



Tax Talk - Security at our Borders

Borders demarcate the independent territories of any country. Borders and Ports of Entry are the entrance and exit points for all people, goods and craft entering or departing a country. Controlling borders and ports of entries are vital in order to ensure the rule of law and prevent or disrupt the flow of criminal activity. All borders, whether seaports or airports are vulnerable to this threat.

Technology is an essential component in the effort to prevent smuggling across our borders via any pathway. Technology can help identify any threats while facilitating legitimate transactions. Targeting systems or processes can utilize information databases to assist with this assessment as can information sharing domestically or internationally with other Law Enforcement Agencies.

Contraband in the Asia Pacific Region

The sale of counterfeit goods and medicines has become an important profit-machine for transnational crime syndicates, accounting for about one-third of the value of transnational crime flows, according to the United Nations' Office on Drugs and Crime.

In total, contraband markets in the Asia Pacific Region are valued at about \$90 billion and are broken down into four categories: human trafficking and smuggling of migrants, illicit drugs, specifically heroin and methamphetamine, counterfeit goods and fraudulent medicines.

About 75 percent of the counterfeit products seized worldwide from 2008 to 2010 were made in East Asia, primarily China, according to the World Customs Organization.

Fake goods can pose serious risks to unsuspecting consumers, as they are often of poor or unknown quality and do not undergo proper safety testing, this is particularly dangerous if the goods are for human consumption.

Border Security in Fiji

Fiji is not immune to drug and other smuggling threats, given that we are located in the center of the Pacific and act as the transit point for a number of countries. The Fiji Revenue and Customs Service have stationed experienced Customs Officers at our border points to profile passengers and cargo before they enter Fiji to identify and mitigate the risk of illegal activities. Assets to

support our staff include our Detector Dog Unit at Nadi, drug detection equipment and X-ray equipment which is used at for in-depth screening of baggage, cargo and mail.

Detector Dog Unit

The Fiji Detector Dog Unit based at the Nadi International Airport has been instrumental in intercepting thirteen cases of hard drugs in the past six months, amounting to more than \$6.1 million Fijian Dollars.

Since the unit started in November 2016, apart from hard drugs it has also detected other narcotics like cannabis, steroids, Ephedrine (a methamphetamine precursor) and liquid products used for producing explosives. The interception of this contraband runs into thousands of dollars. The K9 unit also has the capacity to detect currencies that are smuggled at our borders and so far has helped stop thousands of dollars from illegally crossing our border.

The K9 unit compliments the non-intrusive inspection (scanning) and physical checks carried out by Customs Officers. They are an extremely valuable asset in helping us to protect our borders. The highly trained dogs can detect narcotics, firearms, weapons, explosives and many other dangerous items and materials. They are trained to find illegal items hidden in containers, luggage, vehicles, packages, and on people.

The dogs selected for the K9 unit underwent rigorous training in the detection of specific types of items such as drugs, explosives and currencies before being commissioned into active duty.

Similarly, the K9 handlers were specially selected for their ability to work with and understand the behavior of dogs.

With an ability to quickly screen a large volume of people or goods crossing our borders, our detector dog's capabilities mean that including them in the layers of Fiji's risk detection tools will enhance the overall security of our border and that of neighboring countries as well.

The K9 Unit [which is a collaborative unit including the Fiji Police] comprises of four (4) sniffer dogs and handlers who were trained by experts from the New Zealand Customs Service.

A Central based K9 team will be deployed into the wider Suva area over coming months.

Rapsican

The Government of the state of Israel handed over a Rapsican X-ray machine to the Fiji Revenue and Customs Service on 27th July 2017 and compliments current and planned X-ray capability.

The machine delivers high quality results; the baggage and parcel scanning solutions are versatile to adapt to different screening scenarios and alert upon the presence of explosives and narcotics. With the installation of a Rapsican machine, the detection rate at the airport is also expected to increase. The Rapsican machine is jointly used at the Nadi International Airport by the Bio-Security Authority of Fiji and the Fiji Revenue and Customs Service.

Passenger and Cargo Profiling

We are continuously working to enhance our risk profiling capabilities around passengers and goods and craft. this capability is critical to ensure legitimate trade and travel is facilitated while illicit trade and travel is detected and managed appropriately. Advance information around people, goods and craft is critical and a core component of our risk identification strategy.

The Customs Intelligence teams work closely with frontline staff to ensure information is assessed and intelligence flows quickly to assist with risk identification, management and compliance activity across all import and export pathways.

Such profiling is used extensively by our Nadi Border Compliance Team who are a newly created team dedicated to targeted interventions ensuring passengers and craft utilizing Nadi Airport are compliant with Fijis laws. This team has identified multiple incursions including currency smuggling, skimming crime groups, drugs and other undeclared goods.

The coming months will see a focus on enhancing our Maritime compliance area as well as the deployment of extensive X-ray technologies for containerized and other cargo screening into the Lautoka and Nadi area.