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Risk Assessment/Targeting Centres – Study Report

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Stefan Aniszewski

Abstract

The changing operating environment together with technological developments and enhancements in the automated processing capacity have increasingly resulted in the reorganization of business unit functions in relation to operational risk assessment, selection and targeting. As a result the concept of Risk Assessment/Targeting Centre has been of growing interest to many WCO Members. This study aims at outlining three basic aspects relating to the centres. It explores why countries are establishing them; what kind of functions the centres generally carry out; and presents a few case studies on national centres.

Key words

Risk Assessment/Targeting Centres, Coordinated Border Management, Supply Chain Security

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The changing operating environment together with technological developments and enhancements in the automated processing capacity have increasingly resulted in the reorganization of business unit functions in relation to operational risk assessment, selection and targeting. As a result the concept of Risk Assessment/Targeting Centre (centre) has been of growing interest to many WCO Members.

This study outlines three basic aspects relating to the centres. It explores why countries are establishing them; what kind of functions the centres generally carry out; and presents a few case studies on national centres.

According to the study, there are various reasons why WCO Members have been creating Risk Assessment/Targeting Centres. In short, the centres have allowed better :

- Management and fusion of information;
- Application of a nationally coordinated approach to risk assessment and targeting;
- Coordination of intelligence and operational activities; and
- Ability to manage border risks holistically across the border sector.

There is clearly no static set of functions for the centres. Five general types of tasks, which the majority of the centres carry out, can be identified. These are :

- Management of selectivity and targeting criteria;
- Management of risk analysis related IT systems;
- Providing operational support through 24x7x365 tactical analysis and coordination capacity;
- Coordination of risk related information exchange; and
- Providing a platform for stakeholder cooperation and better coordinated border management.

The case studies show that even though the centres carry out similar tasks over jurisdictional boundaries, there are some differences in national approaches. The unique organizational context and the operating context often stipulate the exact functions and operating model.

The capacity of Customs to receive advance electronic information earlier in the supply chain, the need to manage this information, the developing IT capabilities and the need to address border risks from a whole-of-government perspective are some of the drivers that will most probably lead an increasing number of WCO Members to establish these centres in the future. However, each country faces its unique operating environment and context and the need to establish a centre needs to be reviewed carefully on a case-by-case basis.

1. INTRODUCTION

1. Customs administrations today are faced with difficult challenges of simplifying goods and passenger processing procedures while ensuring regulatory requirements are met in a way that reduces unnecessary delays and interventions in the international trade and travel chains. Meeting these challenges is further complicated by the increases in the trade and travel flows which often are not accompanied by increases in Customs resources.
2. To achieve their objectives, Customs administrations have increasingly been adopting new approaches based on the principles of risk management. Intelligence-enabled risk assessment, selectivity and targeting practices form a key aspect of the approach. It enables Customs to determine the level of risk and to allocate scarce resources towards the high-risk end of the risk continuum.
3. The ability to receive and process advance electronic information has increased Customs capacity to target high-risk consignments. Where in the past selectivity and targeting decisions were largely done at the front-line - leading sometimes to disparities between different points of entry - advance electronic information and automated processing have enabled a multi-tiered targeting that ensures Customs controls are applied in a nationally consistent way.
4. To keep up with the developments in the operating environment and to exploit the technological advances, an increasing number of Customs administrations have been reorganizing their business unit functions regarding operational risk assessment. Lately this has increasingly resulted in the establishment of specific Risk Assessment/Targeting Centres (centres).
5. The main objective of the research was to study the reasons for establishing the centres, the functions they carry out, and to outline different operating models at the national level. This document presents the findings of the study.
6. The findings of the study report are based on the Risk Assessment/Targeting Centre related discussions during the regional Risk Management Workshops and on written materials received from WCO Members on their centres.

