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Secretariat for Multidimensional Security

Guide to Best Practices for the Establishment and Integration of Risk Assessment Groups (RAG) and Cargo Control in Ports

1. PREAMBLE

- a. Increased seaborne trade has brought a concomitant increase in the movement of cargo and containers in the member states' ports.
- b. Control actions taken by the various stakeholders who manage this commercial flow have been inadequate, because illicit drug trafficking (IDT) has increased, closely linked to the use of increasingly sophisticated, modern, and perfected tactics to avoid detection by the control systems, making them ever more vulnerable to evasion.
- c. Another important factor, commonly known as "container contamination," results from the surreptitious or coordinated introduction of illicit goods at some point in the maritime transport chain before, during, or after sailing.
- d. The various organizations, institutions, or government agencies in charge of cargo and containers differ in each member country, depending on its legislation.
- e. The establishment of Risk Assessment Groups (RAG) that coordinate the various agencies in charge of cargo control in ports, through the implementation of modern instruments of Risk Management, has become a necessary tool for facing the new challenges posed by criminal organizations involved in illicit activities, among them illicit drug trafficking (IDT).

2. GENERAL PURPOSE

To prepare a guide of best practices that can be adapted to member states' legislations for the establishment and implementation of Risk Assessment Groups (RAG) of cargo transport in ports as well as vessels in bays and high seas.

3. **LEGAL FRAMEWORK**

International agreements

Member state's national legislation

4. **AGENCIES**

- Customs or similar agency.
- Police authority with jurisdiction in the area.
- Public Prosecutor's Office.
- Maritime Authority.
- Port Management Authority
- Other relevant authorities

5. **TASKS/RESPONSABILITIES**

- a. Review cargo manifests or other documents related to cargo's transport in and out of the country.
- b. Verify cargo place of origin and destination as well as companies involved.
- c. Confirm information obtained.
- d. Gradually develop and implement information systems as well as high-tech communications to combat IDT¹.
- e. Consolidate and process relevant information related to cargo transport through the waterway.
- f. National and International suspicious cargo warnings
- g. Respond to the suspicious warnings (including the information sent through Pen Online).
- h. Coordinate investigations on suspicious companies with relevant agencies, under the national law.
- i. Continuously share information among member states' RAG for cooperation and exchange of information.

¹ This will require the development of tools and protocols based on the integration of different databases, designed to perform a real-time multidimensional counterintelligence analysis

6. **IMPLEMENTATION PLAN**

- a. Promote and manage the creation of the RAG as a contact point and national coordinator for risk management in ports as well as communication among member states.
- b. Selection of members of the RAG, according to standards and regulations of each country.
- c. Establish commitments between the institutions involved.
- d. Provide training to members of the RAG according to standards and regulations of each country.
- e. Establish commitments and interagency policies for RAG's activities.
- f. Promote awareness between port agents to collaborate with the RAG.
- g. Coordination with importing and exporting companies to provide information to the RAG.

7. **RECOMMENDATION**

- a. The use of current agreements for exchange of information and the creation of new ones to establish a risk assessment group (RAG) to exchange information through a secure email account.
- b. Provide the following information to the secure email address:
 - Number and type of container.
 - Port of origin
 - Cargo manifest
 - Number of bill of lading
 - Name of vessel
 - Departure date from the port of origin
 - Port of destination
 - Customs regulations applicable to cargo (export, re-export or transit, etc.)
 - Cargo (type, weight, packaging, declared value).
 - Risk Indicators (IDT, smuggling, etc.).
 - And any other relevant information