

C-TPAT Supply Chain Security Program For Importers

The Customs-Trade Partnership Against Terrorism (“C-TPAT”) is a voluntary government/private sector partnership program designed to protect the United States against acts of terrorism by improving supply chain security, while simultaneously speeding the flow of compliant cargo. An importer may apply to U.S. Customs and Border Protection (“CBP”) for C-TPAT certification, which will be granted when the company demonstrates that it meets or exceeds certain minimum security criteria.

C-TPAT certified importers receive many benefits from CBP including the following:

- A reduced number of inspections and reduced border wait times.
- Eligibility for access to the FAST lanes on the Canadian and Mexican borders.
- Reduced selection rate for Compliance Measurement Examinations and exclusion from certain trade-related local and national criteria in the Automated Commercial System.
- Targeting benefits by receiving a “credit” via the CBP targeting system.
- A C-TPAT supply chain specialist to serve as the CBP liaison for validations, security issues, procedural updates, communication and training.
- Access to C-TPAT members through the Status Verification Interface.

Importers must conduct a comprehensive assessment of their international supply chains to qualify for C-TPAT certification based upon security criteria related to business partner requirements, physical access controls, personnel security, procedural security, security training and threat awareness, physical security and IT security.

Where an importer outsources or contracts elements of its supply chain, it must work with those business partners to ensure that appropriate security measures are utilized and followed throughout its supply chain. The supply chain for C-TPAT purposes is defined from point of origin (manufacturer/supplier/vendor) to point of distribution.

CBP recognizes the diverse nature and complexity of international supply chains and therefore, supports the use and implementation of security measures based upon risk analysis. Accordingly, the C-TPAT program is flexible and permits customization of security plans based on the unique and differing business models of the members.

If you would like to discuss the C-TPAT program or other customs and international trade issues, please do not hesitate to contact Craig A. Koenigs at (202) 216-8317 or ckoenigs@ralaw.com.