

## VI. INITIATIVES OF JAPAN CUSTOMS FOR PREVENTING SMUGGLING

### 1. Effective Use of Control/Inspection Equipment and Advanced Technologies

#### (1) X-ray inspection equipment

Customs has introduced various X-ray inspection equipment in order to inspect commercial cargo, passengers' personal effects, international mail, etc. being imported and exported more speedily and appropriately without opening them. Utilizing such X-ray inspection equipment effectively, Customs endeavors to find and seize smuggled methamphetamine, cannabis and other illicit drugs and firearms.

In consideration of the fact that large containers or containerized cargo are used for smuggling, large-scale X-ray inspection equipment has been introduced at 15 locations (13 ports) nationwide, since its first introduction in Yokohama Port in 2001. Previously, it took around 2 hours to bring out and inspect all cargo of one container, but thanks to the introduction of this large-scale equipment, it became possible to complete an inspection of one container in around 10 minutes, and the time required for inspections was thus reduced significantly.

Recently, X-ray CT inspection equipment, with which the inside of cargo can be visualized in 3D X-ray CT images, are also being introduced and utilized. Furthermore, in order to cope with increasingly sophisticated smuggling tactics for illicit drugs, etc., Customs is working on study and research for achieving automatic detection of illicit drugs by the use of information obtained through X-ray CT inspection equipment and advanced technologies, such as AI.



## **(2) Support for examinations of X-ray inspection images by the use of AI**

The use of AI makes it possible to process and analyze a large volume of data, such as images and texts, at high speed, and is expected to sophisticate and improve the efficiency of customs services. Customs has developed and is utilizing AI that identifies the content of international mail based on X-ray inspection images.

## **(3) Customs' patrol boats**

Customs' patrol boats are utilized to surveil a wide area and crack down on smuggling at seaports or trade on the sea that uses fishing boats.



## **(4) Drug detector dogs**



The first two drug detector dogs were introduced with the cooperation of the US customs in 1979. At present, approx. 130 dogs are stationed at customs offices nationwide. They are mainly used for inspections of passengers' personal effects and international mail, etc. and have contributed to a number of seizures of cannabis, methamphetamine or other illicit drugs. In 2002, dogs were introduced to detect explosives as part of counterterrorism measures, and in 2024, currency dogs were also introduced for the purpose of cracking down on the illegal taking out of cash abroad.

## **(5) Port monitoring camera systems**

Since March 1996, highly sensitive monitoring cameras with night vision have been introduced at major seaports to tighten surveillance of vessels, movement of goods, and persons at the port areas.



## (6) Metal detector gates

Metal detector gates were first introduced in 2017 as countermeasures against the smuggling of gold bullion, and have already been introduced at airports and ports nationwide. Compared with conventional hand-held metal detectors, metal detector gates enable stricter regulations through swift customs clearing targeting a larger number of passengers, without the need to stop the procedural flow.



## (7) Illicit drugs and explosives detector systems

Illicit drugs and explosives detector system (TDS; Trace Detection System) detects concealed methamphetamine, other illicit drugs, and explosives through the procedures of wiping the surface of commercial cargo, passengers' personal effects, and international mail, etc. being imported or exported, ionizing collected specimens, and analyzing their mass. The TDS has contributed to seizures of a large amount of methamphetamine and other illicit drugs. As the TDS enables detection of concealed illicit drugs and explosives in a short time without destroying inspection targets, swift and strict inspections have become possible.



## (8) Electronic Customs Declaration Gate System



As of April 2025, the Electronic Customs Declaration Gate System (e-Gate) is operating at Narita Airport, Haneda Airport, Kansai Airport, Chubu Airport, Fukuoka Airport, New Chitose Airport and Naha Airport. A passenger can complete the submission of "Declaration of Accompanied Articles and Unaccompanied Articles" by having an electronic declaration terminal scan the IC passport and the QR code created using "Visit Japan Web," and taking the customs entry procedures in accordance with the terminal's instructions. During this process, face photos are taken to verify identification with the photo in the IC passport. After completing the procedures at the terminal, the passenger is asked to go to the electronic declaration gate. The passenger may simply pass through the gate as face photos are taken once again for facial recognition.



(Please log in to the Visit Japan Web service from here!)



