Jonathan Fleming discusses how the latest border screening technology can help tackle corruption, and calls for wider adoption of the "Security Screening as a Service" model

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For any entry point into a country or state – whether it is via road, rail, sea or air – security screening operatives are facing an ongoing battle in the fight against illegal activity that threatens not only national security but also the economic and social welfare of the nation. Whether it is trying to stop narcotics, people trafficking, weapons or counterfeit goods from crossing the border, the personnel on the front line are not always able to stop this illegal activity from occurring. It is for this reason that governments across the globe, as well as leading international bodies such as the European Union, need to take a stand against the threats this activity poses to nations and the wider international community.

While those perpetrating these crimes are starting to get smarter in concealing goods in the cargo they are transporting, there is also the added risk of corruption and bribery at the border, leading to the goods being given a free pass into a country. The level of corruption worldwide still remains high and, according to the corruption index from Transparency International, some of the most corrupt countries around the world include Mexico, Argentina and Egypt. The index highlights that the abuse of power, secret dealings and bribery continue to ravage societies around the world.

Some governments are already in the process of taking proactive steps to stop this activity from taking place. In the wake of the latest innovations in technology, security technology products and new business models in the way security screening of cargo is conducted have evolved. Now it is possible for security screening solutions to lead to greater accountability, increased governance and an improvement in transparency of cargo and goods coming in and out of a country, therefore helping to significantly cut the level of corruption at ports and borders.

As evidenced by the Transparency International

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> **The managed 'pay-as-you-use' screening model offers a practical and feasible approach to reducing the potential risk of corruption."**

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member of the European Union that compel applicant counties to demonstrate they have effective security screening and border control measures in place. But as individual nations seek to work together as an international community in the fight against the illegal trafficking of people, drugs, weapons, etc, there continues to be a pressing need to ensure borders are locked down against all illegal activity. Just as importantly, each nation and their associated governments must be held fully accountable for what is entering and leaving their countries.

The impact of these illegal goods entering the country not only raises concerns about the country's security status but it also impacts them socially and economically. If a country has a reputation for bribery and being an easy through-road for illegal activity, and demonstrates no willingness to stop this activity and perception, then its standing within the international trade and investment community will be impacted. This would then ultimately lead to significant impact on its economic growth, as no other country is going to want to trade with or invest in a country that is allowing this activity to continue.

But stopping corrupt activity that has been going on for years and is potentially inherent within the security screening process is not an easy task for governments. For some it will require investment in new technology and staff training, which is time-intensive, as well as then maintenance of the equipment and inspections to ensure it is doing the job it was designed for – stopping illegal materials and people from crossing international borders. For others, it may mean upgrading current equipment. Yet innovations within the security screening industry have led to significant advances in recent years, making this task less cumbersome and removing some of the associated management headaches.

In the past, ensuring the cargo security scanning equipment was always well-maintained and running at the peak of operational efficiency could be a constant challenge, and was an area often underestimated by the customer. The result could often be systems falling into disrepair or not used sufficiently. Throw into the mix the chance of corruption and bribery resulting in goods being given the green light to enter a country despite a red warning flag being raised, and it easy to see how the situation at a border could get out of control. But what if it were possible to have this all taken care of for you? This is exactly what we are seeing government and border control agencies across the globe now wanting from expert third party providers.

It is for this reason a new business model and service offering is now being adopted and deployed at international ports and borders. The model, known as Security Screening as a Service, utilises the widely-used "managed pay-as-you-use" format adopted by the IT industry in recent years. Using this new model, customers have a consultation with experts regarding

High volume screening: the costs of screening all border cargo can often be prohibitively high

organisation, corruption is still rife within many countries across the globe, and it continues to be one of the biggest challenges facing authorities on a daily basis. By exploiting this corruption, criminals are able to bypass security screening checkpoints or bribe officials who are meant to be screening and stopping cargo from crossing borders to look the other way; this not only keeps their operations profitable but also makes the true extent of the problem hard to pin down.

There are certain levels of expectation from the international community which require governments to put measures in place to crack down on the potential risk of illegal activity. For example, there are stipulations in the process of becoming a

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their specifications so they receive a bespoke service. This means they are given the advice they need to make informed decisions and understand what will work best for their environment, while ensuring compliance with the regulations in their region.

By working with a scanning provider, the equipment can then be installed, maintained and operated by expert engineers. This removes the need for the customer to have to spend time and capital hiring staff and training them in all areas of the cargo screening process, whether it is image analysis, field engineering or operations. These staff will already know what to look out for and how to remediate any problems that arise. Should any repairs or upgrades need to be undertaken, they will be carried out by the service provider immediately. This means the cargo operator will not suffer any prolonged periods of downtime due to broken equipment, thus increasing their operational efficiency and ensuring maximum levels of throughput.

More importantly, though – and specifically with the fight against corruption and bribery in mind – this model and way of operating a security screening process offers a practical and feasible approach to reducing the potential risk of corruption. This is because the images received from the cargo passing through the security scanning equipment can be sent in real time to a remote location for analysis by an operative not on-site at the border. This means that if any abnormalities appear on the images then an order can be sent to those on-site to carry out a full inspection of the cargo. For example, the cargo X-ray

can be compared against the manifest provided to ensure the goods passing through are as declared. This significantly reduces the risk of bribery at the borders, as those operatives carrying out the screening on site will not be able to take any bribes and give free passes into a country as the images will have been viewed remotely and then an order, which cannot be dismissed, sent for a thorough inspection.

We are seeing an increased interest in this solution and business model from around the world, with one customer in Latin America having deployed the solution and already seen positive results from the investment. As the spotlight continues to be shone on those countries that continue to feature highly on the corruption index – particularly those looking to elevate their standing and position within the wider international community – then we expect to see more governments taking proactive and practical steps to reduce the levels of bribery and corruption that occur at international borders.

While this model still has a long way to go before it is fully adopted by all authorities, the Security Screening as a Service business model not only enables the provider to have a "hands-on" approach – ensuring it remains at full operational efficiency and is maintained by experienced staff – but also ensures they can be held fully accountable over what is entering or leaving the country. This ultimately increases the governance within a nation and leads to a more transparent process that can improve the country's social and economic standing within the global community.

When screening takes place off-site, the risk of corruption among screening staff is greatly reduced

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