2. WHY ESTABLISH A RISK ASSESSMENT/TARGETING CENTRE?

7. There are various reasons why administrations have decided to set up a Risk Assessment/Targeting Centre. The following paragraphs briefly outline some key benefits administrations have gained through the centres.
8. The centres provide an increased ability and capacity to better manage and integrate multiple information and intelligence flows. They can act as information fusion points and serve as a nexus for gathering information from a wide variety of sources, both internal and external to Customs, allowing a more holistic picture of individual risks and of the risk environment as a whole. Often the different information streams may include but not limited to advance pre-arrival or pre-departure information; Advance Passenger Information System (APIS) and Passenger Name Record (PNR) data; trader databases; and information on other law enforcement databases.
9. The centres also allow administrations to have a nationally coordinated targeting approach that enables more effective and efficient allocation of resources through integrated targeting and operational coordination. The centres are increasingly seen as vehicles allowing countries to ensure that front-line control activities across the Customs territory and at all points of entries are aligned and contribute to the achievement of organizational objectives in a prioritized manner. This has enabled a more nationally uniform approach, often leading to the detection of anomalies at a much higher rate and in a more organized and concentrated fashion.
10. One of the benefits associated with the centres is their ability to facilitate closer linkages between intelligence and front-line operational activity. The centres can play a coordination role and provide operational staff in the field access to intelligence that enables better and more effective operational activity.
11. In addition to the above-mentioned benefits, the centres can also provide improved risk assessment capability across a range of border functions and advanced interoperability with border agencies by creating a consultative, cross-functional process for prioritizing targeting. A big part of effective selection and targeting practices is having people functioning adjacent to each other, sharing information, identifying best possible targets and coordinating actions. The centres can provide a physical facility for border agencies to be collocated and contribute to the governments' capacity to better achieve their whole-of-government border management objectives. At the same time, the centres can provide a common border sector agency interface for operational border management issues.
12. To sum up, administrations that have established a Risk Assessment/Targeting Centre seem to have done so to ensure better :
 - Management and fusion of information;
 - Application of a nationally coordinated approach to risk assessment and targeting;
 - Coordination of intelligence and operational activity; and
 - Ability to manage border risks holistically across the border sector.

3. WHAT KIND OF FUNCTIONS DO THE CENTRES CARRY OUT?

13. There is no standard set of tasks that would apply to each and every centre. It is often the wider organizational context, objectives and structures that affect and stipulate the exact functions the centres carry out. However, it is still possible to outline some generic tasks that are associated with the centres. The following five functions seem to be typical to many of the studied arrangements :

- Management of selectivity and targeting criteria (3.1);
- Management of risk analysis related IT systems (3.2);
- Providing operational support through 24x7x365 tactical analysis and coordination capacity (3.3);
- Coordination of risk related information exchange (3.4); and
- Providing a platform for stakeholder cooperation and better coordinated border management (3.5).

3.1 Selectivity and targeting

14. The centres carry out analytical functions and develop selectivity and targeting criteria in relation to activities such as vetting commercial transactions; revenue assurance; fraud and other illegal activities; profiling travellers; enforcing prohibitions and restrictions; and cultural heritage protection. Most often they use automated analysis and trade-based research tools (importation trends, common traits, profiles, past violations, passenger data, etc.) to conduct these activities in conjunction with existing intelligence products. The outcome of the analysis leads to the development of risk profiles and examination criteria that allows Customs to identify those transactions most likely to be non-compliant in a dynamic manner and enables more effective resource planning and deployment responses to situations presenting the highest risks.
15. The centres contribute to the management of the selectivity system(s) and are often responsible for entering criteria into electronic systems. While most often managed centrally, this function will generally include selectivity and targeting criteria derived nationally, incorporating and taking into account regional and local experience. This ensures national risk management goals and objectives are met and that local knowledge and experience enriches the process. The centres analyze the resultant “hits”, collect, and store information from front line interventions enabling continuous refinement and development of the selection and targeting criteria in conjunction with intelligence units.

3.2 Information systems and their development

16. As mentioned above, the centres often have a role in managing the electronic risk analysis systems and inserting risk rules, profiles and statistically valid random selection criteria to them. The tasks often include keeping the system and its content relevant and up to date.

3.3 Operational support

17. The centres tend to operate on a 24x7x365 basis, providing a single point of contact offering an after-hours assistance centre for staff as well as for other domestic and international agencies. They also in many cases provide additional tactical analysis capacity that supports front line operational activity by responding to operational inquiries originating in real time from activities such as goods and passenger inspection, transport and vessel searches and investigative activities. The centres can also support resource planning and deployment, particularly in dynamic situations where mobile units may be dispatched to address risks or to bolster static resources deemed insufficient to deal with a high-risk situation.

3.4 Information coordination and exchange hubs

18. The centres often facilitate information exchange on risk related issues both nationally and internationally. Operating as a central hub they can be used to coordinate information exchange on risk related issues between Customs and other governmental agencies, between Customs and the private sector, and between Customs administrations internationally where the legal authority to do so exists.

3.5 Stakeholder cooperation and better coordinated border management

19. Even though the majority of stakeholders to the centres seem to be internal to Customs, the operation of the centres will leverage the relationships and enhance cooperation with external stakeholders.
20. In many cases Customs have invited other border agencies to join and work in the centres. This has enabled better planning, coordination (joint targeting) and response actions contributing towards more efficient and cost-effective delivery of whole-of-government border management goals. A major feature of such an approach is the fact that even though Customs physically host these centres, each participating organization keeps its agency-specific mission, role and identity. This encourages wider buy-in to the concept and enables governments to achieve a “many parts, one view” approach without destabilization of wider institutional and agency arrangements.
21. Where the centres provide a platform for multi-agency contribution that enables different agencies to be physically collocated they may, for example, include authorities from the following border management areas :
 - Police;
 - Border Guards;
 - Agriculture/Quarantine;
 - Immigration;
 - Transport security; and
 - Other law enforcement agencies.

