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C-TPAT Conference Draws Record Numbers

At 11 Years, Still Going Strong

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It was a sight to behold. More than 1,200 members of the trade community gathered in National Harbor, Md., this week for the Customs-Trade Partnership Against Terrorism, C-TPAT, conference on Jan. 8-10. The event, "Unified Global Security: The Challenge Ahead," hosted by U.S. Customs and Border Protection, drew participants representing all aspects of the supply chain including manufacturers, importers, transportation carriers, retailers, brokers and freight forwarders.

"I've been in government now going on 38 years and I've been through a lot of programs in my career. If a program lasts more than a year or two, it's pretty successful. But to have a program that started in November 2001 that is still going strong and has the energy level to attract 1,200 people at a conference, you know you have a winner," said Thomas Winkowski, CBP's acting chief operating officer, who welcomed a packed audience Wednesday at the Gaylord National Resort and Convention Center. "But with winners," said Winkowski, "you have challenges--what are the next steps? How do we make it better? How do we become more creative? How do we take the principles of C-TPAT and continue to apply them globally?"

C-TPAT, a voluntary trusted trader program that has been emulated worldwide, was launched shortly after the Sept. 11 attacks. In the days following the tragedy, security at the U.S. borders was so tight, the economic repercussions were devastating. As a result, CBP's legacy agency, the U.S. Customs Service, began meeting with some of the major U.S. importers to find a way to maintain a high level of security while facilitating the flow of goods across America's borders. It became apparent that the only way to do this was by engaging U.S. businesses to look at security within their individual supply chains and ensure that appropriate security measures to guard against terrorists were being used. A joint effort with seven original charter member companies was formed.

Today, the program has nearly 10,500 members. "More than 55 percent of the goods entering the United States are C-TPAT certified and validated imports," said Winkowski. "That's a big accomplishment, but we have to continue to drive that number up to our goal of 100 percent."

The conference agenda included speakers from CBP's senior leadership. Acting Assistant Commissioner of Field Operations Kevin McAleenan discussed the future of the C-TPAT program from an operational perspective. "Our shared and continuing challenge is brought about by some good news and some difficult news that we're seeing in Washington," said McAleenan. "On the good news front, the international trade volume continues to grow. We're seeing a very robust recovery in terms of cross-border international trade for imports and exports. While we're still finalizing our fiscal year 2012 stats, I can tell you that we're going to be at a record for maritime container traffic—over 12 million containers for the first time. We're going to be at a record for rail—right at the 3 million mark. We're re-approaching our record in the truck environment—close to 11 million in truck containers crossing the border. And in the air environment, we're exceeding previous records in reaching close to 100 million total air cargo shipments."

McAleenan noted that further growth was predicted for fiscal year 2013. "From our perspective, we see that growth occurring and we need to continue to secure and facilitate it," he said. "We know that we have a critical role at the ports of entry to make sure that nothing dangerous comes in. But at the same time, we don't want to slow anything down because we cannot be a choke point to prevent further growth in that recovery."

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CBP's Acting Chief Operating Officer Thomas Winkowski welcomes members of the trade community at the 2013 C-TPAT conference in National Harbor, Md. on Jan. 9.

Photo Credit: Josh Denmark

However, McAleenan explained, "we still have some milestones to reach. We know pretty clearly that our resources are going to be constrained into the future," he said. "To me, that really highlights the importance of a program like this. It's critical to our security, critical to the flow of trade, and critical to meeting these challenges of increased traffic and constrained resources."

One of the underlying goals of the conference was to update the trade community on the program's newest developments. "We haven't had a conference in about a



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Kevin McAleenan, CBP's acting assistant commissioner from field operations, discusses the future of the C-TPAT program to a crowded audience at 2013 C-TPAT conference while Dan Baldwin, CBP executive director of cargo and conveyance security, listens.

Photo Credit: Josh Denmark

year, "said Dan Baldwin, CBP's executive director of cargo and conveyance security who oversaw the team that organized the event. "We need to get the private sector up to speed as to where we are and introduce the agency's new concepts."

Baldwin explained that the conference title, "Unified Global Security," highlights the central theme of these concepts. "We're trying to be much more holistic in our approach for supply chain security. It's about unifying and mutually recognizing various programs and initiatives that all have a nexus to C-TPAT," he said. These include programs with other government agencies such as the U.S. Food and Drug Administration, the Transportation Security Administration, and the U.S. Coast Guard as well as international mutual recognition agreements with foreign governments. To date, CBP has signed seven mutual recognition agreements with New Zealand, Canada, Jordan, Japan, Korea, the European Union and, most

recently, Taiwan.

The signing of joint work plans with Israel and, later this month, with Mexico were also announced at the conference. The work plans are initial steps toward mutual recognition agreements with these nations. "We're trying to unify all of these approaches to partnership so that we are much more transparent," said Baldwin. "Reduced transaction costs for the trade community will be another result."

McAleenan announced the selection of a new C-TPAT program director. Lauren Kaufer, the former acting director of CBP's personnel security division in the Office of Internal Affairs, will now head the program. Kaufer, a former civil litigation attorney, is a graduate of CBP's Leadership Institute. "As part of the leadership program, she stood out as a future star," said McAleenan.

The conference also featured a number of other highly recognized speakers in the transborder security and supply chain fields. Richard Reed, the deputy assistant to the president for Homeland Security, was the keynote speaker. Reed discussed what the administration has done to improve the security of the global supply chain system in the U.S. Other speakers included **Barry Brandman, the president of Danbee Investigations**, and Dan Purtell, senior vice president of supply chain solutions for BSI Professional Services. Both discussed best practices and emerging risk models for supply chain security.

This year's conference was the first to allow non-C-TPAT members to attend. "The conference has traditionally been for C-TPAT members only," said Baldwin. "But we also wanted to recognize that this is an opportunity to educate potential partners who need more detail on what C-TPAT has to offer. It allows them to speak with members about the value of participating in the program."

One of the new benefits for qualifying C-TPAT partners is participation in CBP's new Centers of Excellence and Expertise. The new industry-specific centers will manage entries of participating importers and help facilitate the importation of legitimate goods. "Our initial partners that we've been working with in the existing centers are C-TPAT members exclusively," McAleenan told audience members. "And those companies are helping drive and shape what these Centers of Excellence and Expertise will become."

The three-day conference included a number of workshops. For many attendees, the breakout sessions provided the most practical information. "It reinforces what I know," said Mary Ann Comstock, the northern border compliance manager at UPS Supply Chain Solutions. "The workshops also give me new ideas of how to do things differently and better."

Others who attended this year's event came for different reasons. "I actually haven't been to one of these conferences for about three years," said Lori Goldberg, the senior director of global trade management for the Americas for Avery Dennison, a manufacturer of industrial products. "But since there have been so many changes in the C-TPAT program and a lot of mutual recognition treaties have been signed, I decided to come this year for an update."

For Tim Perry, the director of trade and regulatory affairs for APL Limited, one of the world's largest ocean carrier firms, the C-TPAT conferences are a must. "I've been coming to these conferences ever since they've been having them," said Perry. "The first was in 2002 under Commissioner Bonner." Perry sees the exchange of ideas between the government and the private sector as critical. "We think we know government and the government thinks they know the private sector, but there's always this divide" he said. "So it's very interesting to see the customs' point of view and it's important for customs to know how we do our business."

The conferences also give new C-TPAT partners a chance to learn about the program. "It gives the trade a lot of opportunities to ask questions," said Tracey Fusco, the regional compliance manager at Transocean, a worldwide drilling company for oil and gas that just joined C-TPAT. "We want to protect our supply chain the best that we can."

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