

OECD, European transport ministers urge tighter security to beat container terrorism risk

PARIS – Governments and transport authorities must act to tighten security of the freight container industry in order to reduce the risk of possible terrorist attacks, recommends a new report by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and the European Conference of Ministers of Transport (ECMT).

The container industry is vital to the world's economy, according to *Container Transport Security across Modes*, a report by the OECD's maritime transport committee and the ECMT. More than 80 per cent of goods traded worldwide are transported by sea, much of them in containers, involving thousands of vessels and more than 250 million container movements every year.

The vulnerability of cargo containers has been a focus of international policy since the attacks of September 11, 2001. But though security on ships and at ports has been strengthened in recent years, little has been done to address inland security risks relating to cargo containers, the report said.

It notes that security measures

should not unduly slow down or block the flow of goods nationally and internationally and that, in fact, countries have many options that can increase security and actually facilitate the free flow of trade. Better coordination between transport authorities, customs officials and police forces can help, said the report, which also advises governments to work closely with transport authorities when designing and implementing security measures.

The report outlines two scenarios in which the container industry could be vulnerable to a terrorist attack: a 'hijack' scenario in which terrorists intercept a legitimate consignment and tamper with it, and a 'Trojan horse' scenario in which terrorists develop legitimate trading identities to then ship dangerous consignments.

To minimize risks, the report specifically recommends improvements in relation to:

- **Shipper responsibility:** Shippers and/or other parties packing a container are the most important link in the container security chain. They should help to establish, and follow, clear container stuffing and sealing protocols and initiate the start of a

clearly auditable trail for all containers;

- **Container security:** Containers should be sealed with, at a minimum, a high-security mechanical seal. The report advises against mandating the use of 'smart' electronic locks at this time, saying the technology is not yet standardized and deployed internationally;

- **Inland security:** Containers are most at risk while being transported inland, especially when parked in rail yards, road stops and loading facilities. Security in these areas needs to be increased, identification checks for transport workers introduced, and the time containers spend at loading terminals reduced; and

- **International rules and recommendations:** Inland transport and maritime authorities should make efforts to comply with existing recommendations and international rules. Specifically, the report urges implementation of the recommendations of the ECMT Ministerial Declaration on Combating Terrorism in Transport, the 2001 Ministerial Conclusions on Combating Crime, and ECMT Resolution No. 97/2 on Crime in International Transport. It also calls on countries to comply with the amended Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS) Convention and the International Ship and Port Facility Security (ISPS) Code that govern security measures for international ocean-going vessels.

The executive summary and conclusions and recommendations of the report are available at www.oecd.org/transport.