4. CASE STUDIES¹

22. As often, there is no “one size fits all” model for the operation of the centres. The approach often depends on issues such as organizational roles, structures, and functions. The following paragraphs present several WCO Members’ case studies regarding their arrangements.

4.1 CANADA

23. Canada has been conducting targeting activities for over 30 years. Over this time, the program has increasingly become an integral part of border management by supporting national security and public safety priorities. It significantly contributes to the detection and interception of high and unknown risk people, goods and conveyances that may pose a threat to the security of Canada and North America. The Canadian benefits are significant in terms of focusing resources, making them more effective in interdicting high-risk people, goods and conveyances and by doing so, benefits the economy by enhancing the free flow of low risk travellers and trade.
24. The attacks of September 11th, 2001 resulted in the Canadian Government taking steps to better address threats to national security and guarantee the safety of not only Canada and Canadians but also North America. In order to ensure a focused response to these threats, and building upon the targeting program in place at Ports of Entry, in 2004, the National Risk Assessment Centre was established to concentrate on national security threats and ensure the identification of high-risk people and goods as early as possible in the trade and traveller continuums.
25. The National Risk Assessment Centre increased Canada's ability to detect and stop the movement into the country of people and goods who pose a high-risk for national security. The benefits for having a Centre not only included improved cost effectiveness but it also provided the opportunity to have a consistent approach to targeting and more efficient information sharing capabilities with internal and external partners.
26. The efforts at the National Risk Assessment Centre are supported by targeting activities that take place at Ports of Entry throughout Canada. Targeting on marine containers, marine vessels, air cargo including courier shipments, rail cargo and air passengers is conducted by officers throughout a number of locations.
27. At both the Ports of Entry and the National Risk Assessment Centre, targeting officers are responsible for reviewing pre-arrival information and conducting a risk assessment on travellers or goods that have been identified as high risk. Generally, officers are aided in this part of the process by targeting systems. This risk assessment process also includes both mandatory and non-mandatory checks in law enforcement databases and has targeters looking for possible commercial linkages, previous enforcement, prior travel history and any other useful information that can be provided by domestic and foreign partners and used to determine the level of risk. A “target” is issued to intercept the traveller or goods upon their arrival to Canada.
28. In this current model, targeting officers at the National Risk Assessment Centre and in the regional units review the same pre-arrival information for different reasons. The

¹ WCO Members were asked to submit case studies for the study during the WCO’s Regional Risk Management Workshops.

National Risk Assessment Centre officers mostly focus on national security risks, while the targeting officers in regional units will target for all other threats including contraband such as drugs and weapons, illicit migration, child exploitation and risks to food, plants and animals. With this “tiered” approach to targeting, the responsibilities for identifying different threats are divided between the Centre and regional units and so the advance information on these travellers and goods is reviewed several times. The processes used at these targeting units located across Canada vary as do the performance results.

29. Today, the activities of the National Risk Assessment Centre and the regional targeting units continue to support the Canada Border Services Agency’s (CBSA) strategic goal of providing border management that contributes to the safety and security of Canada and facilitates the flow of persons and goods.

Proposed future model

30. Through a series of studies, evaluations and audits of the CBSA’s targeting program, it has been recognized that although this current operating model has produced results, it could be more efficient and less costly. Consequently, the CBSA has undertaken an initiative to restructure the way the program is managed and the way targeting services are delivered. The establishment of a functional authority to direct the Targeting Program will ensure that it receives the guidance and support to become more effective and efficient. A new Targeting Service Delivery Model is focused on the elimination of duplication of efforts, addressing existing gaps, eliminating a multi-tier approach to targeting and improving national consistency of program delivery through a centralized governance and management model.
31. The new CBSA Targeting Business Model will include the consolidation of current targeting resources within a new National Targeting Centre for the air and marine modes located in Ottawa, along with four regional Land Border Targeting Centres for the highway and rail modes. These Centres will be the focal point for all CBSA targeting as all targeting activities will take place at these locations whether it is for national security, contraband, or food, plant and animal threats. The elimination of “tiers” in the targeting process is key to eliminating duplication, improving efficiencies and the facilitation of travellers and goods at the border.
32. The longer term targeting vision for the CBSA includes an approach to border processing whereby a targeter would review the pre-arrival information for all purposes and make a decision to refer or recommend the release of the goods. This approach would improve border processing and facilitate the movement of the goods. Moving to this single tier approach in the new Targeting Business Model will take some time to implement.
33. A key element in the new Targeting Business Model is a targeting process that is well-supported by the intelligence community. The intelligence information provided to targeters will be developed through the analysis of examination results and enhanced information sharing. The new Targeting Business Model will see an increase to the number of intelligence officers and analysts co-located with targeting units, and the intelligence community will provide critical support to these Centres and at Ports of Entry across Canada where the examinations will be conducted. In this new centralized targeting Business Model, a number of regional employees will be located throughout Canada and will be responsible for maintaining good communication linkages between regional operations and the National Targeting Centre and the Land Border Targeting Centres.

