



### **FRCS Marks First Anniversary of Container Control Programme in Fiji**

The August 2021 marks the first anniversary of the Container Control Programme (CCP) and the World Customs Organisation (WCO) Cargo Targeting System (CTS) in Fiji. The occasion is an opportunity for the Fiji Revenue and Customs Service (FRCS) to reflect on all that has been achieved, and learnt over the past year to help curb illegal cross border activities in Fiji.

The Container Control Programme is jointly implemented by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and the World Customs Organization.

The Programme was launched in August 2020 by FRCS. It is funded by the Australian Border Force (ABF) as part of its commitment to work together with Pacific nations to strengthen regional borders. Australian Border Force partnered with the UNODC and WCO to implement the Container Control Programme and the Cargo Targeting System in Fiji – a system funded by Australia through the Fiji-Australia Vuvale Partnership.

FRCS is the first Customs Administration within the Oceania Region to administer CCP and CTS.

FRCS acknowledges the valuable support and collaboration with UNODC – WCO and the Australian Government through the Australian Border Force in the establishment of the Container Control Programme in Fiji.

#### **Container Control Programme and WCO Cargo Targeting System**

CCP was established in 2004. According to global statistics, around 90 per cent of international trade is represented by container flows and at global level less than two per cent of these flows are inspected. On an annual base over 793 million containers (Twenty-foot Equivalent Unit) are moved in the International Supply Chain which provides criminal syndicates with the opportunity to organise transnational crimes. In response to this threat, the UNODC and WCO launched the CCP to assist governments in establishing effective container selections and controls to prevent drug trafficking and other illicit cross-border activities.

The World Customs Organisation Cargo Targeting System is an information technology application developed by WCO that provides risk assessment and targeting of import, export and transshipment cargo across the full range of customs risks.

#### **How the Container Control Programme Works?**

Under the CCP, member countries form a dedicated National Border Targeting Centre consisting of risk analysts and physical inspection teams from different law enforcement agencies (e.g. Customs, Police and other law enforcement agencies), who are trained and equipped in the framework of the CCP to

work together to systematically target high-risk goods for professional law enforcement scrutiny, using risk analysis and other proactive techniques with minimum disruption to the free flow of legitimate trade.

They work in close cooperation with each other to prevent cargo containers from being used for unlawful activities such as illicit drug trafficking, smuggling of goods, tax evasion, intellectual property related acts and possible terrorist acts.

### **Progress since implementation last year**

Since the launch of the UNODC and WCO CCP in Fiji, FRCS has established a dedicated targeting team namely the National Border Control Targeting Centre (NBCTC) which was pioneered by the Port Control Unit in Suva. Then in January 2021, an Air Cargo Control Unit was also established in Nadi under NBCTC. These Units consist of risk analysts that work closely with frontline inspection officers in their role of mitigating threats at the border. To enhance the capability of these officers, the WCO and Australian Border Force teams have facilitated and delivered various stages of CCP training including classroom and practical training, mentoring and advanced specialised training to these Units and the Inspection Teams in FRCS.

In July 2021, the Australian Government contributed over \$100,000 worth of information technology equipment to support FRCS with sea and air cargo targeting capabilities. This IT equipment has significantly enhanced the connectivity between risk systems as well as supporting Fiji's ability to analyse large trade data sets to identify high-risk consignments. The operations of National Border Control Targeting Centre are centred around the virtual border and the IT equipment donated by the Australian Government will greatly enhance the capability of these units in having real-time access to advance critical cargo information and systems.

Since then FRCS has modernized its targeting and profiling capabilities to minimize the use of cargo and other means of transportation for drug trafficking, transnational organized criminal activities and other forms of illegal trade to ensure facilitation of legitimate trade and promote secured global trade supply chain.

Through the use of modern technology and equipment, FRCS has boosted its ability to profile and target sea and air cargo shipments for the risk of illicit trade and revenue frauds.

Since the establishment of National Border Control Targeting Centre, there have been over 50 successful interceptions, including methamphetamine, weapons, cargo of environmental risk, illicit medicines and other border security related elements. Furthermore, there has been an increase in the number of detections related to revenue evasion, leading to financial penalties that support Fiji's economy. This is attributed to the successful coordination between the targeting team and the inspection teams at FRCS.

With our pre-screening capabilities, and the support from our international partners such as WCO, UNODC and the Australian Border Force, our capability to detect, dismantle and disrupt illicit importation and organized crime syndicates is enhanced and we can support legitimate trade to help Fiji grow. Our Customs to Customs partnership today has been strengthened with this collaboration and serves to promote Coordinated Border Management.

The successful interceptions of NBCTC is a result of close collaboration with other operational units in FRCS and also with our international partners. In January this year, intelligence on a high risk consignment was received from our overseas counterparts and the consignment was targeted on its arrival. The team worked closely with our Enforcement Unit to disrupt 200g of methamphetamine

concealed in an air cargo consignment that arrived from Nigeria. A few months after this interception, the team targeted a consignment that arrived from Zimbabwe and intercepted 460g of methamphetamine that was concealed in air filters.

FRCS has been able to contribute to Fiji's future wellbeing through the seizure of these drugs which have a total social cost of over \$700,000. In March, a consignment from Kenya was also targeted for the risk of illicit drugs but with challenges in our testing capability, the illicit drug was handed over to our partner border agency for destruction as it also failed to meet biosecurity requirements. In addition to narcotics, National Border Control Targeting Centre has also targeted consignments that upon inspection were detected to contain undeclared restricted medicines which is a trend seen globally of pharmaceutical drugs being used for non-medical purposes. One of these successfully targeted consignments contained counterfeit medicines which most likely were purchased online by an unsuspecting individual.

In terms of revenue collection, the unit has targeted importers who continuously failed to correctly declare their goods on the advanced cargo manifest and this led to the recovery of over \$12000 in revenue excluding the amount imposed on the penalty imposed on the offence committed. Other risk factors that has been identified and mitigated by the CCP includes the environment risk, the control of ozone depleting substances and any other environment related import products, medicinal risk, the control of counterfeit and expired imported medicines and its sub-products, narcotics and cigarette smuggling.

The COVID-19 pandemic has presented new challenges for Customs around the world and the roll out of Container Control Programme in Fiji has been timely as it has leveraged Fiji's position in terms of border protection and trade facilitation. In addition to these challenges, transnational organized criminals are infiltrating supply chains and are using sophisticated methods of concealment in the business of illicit trade. FRCS's commitment to the Container Control Programme will minimize the use of Fiji as a staging point for illicit trade given that Fiji is strategically positioned in the Pacific and has a well-established trading community. Whilst the pandemic has increased the use of e-commerce, drug markets had already started to adopt and adapt such technological developments before the pandemic which enabled anyone anywhere to access and organize illicit trade despite the lockdowns and closure of borders. These challenges can be overcome through the combined efforts of law enforcement and the support from Fiji's civil and private sector.

### **Coordinated Border Management**

FRCS is committed to ensure a Coordinated Border Management Strategy to enhance national security, in line with international standards and collaboration. Container Control Programme will assist FRCS in meeting this goal through active inter-agency coordination with other national border and law enforcement agencies, introducing new mechanisms to reduce risks of entry of illicit and undesirable goods in Fiji and ensuring a secure trade platform to enable traders to comply with standards and the efficient movement of legitimate goods.

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