## (9) Integrated KIOSKs



The Japan Customs and the Immigration Services Agency have commenced the operation of the integrated KIOSKs, which can provide information required for customs and immigration procedures all at once, at Kansai Airport, Haneda Airport, and Narita Airport (limited to Terminal 3) as of April 2025, as a new interministerial initiative with the aim of making procedures more convenient for passengers and further enhancing the efficiency of border controls.

The integrated KIOSK can provide passport information, a face photo (and a finger print for immigration procedures for a foreign national), and self-reported information all at once, which have so far been provided separately by the Japan Customs and the Immigration Services Agency, thereby achieving the elimination of duplication and shortening of the time required for customs and immigration procedures.

## (10) Smart glasses

Customs aims to develop a system for more efficient and effective examinations and inspections through having staff members remotely share information on a real-time basis by the use of smart glasses. For example, cargo inspectors conduct inspections while remotely collaborating with examiners and other staff with abundant expertise and experience.



## (11) Utilization of digital forensics

Digital forensics are techniques and procedures for analyzing electromagnetic records to prove crimes. Information collected from digital data of communication equipment that was used in a crime often serves as significant objective evidence for solving the crime. With further advancement of ICT in society and economy, such information and digital forensics are expected to become even more significant.

## 2. Customs Controls by Utilizing Information

### (1) Utilization of the information system

The Customs Intelligence Database System (CIS)—a computerized system capable of sorting out and managing a wide variety of information, such as customs clearance for exports and imports as well as ship entries and departures—has been introduced at customs offices throughout the nation. Through the improvement and reinforcement of the system for intelligence analysis, processing, and management, intensive and efficient border control of smuggling is being carried out.

### (2) Utilization of prior information

For effective and efficient border control, enforcement activities actively utilizing prior information, such as passenger name records (information on passenger reservation and boarding procedures held by airline companies), are being conducted.

### (3) Development of the Customs controls system

Each customs office has the Customs Intelligence in charge of handling smuggling-related information with an appointed Customs Intelligence Manager. Additionally, the National Intelligence & Targeting Center, which conducts nationwide collection and analysis of information, was established and has been comprehensively managing and analyzing smuggling-related information received from domestic law enforcement authorities, such as the police and the Japan Coast Guard, as well as from foreign customs and other sources. In this manner, efforts have been made to reinforce the capacity to collect and analyze information.

In order to cope with organized and large-scale smuggling cases, the Criminal Investigation Center and the Customs Surveillance and Control Center were established. In close collaboration among these three Centers, efficient and effective enforcement activities have been conducted against cases involving two or more jurisdictions.

### (4) Strengthened cooperation with various related organizations for better information collection

Customs has concluded Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) with various related organizations, thereby strengthening cooperative relationships with private companies and bodies as part of border control measures to prevent terrorism and entries of articles prohibited from import or export under laws and regulations.

The Customs and Tariff Bureau has concluded MOUs with the following 12 organizations and 3 private companies.

The Japanese Shipowners' Association; The Scheduled Airlines Association of Japan;  
Japan Air Cargo Forwarders Association; Japan Customs Brokers Association;  
Japan Foreign Steamship Association; Japan Fisheries Association;  
Japan Oceangoing Passenger Ship Association; All Nippon Hotel Association;  
Japan Ryokan & Hotel Association; All Japan Ryokan Hotel Association;  
National Federation of Fisheries Co-operative Associations; and  
Japan Marine Recreation Association; and  
Amazon Japan G.K.; Japan Post Co., Ltd.; and Rakuten Group, Inc. (As of April, 2025)

### (5) Enhancement of collection of information from the public

Ongoing efforts to gather information from the public throughout the nation include the opening of a single toll-free telephone number accessible 24 hours a day from everywhere across the nation, the distribution of leaflets, and public relations activities such as those regarding law enforcement countermeasures at the border by using posters, the Japan Customs' website, and various social media services (X, Facebook, and YouTube).

[Leaflet]



[Posters]



\* In addition, materials for port-related organizations and fishery cooperatives, for logistics companies and warehouse companies, and for accommodation suppliers have been made and distributed.

[Customs YouTube Channel]



[Tekken × Japan Customs]

Protect and take over our daily living

Access to videos  
Customs YouTube Channel



[Customs X]



[Customs Facebook]



@Custom\_kun

SMUGGLING - HOTLINE  
(24 hours a day: toll-free)

**0 1 2 0 - 4 6 1 - 9 6 1**

(Call Customs, Ministry of Finance, for information on smuggling.)