34. The Targeting Business Model includes a plan to co-locate officers from other Canadian government departments and our international partners. Through these domestic and international partnerships, barriers to information sharing will be reduced and threats can be identified more easily but also quicker.
35. The new approach to targeting in the CBSA will be supported by a strong Performance Measurement regime including the development of a Random Referral Program to measure the effectiveness of the targeting being conducted. The CBSA targeting program will be results-driven in order to ensure that areas of the highest risk are the focal point of our efforts.
36. The CBSA continues to strive to be a world leader in border risk management. The vision that CBSA has for the new model is that targeting will be conducted from centralized locations and will be a fully integrated, nationally consistent program that is an integral part of the CBSA's border risk management. The CBSA expects to have the framework for this new business model in place by April 2013.

4.2 FINLAND

Risk Management in Finnish Customs

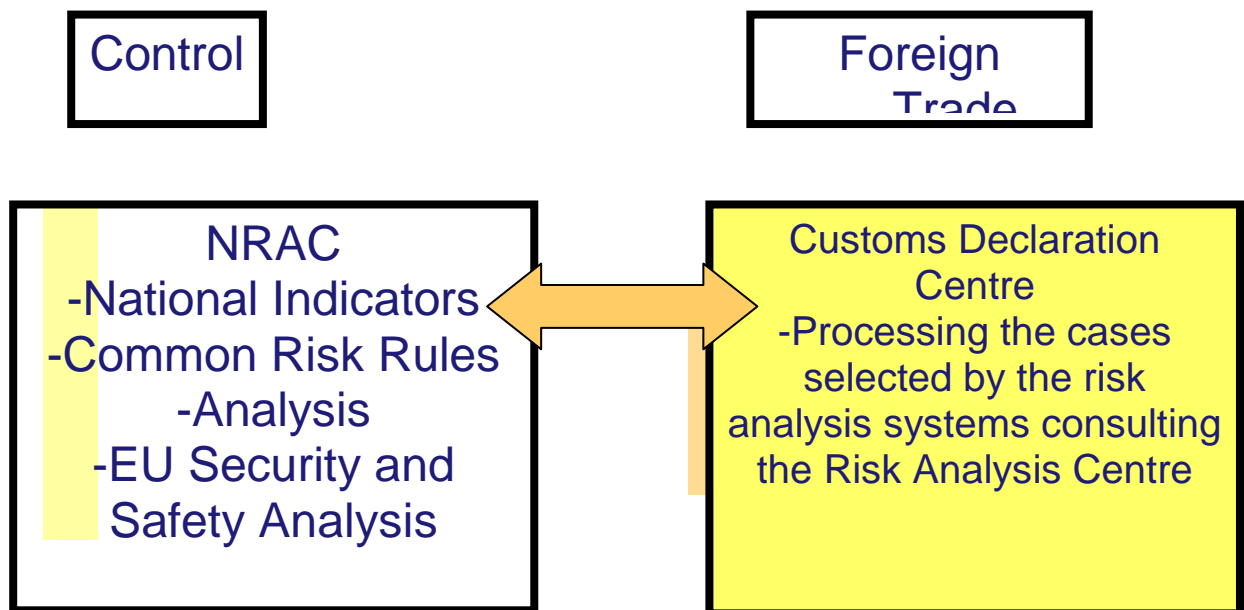
37. Risk management in Customs clearance is the key in enabling a right balance between control and facilitation and efficient allocation of Customs resources. The systematic development of the new, revised risk management approach in Finnish Customs started in 2007 and follows the framework outlined by WCO instruments such as the SAFE Framework of Standards, the Revised Kyoto Convention (RKC) and the Coordinated Border Management (CBM) Compendium. Risk management covers all the main processes of Customs and the implementation of electronic Customs processes has a strong impact on it. Finland is a Member of the European Union (EU) and its risk management activities take place within the Common Risk Management Framework (CRMF) of the EU. Finnish Customs has actively participated in the EU-level planning and development work in relation to all areas of the CRMF. The EU Member States have been responsible for taking decisions for implementation of the above-mentioned regulations at national level. The EU Member States and the European Commission have been obliged to make every effort to have an actually functioning and effective CRMF.

Finnish Customs' National Risk Analysis Centre (NRAC)

38. Following the development of an organizational risk management framework, the NRAC was established in 2009 to better coordinate operative risk analysis and control functions. The NRAC operates in Helsinki, Turku and Tornio in connection with the electronic Customs clearance centres. The NRAC has 12 risk analysts working for it. The tasks of these analysts include :
 - setting risk rules into the risk analysis system;
 - issuing directions to control groups on consignments stopped on the basis of security and safety risk analysis; and
 - cooperating with electronic Customs clearance centres and regional risk analysis groups, performing various analyses and drafting reports.

