bonner also stressed the importance of ensuring that containers are examined and sealed at their points of origin, and that cooperation with exporting countries and the WTO is essential to this procedure. Overall, the former Commissioner supports an “exten[sion] of our security beyond our borders,” utilizing risk management to assure that commerce is not negatively impacted by U.S. security measures.



CBP Commissioner Basham's Remarks

Commissioner Basham appears motivated to move forward with the policies set in place by his predecessor. Given that Congress has already given a green light in the form of the SAFE Port Act to many of former Commissioners Bonner’s initiatives, Mr. Basham believes that improving on Mr. Bonner’s efforts and understanding the balance between security and facilitation is very important. He advocates for the US authorities to get closer to the risk and to achieve this, he has instituted the Secure Freight Initiative (SFI) as part of CSI. Whereas the CSI identifies and pre-screens containers at approximately 55 ports (85%

of all imports entering the US), SFI enhances the federal government's ability to scan containers for nuclear and radiological materials overseas.

SFI is currently operational at Port Qasim in Pakistan, Puerto Cortes in Honduras and Southampton in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Basham is also focusing CBP's efforts in developing mutual recognition regimes with other countries and is hopeful that C-TPAT will continue to grow. The partnership currently consists of about 7000 members and accounts for 45% of all imports into the United States. A new area that the CBP is exploring is the CSD initiative. A container security device (CSD)

would help CBP answer the question: "Has a container been tampered with en route to our ports?" If this initiative is successful (it is currently in the testing phase which will take anywhere between 60-90 days), it may become part of C-TPAT. However, CBP has not yet formulated a formal CDS policy.

The Commissioner concluded his remarks by reminding the audience that terrorists not only want to harm American citizens, but also inflict economic pain, but stated that "perfect can't be the enemy of the good" and that CBP has to be "flexible going forward."

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