



ASIA/PACIFIC CUSTOMS NEWS

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FEATURE

*Critical Role of
Detector Dogs in
Border Protection*

*Unleashing
the **POWER** of
Detector Dogs*

REGIONAL NEWS

*The Sixth WCO
Global Canine Forum
in Hong Kong, China*

SPOTLIGHT

*Fiji Honours First Female
Dog Handler in the Pacific*

*25th WCO Asia/Pacific
Regional Heads of Customs
Administration Conference
Sydney, Australia 2024*

DETECTOR DOGS

Growth | Security | Unity | Prosperity



ASIA/PACIFIC CUSTOMS NEWS

Volume #71 March / April 2024

DETECTOR DOGS

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CONTENTS

MESSAGES FROM THE OFFICE OF THE WCO ASIA/PACIFIC VICE-CHAIR	4
DETECTOR DOGS FEATURE	6
MESSAGE FROM ABF SUPERINTENDENT GREG DOWSE (DETECTOR DOG PROGRAM)	7
The Critical Role of Detector Dogs in Border Protection	7
Unleashing the Power of Detector Dogs: Enhancing Customs Security and Efficiency	12
IN FOCUS: Indonesia's Directorate General of Customs & Excise K-9 Unit	14
REGIONAL NEWS, EVENTS & CAPACITY BUILDING	17
The Sixth Global Canine Forum in Hong Kong, China 5-7 March 2024	18
New Zealand Customs Service: Dogs Disrupting Crime Across the Pacific	20
SPOTLIGHT: Fiji Honours First Female Narcotic Dog Handler in the Pacific	22
Current Status of Drug Detector Dogs in Japan	25
25TH ASIA/PACIFIC REGIONAL HEADS OF CUSTOMS ADMINISTRATION CONFERENCE	26
IN DEPTH: India Customs Canine Squad – the Force Multiplier	30
ABF Detector Dog Program: Engaging Traditional and New Partners	34
UPCOMING WCO EVENTS	36
MESSAGE FROM THE SECRETARIAT OFFICE	37
NOTES	38

Message from the Secretariat Office of the WCO Asia/Pacific Regional Vice-Chair

Ms Kimberlee Clydesdale

Assistant Secretary, Customs & Trade Policy Branch, Strategy & Policy Division Australian Border Force (ABF)

Dear WCO Asia/Pacific Colleagues,



*Kimberlee Clydesdale,
Assistant Secretary,
Customs and Trade Policy ABF
**WCO Asia/Pacific Vice-Chair
Secretariat for 2022-2024***

Welcome to Volume #71 of the World Customs Organization (WCO) Asia/Pacific (A/P) Customs News. This Issue highlights the key events from our Region from March and April this year. The last few months have been a very busy but exciting time for our Region and one of the highlights for me is the 25th Regional Heads of Customs Administrations (RHCA) Conference held in Sydney, Australia from 14-18 April 2024. We welcomed more than 100 delegates to Sydney and I am so grateful to those who journeyed to the land down under (a familiar song will come to mind to all those who attended the 25th RHCA) and all participants (including those online) who joined us to discuss matters of great importance to our Region. You will find a photo gallery of the 25th RHCA in this Issue and we have included a QR code that you can scan to play the wrap-up video of the Conference.

Volume #71 of our A/P Customs News is dedicated to our loveable, and everyone's favourite, *Detector Dogs*. Detector dogs have been utilised in customs and law enforcement agencies for decades, but their importance has grown exponentially in recent years. Historically, dogs have served in various capacities, from hunting to search and rescue. Their extraordinary sense of smell, estimated to be between 10,000 to 100,000 times more sensitive than humans, make them ideal for detecting minuscule traces of prohibited items. In the customs environment, Detector Dogs play an important role in assisting Customs Officers in detecting illicit goods such as drugs, firearms, explosives, tobacco and currencies at or beyond the border. Detector Dog teams screen people, cargo, mail, vessels, aircraft and premises at international airports, seaports and mail centres, and licensed cargo depots. In our Region alone, we now have five WCO-accredited Regional Detector Dog Training Centres (RDTCs) in the Asia/Pacific – including, Australia; China; Hong Kong, China; Indonesia; and, Korea – developing sophisticated canine units that are integral to our customs operations. These RDTCs are continually adapting to address emerging threats and challenges in the global landscape.