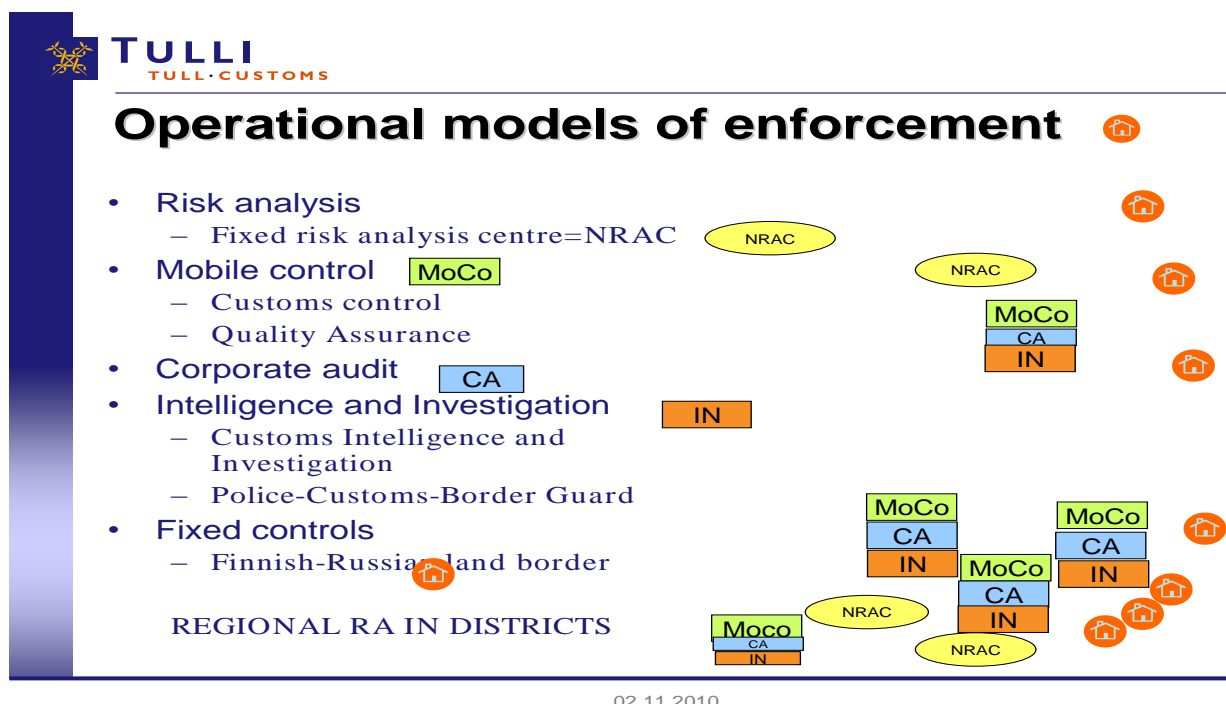
39. Diagram 1 illustrates the working relationship between the NRAC and the electronic Customs clearance centres.

Diagram 1 Relationship between the NRAC and the electronic Customs clearance centres



40. One of the main developments brought about by the NRAC is the fact that risk analysis is done separately from controls of consignments and declarations, criminal investigation and post-clearance audit. However, the exchange of information between the different units contributing to the Customs control process is seamless, continual, efficient and effective. Diagram 2 illustrates the operational models of Customs enforcement in Finland.

