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# Optimizing Cargo Security

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## The Problem

A U.S. government agency was concerned about its cargo security, yet had tight time and budget constraints that precluded any massive changes in its security program.

## The Response

The agency sought the assistance of the Vulnerability Assessment Team (VAT) at Los Alamos National Laboratory. The VAT has extensive experience in performing vulnerability assessments for government agencies and private companies. It offers practical suggestions for improving tamper detection and cargo security.

During 30 days in the winter of 1998, the VAT evaluated the agency's cargo security program with an eye towards offering suggestions that could be incorporated with minimal cost and hassle. Extensive re-training of security and cargo personnel also needed to be avoided.

The VAT visited critical cargo handling facilities, interviewed relevant personnel, reviewed security procedures, and performed laboratory tests and demonstrations on some of the security devices used in the cargo security program.

## The Outcome

The government agency was surprised to learn about some of the easily exploited vulnerabilities demonstrated by the VAT. The VAT generated over 100 suggestions for simple changes that could significantly improve cargo security. A number of these changes are now being implemented, at minimal additional cost or intrusiveness.

These changes include minor modifications to existing security devices, use of additional or complementary tags & seals, enhanced physical security measures, changes in cargo handling procedures, improved containers, and modifications to seal installation and inspection.

Both the agency and the VAT believe these changes will significantly improve cargo security. The cost to the agency for this security analysis was negligible compared to its annual cargo budget, or the potential and consequences of cargo loss.