

Best Practice: 100% X-Ray Container Screening



Photo not taken in Tunisia, Gen. Ref. Only

Category:	Access Control
Location:	Port of Rades, Tunisia
Date Observed:	January 2005
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Description: 100% x-ray or gamma-ray screening of all import and export inter-modal shipping containers.

Discussion: In Tunisia's primary container port of Rades, 100% of all exported and imported shipping containers are scanned using four stand alone container x-ray machines. When a discrepancy is detected, the container is opened, de-vanned, and searched. While both commercially available x-ray and gamma ray machines are available, using gamma rays as opposed to x-rays, allows for an overall lower cost, smaller operating space, higher system reliability/availability, and safer operation.

Potential Down-side: Depending on the number of shipping containers a facility handles on a daily basis, 100% screening might not be economically viable. Financial impact is both the cost of purchasing and running x-ray scanners, and the delay in commerce from scanning every container.

Conclusion: The mandatory screening of all the containerized cargo that travels through a port is a highly effective means for detecting and deterring the smuggling of contraband and stowaways. While few ports are able to achieve 100% electronic inspections, considerable investments have been made to increase the number of containers screened in certain key ports around the world.

Cost: Depending on the size of the port, it can be very expensive to implement 100% electronic screening of all inbound and outbound containers. The initial cost of purchasing a container scanner varies depending on type, size and model but all models cost at least two million USD apiece. Maintenance and training costs can also be considerable.