Diagram 2 Operational models of Customs enforcement

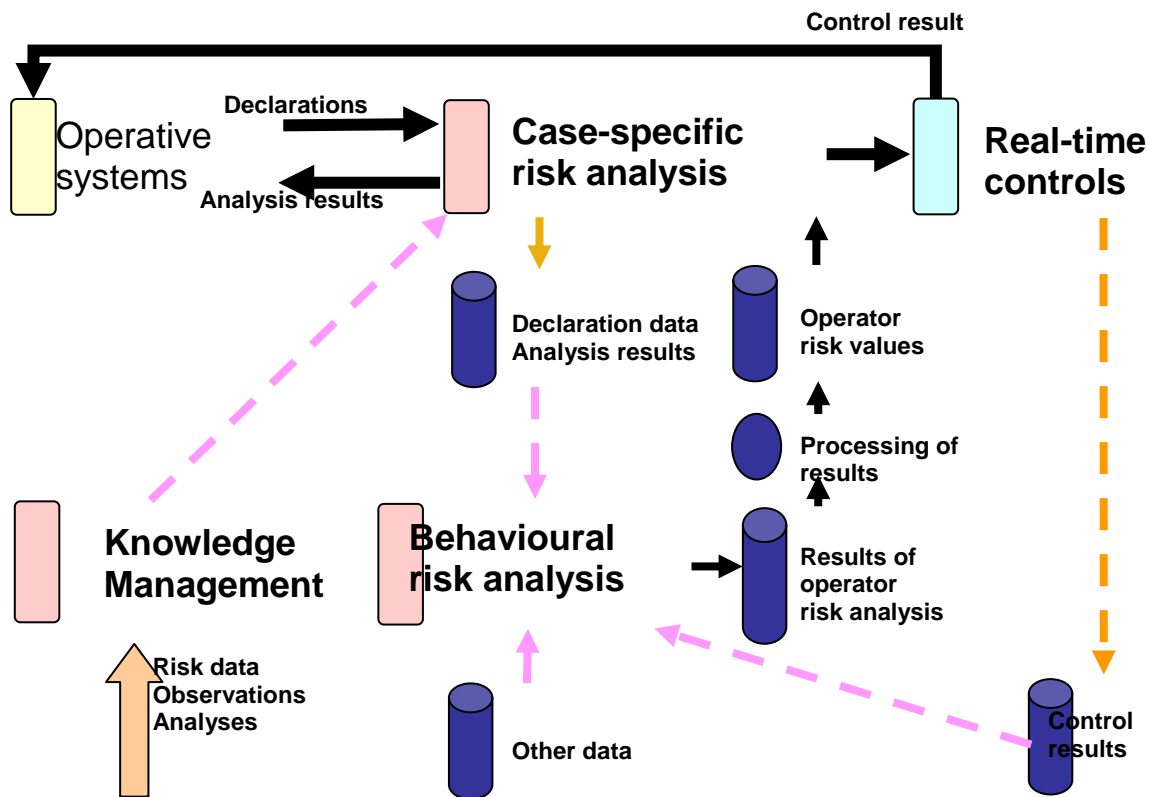


Risk Management and Control System - the RITA system

41. The main instrument of operative risk analysis will be the Risk Management and Control System (RITA). Risk management covers the collection of risk data and observations including risk analysis directing operational control activity based on assessed levels of risk. The system will perform risk analysis by using the export data system, the New Community Transit System (NCTS) system and the data system for intelligence and investigation. The intention is to incorporate other data systems into the risk analysis and control system at later stages.
42. Knowledge management, which is a feature of the risk analysis and control system, refers to the collection of risk data and observations. Risk data and observations consist of all data and observations focusing on a suspected risk. Risk data and observations are received, for example, from Customs personnel, other authorities, the European Commission and other member states.
43. Behavioural risk analysis will be carried out using the risk analysis and control system at a later stage. Behavioural risk analysis refers to the type of risk analysis where an operator is assessed. Such operators include but are not limited to declarants, exporters, and parties responsible for transit. An operator is assessed by analysing historical data or other possible data using various risk rules. This procedure results in a risk assessment of the operator. The NRAC is responsible for carrying out behavioural risk analysis in cooperation with regional risk analysts.

44. Diagram 3 explains the functioning of the RITA system.

Diagram 3 RITA system



NRAC's role in facilitating risk management related coordination and cooperation

45. The Customs role in the context of developing and maintaining the EU as an area of freedom, security and justice is reflected in the security amendments of the Community Customs Code and its implementing provisions. Its role is to protect the EU from the threats related to the safety and security of its citizens associated to the movement of goods. The approach is an implementation of security and safety risk analysis prior to the entry of goods into the Customs territory of the EU. In Finland the NRAC is responsible for the operational risk analysis.
46. Finnish Customs is nationally also a responsible authority in the area of the Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI), which provides the international community with the practical means for cooperation in preventing illicit trafficking of weapons of mass destruction (WMD), their delivery systems and related materials. The initiative aims at impeding illicit WMD-related trade to and from states of proliferation concern and terrorist groups, and Finnish Customs participates actively in the work of sea port security in order to detect security threats and implement security measures. Nationally Finnish Customs takes part in the cooperation against CBRN threats (CBRN is an acronym for chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear) and is responsible for managing the risks in relation to controlling the cross-border movement of dual use

goods. The NRAC, through its analysis and coordination capacity, plays an important role in implementing these initiatives in practice.

47. Sharing information is a key factor and simultaneously a challenge for cooperation. Cooperation between Customs and other authorities is absolutely vital to the development of a successful border enforcement strategy against different kind of threats and illegal activities. Customs authorities can provide their partners with information of commercial traffic/logistic chains, movements of vessels, containers and cargo, crew and passengers on board, intelligence and even suspicions about operators and consignments of illegal goods. In addition to ongoing cooperation through standard operating procedures and protocols (for example, the Customs-Border Guard-Police (CBGP) Cooperation, EU Customs cooperation, bilateral cooperation, etc.), Customs carries out a lot of joint operative activity with both international partners and other law enforcement agencies. As the centre of operative risk management, the NRAC is one of the key contributors to this cooperation and its development.

