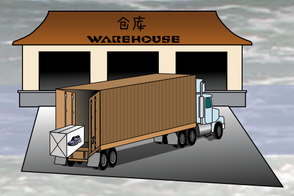
FROM THERE TO HERE

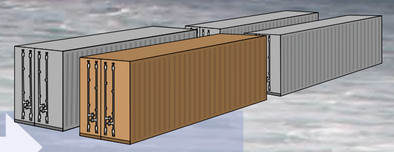
Supply Chain Security to the Port of Tacoma

Every day, thousands of containers arrive at U.S. seaports from countries all around the world. Each shipment represents a specific supply chain, whether it is patio furniture from Thailand bound for a Kansas City retailer or – as illustrated here – shoes shipped from China to a Spokane, Washington, athletic supply store. Every supply chain is subject to multiple layers of security processes, reducing the risk that something bad may arrive in our country. The supply chain shown to the right illustrates just a few of the security processes that scrutinize each container entering the United States. Other programs, such as the Customs-Trade Partnership Against Terrorism (C-TPAT) and the Container Security Initiative (CSI), contribute to overall supply chain security by establishing security criteria for importers and carriers, as well as protecting the global commerce ... and adding extra layers of security for our local communities.

A Spokane athletic supply store is running low on the season's hot, new shoes, which are manufactured in northern China. The store places an order for 500 pairs. The shoe company works with a Canadian freight forwarder to arrange transport from the Chinese factory for a containerload of shoes.

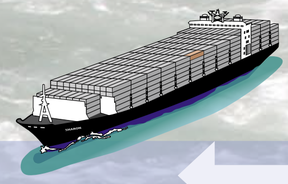


A Chinese trucking company arrives at the factory, loads the order, along with orders from many other retailers, into a 40-foot container, which is bolted shut and fitted with a high-security seal. The container will not be opened again until it arrives at a U.S. distribution warehouse, unless U.S. or foreign customs officials decide to open and inspect it.



The freight forwarder determines it is most economical to truck the container to the Port of Tianjin for trans-Pacific shipment to the United States. The freight forwarder has contracted with a shipping line, which must submit documentation about the shipment at least 24 hours before the ship leaves port. This "manifest data" includes information such as exact contents, the exporter, the importer and who is transporting the cargo.

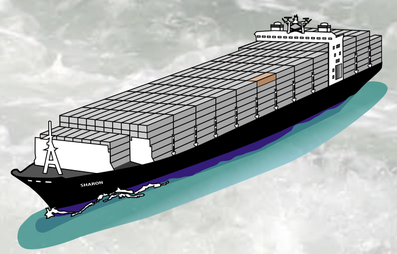
This information is sent to the U.S. government, where officials from several federal agencies use intelligence data bases to rate and evaluate the risk level of each of the 11 million-plus containers that enter the United States each year. Risk-based analysis and intelligence is used to pre-screen, assess and examine 100 percent of suspicious containers.



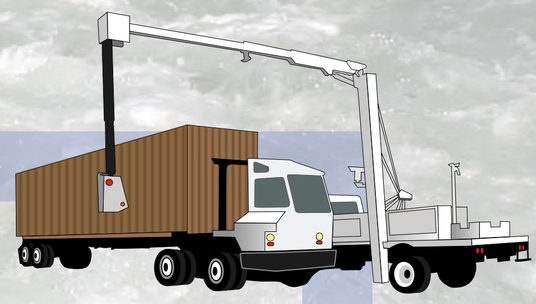
Loaded onto a container ship, the container of shoes is bound for the Port of Tacoma. The trip takes 12 days.

When the ship is 96 hours from Tacoma, the captain of the vessel prepares a report that includes details on each member of the 10- to 15-person crew, plus voyage, vessel, cargo, operational and safety information. This report is sent to the U.S. Coast Guard, which – if it believes anything to be suspicious – will board the ship at sea to investigate.

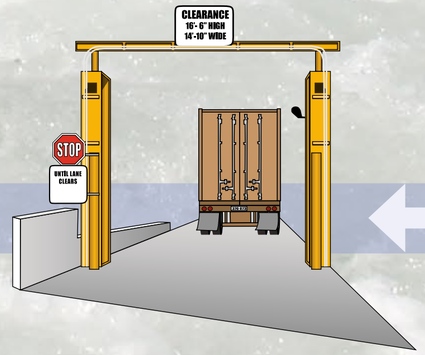
Once the ship arrives in Tacoma, Port of Tacoma Security, Tacoma Police and other federal, state and local agencies ensure perimeter security around the Port. Also, terminal security ensures only authorized people have access to the terminal and vessel. The Coast Guard, meanwhile, is responsible for waterside security.



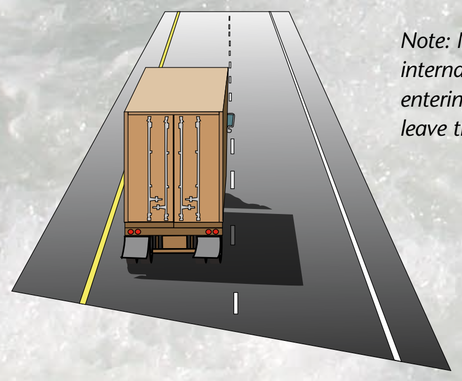
Up to 120 longshore workers arrive to work the ship. They include crane operators, lashers, clerks and cargo equipment operators. A terminal operator directs the longshore workers, as they unload each container.



U.S. Customs officials, armed with a careful evaluation of each container's documentation, instruct terminal operators to pull specific containers for further inspection. Inspection may include a physical inspection of the contents (a six- to 40-hour procedure) or inspection by a VACIS (Vehicle and Cargo Inspection System) machine, which uses gamma-ray technology to look inside and confirm the contents of the container without opening it. A VACIS inspection takes three to five minutes.



Once cleared by U.S. Customs, longshore workers load the container on a truck chassis, which is picked up by a trucker. Leaving the Port, the container passes through a radiation portal monitor (RPM), which detects the presence of any radioactive material in the container. Once cleared, the truck and container leave the Port.



Note: More than 70 percent of international import containers entering the Port of Tacoma leave the Port by rail.

The truck arrives at an import distribution center in nearby Sumner, Washington, where the container is opened and the orders by individual stores are separated and prepared for shipment. The next day, the Spokane athletic supply store receives 500 pairs of the season's most popular athletic shoes.

PORT of TACOMA U.S.A.

Illustrations by Kathy Tomandl