

DEEP DIVE INTO PORTS &amp; BORDERS

# → MONITORING SALVADORIAN CROSS-BORDER ACTIVITIES WITH COTECNA

An integrated approach for improved efficiency and safer borders

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## SUMMARY

The Republic of El Salvador is the smallest and most densely populated country in Central America. It borders the Pacific Ocean on the south, and shares land borders with the countries of Guatemala to the west, and Honduras to the north and east.

El Salvador has an exceptionally high crime rate. Rated "critical" for crime by the U.S. Department of State, the country is in sore need of the best security equipment available to better safeguard society.

The El Salvadorian Dirección General de Aduanas (Customs Department) has a key role to play in the safety of the country. Responsible for controlling the export, import and transit of goods at all the country's border crossing and entry points, the Department safeguards the country against smuggling, illegal trafficking of narcotics, weapons, contraband and other illegal goods and substances. The detection of undeclared goods and associated tax evasion practices are also under their purview.

## THE CHALLENGE: NON-INTRUSIVE X-RAY INSPECTION OF GOODS WITHOUT CAUSING DELAYS AT CUSTOMS

The most significant border entry and exit points for foreign trade in the country include the Guatemala and Honduras land crossing routes at La Hachadura, Anguiatú, El Poy and El Amtillo, as well as the international airport at Comalapa, sea port at Acajutla and the Dirección General de Aduanas headquarters in the district of San Bartolo in the nation's capital.

Every day, enormous amount of goods are passing through these entry and exit points. Inspection activities are therefore required 24 hours a day, 7 days a week to help to detect threats and pinpoint the movement of illegal goods. At the same time, the control of inspection of traffic needed to be performed without causing delays in Customs operations and procedures and hence, the flow of global trade.

Corruption is also a constant concern in El Salvador, and all Customs are on high alert for such suspicious activity. To avoid any interference and potential collusion with fraudsters, a solution was needed to keep all relevant data and images of vehicle contents securely networked, analysed, managed, and tightly controlled at the Customs Control Centre in San Bartolo.

## THE SOLUTION: INTEGRATED SOLUTIONS AND CENTRALIZED DATA MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

In conjunction with local partner Cotecna, Smiths Detection worked closely with Dirección General de Aduanas on the first turnkey multi-border inspection project to fully safeguard the country's borders.

Consignments travelling through the county are assessed for risk to determine scanning requirements. An integrated approach allows the appropriate level of screening to be applied, ranging from re-checks on different X-ray systems to checks with hand-held equipment to detect traces of explosives on vehicles and palletized cargo.

In total Smiths Detection supplied 21 systems to Cotecna, who financed their purchase; carried out extensive civil engineering and construction works; and subsequently operated them in the country. Three types of high energy scanning systems were specified: Relocatable HCVM T mobile vehicle scanners, for the non-intrusive inspection of cargo and vehicles; HCVL, for the automatic scanning of cars and light vehicles – helping highlight drugs, weapons and undeclared goods in passenger traffic; and HCVP standalone system for high throughput commercial traffic areas.

In addition, HI-SCAN 145180 and HI-SCAN 180180 X-ray machines were chosen to inspect palletized freight and cargo at the Comalapa International Airport and in bonded warehouses throughout the country. The small, handheld SABRE 5000 was also selected, to provide an additional layer of protection, helping to detect and identify trace explosives.

All the high performance X-ray solutions offer superior steel penetration, resulting in high resolution images of vehicles and their contents for quicker analysis of results. Operators are able to perform timely and reliable verification of goods and quickly highlight suspect loads for further detailed manual inspection.

All inspection X-ray images and associated data are processed through a centralised DMS (Dataset Management Systems) and analysed online at the Customs Headquarters Control Centre. The on-site Cotecna operators are responsible for the scanning process, including checking and completing the dataset information (customs declaration, ID container, vehicle license plate and weight where applicable). The verdict is automatically returned to the local scanning site, where local Customs officials proceed with the appropriate procedures.

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#### **THE RESULT: IMPROVED EFFICIENCY, INCREASED TAX COLLECTION AND SAFER BORDERS**

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Smiths Detection's integrated approach and Cotecna's operating know-how have resulted in a significant increase in the throughput of inspected traffic through the various border checkpoints at El Salvador by reducing time associated with lengthy manual inspections. Illegal and undeclared goods have been highlighted and intercepted, increasing valuable tax revenue and ultimately improving the security of foreign trade operations in El Salvador.