4.3 NEW ZEALAND

The Integrated Targeting and Operations Centre (ITOC)

48. The Integrated Targeting and Operations Centre (ITOC) is designed to provide all of the information necessary for effective border security management in one location, 24 hours a day. The ITOC's mission is to support the command and coordination of border sector operations, across New Zealand's layered border enforcement strategy.
49. All of the data required to determine the risk presented by specific goods, people, or craft anywhere in New Zealand, is brought together at the ITOC and operations are initiated, planned, and coordinated from there.
 - The ITOC is a multi-agency border sector headquarters.
 - The ITOC is responsible for situational awareness of the border domain.
 - The ITOC is responsible for targeting and coordinating the deployment of operational resources.
50. Informed by intelligence, the ITOC will target risks to the border and provide planning and coordination, and threat assessment processes to ensure operational activity is focused on the risk and priorities. The key border agencies have a presence in the ITOC so they can work together closely and efficiently in planning and executing operational activity. Contributing agencies include:
 - New Zealand Customs Service (lead agency).
 - MAF Biosecurity New Zealand.
 - Immigration New Zealand.
 - Maritime New Zealand.
51. Other agencies can come on board when they are ready.

Why has the ITOC been established?

52. The ITOC has been established to:
- bring Customs' targeting and operational planning and coordination functions together;
 - improve the capability to assess threats and target risks to the border and respond to these more effectively and efficiently; and
 - integrate the border operations activity of all border agencies.
53. All of this enhances the government's ability to protect the safety and security of New Zealanders through more effective border control.

What does the ITOC do?

54. The ITOC has two core functions:

(1) Targeting

55. Targeting is responsible for:
- Maintaining rule sets and applying these to work streams.
 - Acting on intelligence risk profiles, assessments and recommendations.
 - Integrating information and intelligence to identify and target threats.
 - Integrating targeting across the border sector and prioritising operational responses based on risk assessment set within the border domain picture.

(2) Operations Centre

56. The Operations Centre is responsible for:
- Border domain awareness - keeping an overall view of Customs' operational activity.
 - Supporting operational activity - response planning and coordination of resources.
 - Maintaining the professional reputation of border agencies through excellence in operational command. This includes ensuring feedback and debriefing is used effectively so that these experiences can improve the way subsequent operations are planned and executed.
57. To do this, the ITOC recognises three levels of border activity.
- Deliberate operations and exercises, resulting from a risk assessment or other analysis. These are pre-planned activities to address significant and on-going risks to the border.

- Contingency operations are responsive/reactive operations, driven by a specific risk event. They may be short in duration, or run for several months.
- A situational awareness “overwatch” of operational activities across the border sector.

How does the ITOC work?

58. The ITOC works under a command and control structure - so control (what needs to be done) is centralised and operational execution (how it will be done) is decentralised. Responsibility for operational outcomes remains with the specific workgroup or agency through standing management structures.
59. The ITOC is a 24-hours, seven-days-a-week facility with well-trained staff to support the command, planning, and coordination of operations within the border.
60. A key feature of the way the ITOC is set up is that different pieces of information and intelligence from different sources will be brought together in one place, allowing patterns to emerge under analysis and with the potential to improve the tactics used to keep the border secure.
61. The ITOC’s targeting and planning processes ensure activity is focused on real risk and priorities by guiding operations through best practice targeting process, informed (and cued) by intelligence.

4.4 UNITED STATES

62. The U.S. Customs and Border Protection’s (CBP) National Targeting Centre (NTC) was established in October 2001 in direct response to the terrorist attacks of 9/11. It has become the preeminent anti-terrorism facility in the Department of Homeland Security (DHS). Established as a 24x7 operation with the centralized mission of coordinating anti-terrorism targeting and supporting all CBP Anti-Terrorism activities, it has evolved into two operations with one focused on cargo (NTC-C) and the other on passengers (NTC-P).
63. Information is the most powerful tool in anti-terrorism efforts and facilitates the judgment of what is high risk and what presents no threat at all. Information, and systems that allow users to distil and filter it, provide the mechanism for selectively determining levels of risk.
64. A high technology tool the NTC uses to winnow through information is the Automated Targeting System (ATS). Capable of interfacing with various systems to develop exclusive risk summaries on inbound and outbound cargo and international travellers, ATS provides a structured and disciplined approach to identifying actionable targets. As a result of national legislation, CBP receives electronic information on all cargo shipped to the United States 24 hours before the cargo is loaded at foreign seaports and 4 hours prior to arrival for air shipments. Such data transmission requirements exist for truck and rail shipments as well. ATS processes this information thereby allowing the NTC to evaluate every shipment for security risks in advance. Advance information is also vetted on international passengers. ATS processes this information, picking up on anomalies and “red flags” and provides a basis for Customs officers to consider further action on cargo or passengers that are deemed “high risk” and whether

the scrutiny should take place at the port of entry or overseas, or whether entry into the U.S. will be granted at all.

