

Postal Shipments and the Trade Act of 2002

The cooperative goal of the Bureau of Customs & Border Protection (CBP) and trade is to enhance national security in part by working to develop regulations for the advanced transmission of air cargo information. In order to be successful, the regulations must cover all goods entering/departing the United States, including those goods that move through the U.S. Postal Service (even if originating from foreign Postal Services).

The COAC subcommittee working on the air requirements for advanced cargo information could not agree on specific recommendations for Postal shipments. Some carriers were concerned because the various Postal Services are large customers and that the burden of any new requirements for the Postal Services may ultimately fall on the carriers. We believe that if the Postal Services were required to provide the advanced cargo information similar to the forwarders, the subcommittee may have been in a better position to provide uniform recommendations.

There are two specific issues that need to be considered and addressed by the Bureau of Customs & Border Protection:

- (1) Airlines, Forwarders, and Express Carriers have significant physical security Programs in place both internally and through approved TSA programs for shipments being imported into the United States. Postal shipments are not subject to the same physical security measures that were the basis for the COAC proposal to seek post departure as a potential solution. The USPS does have an approved TSA security plan for U.S. outbound mail. However, there are no such requirements for U.S. inbound mail.
- (2) Postal Services are exempt from providing detailed manifests of goods being shipped into the U.S.. If the Postal Services are not required to provide electronic advance cargo information that the carriers and forwarders are, CBP will not be able to perform complete security screening. CBP should address this issue and require all goods being shipped into the U.S. be subject to the detailed manifesting requirements and be included in the CBP mandate of 100% automation.

The air subcommittee is submitting a specific proposal and recommendations that provide a level playing field for the Airlines, Forwarders, and Express Carriers. It is concerning that Postal Services are exempt from the same requirements and will continue to have a distinct competitive advantage. More importantly, exemptions for Postal shipments will result in a serious gap in security and jeopardize Bureau of Customs & Border Protection efforts to fully protect our borders.