

INTERNATIONAL CIVIL AVIATION ORGANIZATION

FOURTEENTH MEETING OF THE STEERING COMMITTEE OF THE COMPREHENSIVE
REGIONAL IMPLEMENTATION PLAN FOR AVIATION SECURITY AND FACILITATION IN
AFRICA (AFI SECFAL PLAN)

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THE TRANSPORTATION SECURITY ADMINISTRATION'S RESPONSE TO THE
CARGO AND MAIL SECURITY THREAT

(Presented by the United States of America)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In response to the air cargo security incidents of 2024, the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) took swift action to mitigate the threat posed by air cargo bound for the United States. This Information Paper (IP) discusses the policy decisions taken and provides an update on their current status. Finally, the IP outlines important next steps for the global aviation security community to address identified security gaps in the cargo and mail supply chains.

*Strategic
Objectives:*

- Security & Facilitation

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Two cargo security incidents occurring in July and August of 2024 in Europe exposed vulnerabilities in the global air cargo and mail security supply chains. Not only did these events reveal a new *modus operandus* through the artful concealment of Improvised Incendiary Devices (IIDs), they demonstrated the willingness and ability of hostile actors to locate and exploit security gaps in the supply chains. In response to the evolving nature of the IID threat, the TSA undertook policy measures to support a safer and more secure supply chain of inbound commerce and cargo into the United States.

2. TSA POLICY DECISIONS

2.1 In response to the immediate, compelling, and evolving threat to air cargo in late 2024, TSA determined it was necessary to rapidly implement mitigation measures. In reviewing the two cargo incidents, the vulnerabilities they exposed, and understanding this posed a potentially ongoing threat to cargo and mail supply chains, TSA exercised its emergency authorities to require immediate implementation of enhanced security controls. Accordingly, TSA issued two Security Directives and Emergency Amendments to air carriers' security programs (hereafter collectively referred to as "directives") that outlined the specific measures to be implemented in response to the threat for all U.S.-bound passenger and all-cargo flights.

2.2 The first directive, closely coordinated with U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP), included enhancements to mandatory data elements to be transmitted to CBP under the Air Cargo Advance Screening (ACAS) program.¹ These additional data elements would assist CBP and TSA agents in better identifying and intercepting high-risk cargo prior to loading onto an aircraft. The second directive was aimed at mitigating the escalating and evolving global threats to air cargo through the introduction of additional security measures for certain inbound cargo shipments that were tendered by individuals without an “established business relationship” with a regulated agent or the operator/air carrier. This second directive was, in large part, designed to ensure immediate mitigation measures were implemented while the technical requirements of the first directive were worked out through the ACAS program.

2.3 The measures proved an effective means to mitigate the inbound cargo threat into the United States. Based on TSA’s ongoing review of the threat and the implementation of the mitigation measures, TSA reassessed the continuing efficacy of the emergency requirements and worked to adjust and fine-tune them, as appropriate. Over the last several months, TSA has coordinated closely with its international partners, bilaterally, multilaterally, and through ICAO, on an aligned response to this threat, to the extent possible. Furthermore, TSA has conducted close consultations with industry to ensure these directives remain operationally feasible and provide effective security countermeasures.

2.4 Regarding the first directive related to the filing of enhanced ACAS data elements, TSA is closely collaborating with CBP in its efforts to permanently incorporate the additional elements in the ACAS program requirements to target high-risk cargo shipments. The existing directive is expected to remain in effect until CBP issues its own rule that would require these enhanced data elements as part of the ACAS program. TSA has also updated its Standard Screening Procedures for Air Cargo (SSPAC), which is applicable to both passenger and all-cargo aircraft operations and includes enhanced screening measures for high-risk cargo shipments referred through ACAS.

2.5 Based on continuous review of the threat and active monitoring of supply chain security activities, TSA determined that the second directive would not need to be renewed, but rather allowed to expire in May 2025. In making this determination, TSA’s process included extensive discussions with industry and other stakeholders, which included considerations related to the implementation challenges associated with the measures in the second directive and the continuing security effectiveness and efficacy of the various measures contained therein. The directive’s expiry notwithstanding, TSA also noted the improved security outcomes produced as a result of the emergency measures in the directive, and therefore issued an Information Circular detailing these relevant measures as best practices for enhanced cargo screening for air carriers to consider as part of their regular supply chain security processes.

3. NEXT STEPS

3.1 For a sustainable and long-term strategy to mitigate vulnerabilities in the cargo and mail supply chains, TSA envisions a three-step approach. First, the global aviation security community will need to collectively enhance detection capabilities to better mitigate the IID threat. When a sufficient technical capability is identified and deployed, States will then need to produce robust guidance and ensure appropriate training is provided to operators at all points in the cargo supply

¹ ACAS is part of the U.S. security program for pre-arrival air cargo information requirements, which focuses on assessing the risk posed by cargo shipments prior to loading onboard an aircraft bound for the United States. ACAS is the Pre-Loading Advance Cargo Information (PLACI) regime in the United States that targets high-risk air cargo shipments for appropriate handling prior to loading onboard an aircraft bound for the United States.

chain. Finally, States must better integrate and align efforts with appropriate public and private stakeholders, to include designated postal operators for the screening and security controls applied to air mail. TSA is supportive of the current collaboration well-underway both within ICAO, including at the Secretariat-level and between expert Panels and Working Groups, and between other organizations, including the Universal Postal Union (UPU) and World Customs Organization (WCO).

3.2 TSA, in partnership with vendors and original equipment manufacturers, is working to address detection and operational challenges, including technology, training, and procedures, that will better support States and industry to prevent and mitigate current and future IID threats to cargo and mail supply chains.

3.3 Specific to the mail environment, TSA recognizes that there is more work to be done globally to mitigate this threat in this supply chain context. This includes better aligning UPU Standards S58 and S59 and ICAO Annex 17 – *Aviation Security* Standards and Recommended Practices, which apply equally to both cargo and mail. TSA will continue to work with its U.S. Government counterparts, other States, international organizations, and industry partners to develop and implement a coordinated global strategy to mitigate the threat to mail.

4. CONCLUSION

4.1 Throughout the AFI region and globally, States should consider implementing enhanced measures to better secure cargo supply chains, to include building States' capacity to develop and deploy Pre-Loading Advance Cargo Information (PLACI) systems to support enhanced cargo shipment advance data transmission and targeting. Additionally, States are invited to lend expertise and contribute to ongoing efforts within ICAO to address the ongoing threat, especially within the Aviation Security Panel of Experts and its Working Groups.

4.2 Should any questions or concerns arise related to applicable U.S. security programs and procedures, to include air cargo security measure requirements, TSA encourages partners in the AFI Region to engage their TSA representatives directly.

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