Customs website  
<https://www.customs.go.jp/>



Webpage for information provision  
<https://www.customs.go.jp/quest/index.htm>



### 3. Closer Cooperation with Relevant Agencies

#### (1) Border controls through cooperation with relevant agencies

With the aim of imposing effective controls at the border, Customs, police, Coast Guard, and other relevant organizations are conducting joint training and joint operations in close cooperation, while each makes full use of their own information, equipment, jurisdiction, and experience.



#### (2) Holding of Law Enforcement Meeting on Measures against Smuggling

The Customs and Tariff Bureau of the Ministry of Finance organizes the Law Enforcement Meeting on Measures against Smuggling with the aim of strengthening cooperation with the ministries and agencies concerned and promoting the exchange of information needed to interdict smuggling cases. Thus, information exchange is being promoted at the national level. Regional customs offices also organize regional law enforcement meetings on smuggling with the law enforcement authorities concerned to promote information exchange at the regional level.



## 4. Promotion of International Information Exchange

### (1) Promotion of information exchange with foreign customs administrations

As the single contact point of Japan Customs for information exchange with foreign customs administrations, the International Intelligence Office was established in the National Intelligence & Targeting Center. Japan Customs has been continuing its efforts to promote the establishment of an international framework of customs cooperation with foreign countries, such as Customs Mutual Assistance Agreements (hereinafter referred to as "CMAAs"), which include provisions for information exchange concerning the smuggling of illicit goods (e.g. illicit drugs) (See "Present Status of the Customs Mutual Assistance Agreements, etc.").

Utilizing international networks, including the ones managed by the World Customs Organization (WCO) and the Regional Intelligence Liaison Office (RILO) for Asia and the Pacific, Japan Customs exchanges smuggling-related information and intelligence with foreign customs administrations and other law enforcement authorities.

(Reference) RILO (Regional Intelligence Liaison Office)

The RILO is the base for the WCO regional projects, which was established for the purpose of promoting information exchange on illicit drugs among customs administrations in the region and improving the intelligence analysis on the trends of smuggling in the region. The RILO for Asia and the Pacific, in which Japan Customs has a membership, was established as the first RILO of the world in December 1987. It has analyzed trends in smuggling within the region based on reports from participating countries and regions on interdicted cases of smuggling of illicit drugs and related objects, has distributed the results to participating countries and other organizations, and has facilitated information exchange among participating customs. The office of the RILO for Asia and the Pacific was relocated to Japan in January 2024. The office is expected to function as an information hub among relevant countries and regions and, thereby, further strengthen Japan's information-gathering network.

### (2) Information exchange under CMAAs

Japan Customs is working toward new CMAAs in order to facilitate information exchange with the source or transit countries of illicit drugs and firearms, and is also committed to further promoting information exchange through the existing CMAAs.

(Reference) Customs Mutual Assistance Agreements

A Customs Mutual Assistance Agreement is an international agreement that includes the provision of the mutual assistance by the customs authorities of the Contracting Parties for the prevention of smuggling of goods harmful to society and strict border control against goods infringing intellectual property rights, and also provides for cooperation in simplification and harmonization of customs procedures.

### (3) Collection of smuggling-related information through the dispatch of officers

Customs officers are sent to the countries and regions that are likely to be sources for illicit drugs, etc. smuggled into Japan to collect information on smuggling. In addition, efforts are being made to establish mutual cooperative relations with the foreign customs administrations. Japan Customs also dispatches officers specialized in intelligence analysis to the countries and regions which are tackling offenses related to illicit drugs smuggling to exchange views on the analysis of intelligence on source countries of smuggling, etc.

#### (4) Participation in international conferences

Japan Customs is actively taking part in international conferences (including online participation), such as the Enforcement Committee of the WCO for discussing ideal international cooperation in customs surveillance and control, WCO Asia/Pacific Regional Contact Points Meeting for exchanging information on smuggling among the customs of the region, and the UN Commission on Narcotic Drugs, to exchange opinions and information on control of illicit drugs with the authorities of various countries.



