

# LAW ENFORCEMENT PERSPECTIVE ON COMBATING CARGO THEFT

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Artur Romanowski

Improving European Truck Parking  
Heading for more safe and secure truck parking areas

Brussels, 25-26 Oct. 2010

# Law enforcement perspective on combating cargo theft

Cargo theft / road freight theft

Cargo Theft is organised increasingly violent and is market driven. Criminals respond to demand, travelling the length and breadth of the EU to steal goods and vehicles in a number of ways ranging from 'curtain slash' offences to organised robberies and lorry hijacks.



# Law enforcement perspective on combating cargo theft

The theft of a lorry and/or load can have a significant impact on drivers, particularly for smaller operators and owner/drivers.

Professional criminals and opportunists alike will target your vehicles and load but **there is much that we can do** to prevent thefts and reduce the chance of being a victim of crime.

# Law enforcement perspective on combating cargo theft

IRU & ITF report (Feb. 2008)

- 17% of all drivers have suffered an attack during the 5-year period investigated
- 30% of attacked drivers have been attacked more than once
- 21% of drivers were physically assaulted
- 60 % of the attacks targeted the vehicle and its load
- **42% of the attacks took place in truck parking areas**
- 30% of the attacked drivers did not report the incident to the police
- Countries where the highest number of surveyed attacks occurred, per million tonnes of international traffic, are: Romania (5.03/Mt), Hungary (1.31/Mt), and Poland (1.21/Mt)

# Law enforcement perspective on combating cargo theft

It is estimated that there are 200,000 attacks against commercial vehicles annually. However, this figure may be much higher as many attacks go unreported. Drivers are often in a foreign country when attacked and feel that they cannot go to the police to report the crime because they are unable to speak the local language.

1 in 6 European lorry drivers have been attacked over the past five years.

Sources: Eurowatch

# Law enforcement perspective on combating cargo theft

Road freight theft has been on the increase since the 1990s. Initially, the targets were vehicles carrying tobacco, wine and spirits. Criminals, quickly realising how lucrative this type of offence could be, began to target other goods as well. These included electrical goods, memory chips, mobile phones – anything that could be sold easily.

Nowadays criminals often steal to order, anything from clothing and power tools to pharmaceuticals, even scrap metal. About 44% of all freight in Europe is transported by road\*.

*\*source: EUROPOL*

# Law enforcement perspective on combating cargo theft

Criminals view cargo theft as a low-risk, high profit crime. Because the owner of the merchandise in a stolen trailer often does not live in the jurisdiction where the theft takes place, it is perceived as a “victimless” crime. For example a semi-trailer of stolen tobacco products can net € 2.25 million. Besides cigarettes, thieves frequently target lorries carrying electronics, computers, clothing, mobile phones, prescription drugs, jewellery, cosmetics, frozen meat, and tires. Thieves often target parking places for lorries, waiting for drivers to leave they cars parked and unattended. The criminals then unhitch the lorry from its ring, attached it to another cab, and pull the lorry to another location to unload its contents. Thieves tend to steal unmarked lorries parked in a opportune location with a quick access to a major motorway

# Law enforcement perspective on combating cargo theft

Road freight theft is a problem experienced by drivers across the European Union. **Most theft occurs when heavy goods vehicles are left unoccupied overnight in unprotected parking bays.** However, there is an increasing trend towards theft from occupied vehicles. It is thought that experienced lorry hijackers can hijack a vehicle, unload its contents completely and dump the vehicle in less than one hour. The stolen goods are then sold and the profits can be used to fund other types of organised crime.

# Law enforcement perspective on combating cargo theft

*modi operandi*



- Curtain slashing/jump up thefts
- Load diversion
- Deception
- E-enabled crime/Bogus logistic companies
- Gas or explosives
- Impersonation of police/customs officers
- Staged accident
- Forced stop
- Moving vehicle attack
- Target vehicle marking
- Theft of load or loaded vehicles from compound

# What's being done?

## **EUROPOL Cargo Theft Working Group**

-established to look at the issues related to cargo/freight crime on a European level. It consisted of law enforcement representatives from several EU Member States and also members of TAPA EMEA.

This LEA/industry partnership acknowledged the need to work collaboratively in this area, share information and intelligence, in order to combat an area of crime of mutual concern

# Recommendations

## **Report**

Communicate all suspicious activity and theft IMMEDIATELY, as organised thieves are able to off-load goods quickly.

## **Respond**

React to all false alarms as well as real ones. False alarms can be attempted break-ins at the yard or facility.

## **Withhold**

Limit the release of details concerning cargo manifests, truck schedules or facility operations to those who really need to know.

## **Know**

Know who the carrier and the driver is that they are releasing loads to. They should require drivers to submit proper identification when they enter a facility and a vehicle registration certificate. They should ensure background checks on companies and drivers have been undertaken.

# Recommendations

## **Monitor**

Keep an eye on delivery schedules and routes and view overdue shipments and route changes suspiciously. Wireless remote monitoring can help the recovery of stolen cargo.

## **Maintain**

Always maintain the company's safety practices: trucks should be kept locked in the yard; alarm systems should be functioning and monitored by a central station; driving teams should be told that one driver must remain in the cab at all times.

## **Review**

Review security regularly and be prepared to make changes.

# Recommendations

## **Screen**

Use rigorous pre-employment screening processes to keep all potential thieves off of the payroll. They should submit detailed employment applications, a photo and a prior employment history for at least the last 10 years. They should do a credit check and a check for criminal records. They should check employees' and sub-contractors' backgrounds thoroughly, and query any unknown or unexpected driver turning up to collect a load.

## **Communicate**

Communication is critical to good logistics, and good logistics is critical to the safety of cargo in transit. When companies allow their internal communications to break down, logistics suffers and cargo is damaged or stolen. Communication systems not only need to be in place, but must be audited and tested regularly. Plans for handling "exceptions to the rule" and unexpected events should be outlined in advance and understood by everyone.

Employers should communicate security processes regarding the facility and yard, as well as the roles employees are to play in security. Employees should be trained on basic procedures of how to report security incidents.

# Recommendations

## **Control**

Admittance to a facility should be controlled through an access control system such as a swipe card system.

## **Identify**

Establish an identification card system. Cards should be laminated and include a photo of the employee, his or her name, signature and expiration date.

Employers should make it hard for non-authorized employees to obtain blank documents and unnecessary cargo information so they cannot forge paperwork.

## **Inform**

Promote the use of crime stoppers, a confidential hotline number where employees can communicate any knowledge of employee participation in cargo theft without fear of reprisal.



**Thank you**

**Artur Romanowski, MJur**  
**EUROPOL**

**Operations Department**

[www.europol.europa.eu](http://www.europol.europa.eu)

[Artur.Romanowski@europol.europa.eu](mailto:Artur.Romanowski@europol.europa.eu)