65. Communication between agencies with anti-terrorism intelligence capabilities is crucial. In this regard the NTC has become a model for integrating and sharing information necessary for security. The NTC is a virtual coalition against terrorism with an expanded scope of information available and a network of inter-agency liaisons located at the NTC and with international partners located overseas.
66. Liaisons assigned to the passenger component of the NTC include U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), the U.S. Department of State (DOS), U.S. Coast Guard (ICC), the U.S. Transportation Security Administration (TSA) and the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), to name a few.
67. The FBI's Terrorist Screening Centre (TSC) maintains the U.S. Government's consolidated Terrorist Watch list and is the central point within the FBI for gathering and managing domestic and international terrorism threats. The TSC produces daily terrorism threat briefing material and intelligence reports that are shared with the NTC and other members of the intelligence and law enforcement communities. When a possible match is recognized, NTC targeters alert TSC personnel. If a match is confirmed, the FBI coordinates a response and determines action to be taken by the appropriate Joint Terrorism Task Force.
68. Of the several government agencies represented at the NTC, a critical coordination point is the TSA liaison. TSA updates and maintains a watch list of suspect travellers better known as the "no-fly" list. This list is designed to deny persons access to commercial airline flights that are a threat to civil aviation or the homeland. Currently, all terrorist lookouts are coordinated through the NTC, including coordination with the FBI's Terrorist Screening Centre.
69. The Federal Air Marshals (FAM), a component program of the TSA, has staff at the NTC. They use information developed by the NTC to determine if they need to deploy FAM resources onto specific flights. Air travel isn't the only area where coordination and communication has been enhanced. The Coast Guard is tasked with protecting waters within a 12-mile limit of the U.S. coast and is also represented at the NTC. Using NTC capabilities to screen vessels, crew members, and cargo information in advance of arrival, the Coast Guard determines high-interest vessels and crew members of interest in order to prioritize its boarding efforts.
70. In 2007, CBP began hosting a number of foreign Customs officials under the International Cargo Targeting Fellowship Program at its National Targeting Centre - Cargo . The main objectives of the Fellowship Program are to foster the timely exchange of security information and trade data; share and refine targeting techniques, and to increase each country's capability to target and eliminate criminal trade entities on a global scale. The NTC-C provides analytical and operational support to other countries by helping them to identify and manage potential security risks and other high-risk threats in the cargo environment. Collaborations include the development of risk rule concepts and targeting methodologies regarding air and maritime cargo. Benefits include working together to effectively reduce terrorism risks, maximize security, and facilitation of the international trade supply chain.
71. The NTC has been and will increasingly be at the heart of CBP's anti-terrorism efforts. As increasing amounts of information becomes available and are developed for intelligence purposes, the NTC's role as a coordinator and facilitator of information

exchange will remain critical to the mission of the Department of Homeland Security while contributing to U.S. national security.

5. CONCLUSION

72. This short study paper has aimed at outlining three basic aspects relating to Risk Assessment/Targeting Centres. First, it aimed at explaining the key reasons why Customs administrations have been increasingly establishing Risk Assessment/Targeting Centres. Second, it explores some common functions the centres carry out. Third, the study presents a few case studies on national arrangements.
73. There are various benefits that can occur from the establishment of a Risk Assessment/Targeting Centre. In general, the centres have provided WCO Members with added value through better management and fusion of information; more effective application of a nationally coordinated approach to risk assessment and targeting; an enhanced link between intelligence and operational activity; and a better coordinated approach to border risks and more effective achievement of whole-of-government border management goals.
74. The functions carried out by the centres on the ground differ to some extent on a country-to-country basis. However, some general functions are typical to the centres currently in existence. Most of the centres seem to manage selectivity and targeting criteria; manage risk analysis related IT systems; provide operational support through 24x7x365 tactical analysis and coordination capacity; act as an information exchange and coordination hub for risk related information exchange; and function as a platform for stakeholder and CBM cooperation.
75. The paper has outlined a few Member cases studies on their centres. The case studies show that even though the centres carry out similar tasks over jurisdictional boundaries, there are some differences in national approaches. The unique organizational context and the operating context often stipulate the exact functions and operating model.
76. It is assumed that the centres will be of increasing interest to a growing number of WCO Members in the future. The trend towards advance electronic information, the need to manage this information, the developing IT capabilities and the increasing need to address border risks from a whole-of-government perspective will most probably be some of the drivers that will intensify the establishment of these centres in the future. However, each country faces its unique operating environment and context and there is clearly “no one size fits all” solution that would fit everyone’s needs. Therefore, the decision to establish a Risk Assessment/Targeting Centre needs to be reviewed carefully on a case-by-case basis. The mere establishment of the facility will rarely be a silver bullet and needs to be a part of a wider organizational risk management framework.