Present Status of the Customs Mutual Assistance Agreements, etc. (As of June 2025)

<p>Enforcing or signed (41 countries and regions<sup>(Note1)</sup>)</p>	<p>&lt; Customs Mutual Assistance Agreements (CMAAs) &gt; U.S.A. (Jun. 1997), Republic of Korea (Dec. 2004), China (Apr. 2006), EU (Feb. 2008), Russia (May 2009), the Netherlands (Mar. 2010), Italy (Apr. 2012), South Africa (Jul. 2012), Germany (Dec. 2014), Spain (May 2015), <u>Norway (Sept. 2016)</u>, <u>Mexico (Jul. 2018)</u>, <u>Uzbekistan (Dec. 2019)</u>, <u>UK (Jan. 2021)</u>, <u>Brazil (Sept. 2021)</u>, <u>Uruguay (Oct. 2021)</u>, <u>Moldova (Jun. 2022)</u>, <u>Bangladesh (Apr. 2023)</u>, <u>Bolivia (Jun. 2023)</u>, and <u>Iran (Jun. 2025)</u></p> <p>&lt; EPAs<sup>(Note 2)</sup> &gt; Singapore (Nov. 2002), Malaysia (Jul. 2006), Thailand (Nov. 2007), Indonesia (Jul. 2008), Brunei Darussalam (Jul. 2008), the Philippines (Dec. 2008), Switzerland (Sept. 2009), Vietnam (Oct. 2009), <u>India (Aug. 2011; May 2022, revised)</u>, Peru (Mar. 2012), <u>Australia (Jan. 2015)</u>, Mongolia (Jun. 2016), and CPTPP<sup>(*)</sup></p> <p>(*) CPTPP participants: Mexico (Dec. 2018), Singapore (Dec. 2018), New Zealand (Dec. 2018), Canada (Dec. 2018), Australia (Dec. 2018), Vietnam (Jan. 2019), Peru (Sep. 2021), Malaysia (Nov. 2022), Chile (Feb. 2023), Brunei Darussalam (Jul. 2023), and UK (Dec. 2024)<sup>(Note 3)</sup></p> <p>&lt; Administrative Arrangements &gt; <u>Australia (Jun. 2003; Jul. 2017, revised)</u>, <u>New Zealand (Apr. 2004; Jun. 2014, revised)</u>, Canada (Jun. 2005), Hong Kong; China (Jan. 2008), Macau; China (Sept. 2008), <u>France (Jun. 2012)</u>, <u>Belgium (Jul. 2017)</u>, and <u>Austria (May 2019)</u></p> <p>&lt; Others &gt; Chinese Taipei (Nov. 2017)<sup>(Note 4)</sup></p>
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(Note 1) A country with which Japan has concluded multiple frameworks in different formats is counted as one. (e.g. with Australia, Japan has concluded an EPA, CPTPP and administrative arrangement.)

(Note 2) EPAs listed here are those incorporating provisions concerning customs mutual assistance.

(Note 3) The CPTPP has become effective for the participants, other than the UK, that have reported the completion of their procedures under domestic laws to New Zealand, the Depositary of the Agreement.

The CPTPP will become effective between the UK and other participants as they individually ratify the UK's accession.

(Note 4) A private sector arrangement signed between the Japan-Taiwan Exchange Association and the Taiwan-Japan Relations Association

(Note 5) The year and month in the parentheses show when the agreement came into effect.

(Note 6) Those underlined incorporate the content of the amendment of the Customs Act in FY2012 for the purpose of enhancing information exchange with foreign customs administrations.

## **(5) Customs technical cooperation project for enhancing border control capabilities**

Japan Customs has been dedicated to customs technical cooperation with the aim of enhancing the comprehensive ability of the customs of developing countries based on their needs and in light of the diplomatic policies of the government of Japan. Specifically, Japan Customs invites customs officials from developing countries to Japan to provide training and dispatches its staff as lecturers to the customs of developing countries.

The enhancement of border control capabilities of the customs of developing countries eventually contributes to the prevention of smuggling and the fight against terrorism to be promoted through global cooperation among the customs of individual countries, and is indispensable in achieving a safe and secure society not only for developing countries but also for Japan. Therefore, Japan Customs has been actively offering technical support in such fields as collection and analysis of information, risk management, and surveillance and control regarding illicit drug smuggling.