

Research Synopsis

NAFTA and Cross-Border Truck Operations Case Study (Bakir)

This Case Study seeks to evaluate the terrorism risks associated with commercial trucks entering the United States through the southern border, and assess the increased risks resulting from NAFTA.

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Brief Description:

The Case Study will examine the cargo security issues arising from Mexican commercial trucks crossing US borders. We will develop a model that examines the risks in the four phases of the transportation process: within the warehouses or factories in Mexico, in transport to the US-Mexico border, during customs inspection, and upon entering the US. It will include a comprehensive overview of threats and vulnerabilities. In light of the 4-year moratorium on the presence of Mexican trucks in the US, and the increased cross-border commerce following NAFTA, we aim to assess the feasibility of bringing these trucks into the country while maximizing the government's ability to deter and intercept smuggling of weapons and nuclear materials. This assessment will include a review of inspections processes on both sides of the border, security challenges faced by Mexican factories, truck drivers and customs brokers, and an evaluation of inspection procedures used by the US Customs and Border Protection (CBP) at the checkpoints along the southern border.

Objectives:

- Gain insights into security breaches in the Mexican truck industry
- Determine effectiveness of current CBP truck security measures
- Identify challenges to improving cargo security prior to border crossing
- Suggest alternatives to increase truck security upon their arrival into the US

Major Products and Customers:

Our major product will be an assessment of all major risks and recommendations for Customs and Border Protection, our primary client. Other potential clients are the Homeland Security offices of the southwestern border states.

Research Methodology:

We will assess cross-border cargo security risks through the following approach:

1. *Literature Review:* We will examine documents that have previously assessed truck security issues. Nonpartisan federal agencies, such as the Governmental Accountability Office (GAO) and the Congressional Research Service (CRS) have released such reports.
2. *Data Collection:* By examining data on inspection rates, drug and weapons seizures at CBP checkpoints, etc., we will evaluate the inspections process and quantify strengths & weaknesses.
3. *Interviews:* Phone and in-person interviews with Department of Homeland Security officials, US truck drivers with driving experience in Mexico, and customs brokers will provide us with insights on the Mexican trucking industry and the border-crossing experience.
4. *Decision Tree Modeling:* We will develop a decision tree model of the end-to-end process, suitable for conducting quantitative risk analysis.
5. *Conclusions and Recommendations:* Finally, we will develop our conclusions and recommendations from the study.