The articles in this Issue highlight the continued importance of our Detector Dogs, their help securing our Region and the wonderful bond between dogs and their handlers. We hope that you enjoy this Issue as much as my team and I did putting this together. We hope that you like the photos of Detector Dogs that we incorporated in this Issue – it was a source of joy for all of us here in the Office.

As always, I thank everyone who contributed to this Issue. It was a pleasure to engage with your Offices. We still have one more Issue to publish in our capacity as your Asia/Pacific Vice-Chair Office. Stay tuned for Volume #72 – our farewell Issue to the Region.

I wish you all well and I am sure that I will see most of you again either in person or online as we continue to drive the Region's growth, security, unity and prosperity.

Message from the WCO Asia/Pacific Vice-Chair

Mr Michael Outram APM

Australian Border Force (ABF) Commissioner and Comptroller-General of Customs

Dear Colleagues,

Welcome to Volume #71 of the Asia/Pacific Customs News focusing on Detector Dogs.

In the vast and dynamic landscape of the Asia/Pacific region, international trade and travel have grown significantly over recent years. This surge in movement brings with it a host of challenges for customs authorities tasked with safeguarding borders, ensuring the flow of legitimate trade, and preventing the smuggling of illicit goods. Among the most effective and invaluable tools in this complex mission are Detector Dogs.

Detector Dogs, with their exceptional olfactory capabilities, have become essential assets in customs operations across the globe. Trained to identify a wide range of substances, from narcotics and explosives to currency and agricultural products, Detector Dogs enhance the efficiency and accuracy of inspections at airports, seaports, and border passages.

The success of Detector Dogs in our Region is a testament to the rigorous training programs and innovative practices adopted by customs agencies. Our Region have dedicated canine units and together with our five World Customs Organization (WCO)-accredited training centres are integral to our customs operations. These dogs undergo specialised training regimes, often starting from a young age, to refine their natural abilities and adapt to various detection scenarios. Their handlers, equally well trained, form a bond with their canine partners, creating a seamless and effective detection team. Those of you who attended the 33rd Regional Contact Points in person last year were able to witness the daily routines of the dogs and handlers in the training centre in Melbourne.

Beyond their practical applications, Detector Dogs play a crucial role in maintaining national security and public safety. They deter illicit activities by their mere presence, contributing to a safer environment for international trade and travel. Furthermore, their non-intrusive inspection methods are preferable in many situations, ensuring minimal disruption to legitimate business and passenger flow.

The role of Detector Dogs in customs within the Asia/Pacific Region also underscores the importance of international cooperation. Regional forums and training centres facilitate the exchange of knowledge and best practices, fostering a collaborative approach to combating transnational crime. These cooperative efforts enhance the capabilities of customs authorities, ensuring that Detector Dog programs remain at the forefront of technological and methodological advancements.

As we move forward, the importance of Detector Dogs in customs operations will only continue to grow. Their unparalleled detection capabilities, efficiency, and versatility, combined with ongoing innovations in training and deployment strategies, will ensure they remain a cornerstone of border security not just in the Asia/Pacific Region but also across the world. As challenges in international security and trade evolve, the role of Detector Dogs will continue to be vital, ensuring that the region remains secure, and prosperous. I acknowledge the pivotal role of these remarkable animals and their handlers, whose dedication and expertise contribute significantly to the safety and integrity of our Region.



*ABF Commissioner and
Comptroller-General Customs,
Michael Outram APM,
**WCO Asia/Pacific Vice-Chair
for 2022-2024***

DETECTOR DOGS



The Critical Role of Detector Dogs in Border Protection

An overview of the role Detector Dogs play in protecting the border continuum, challenges faced in canine programs, and international projects and initiatives supporting global capability and capacity building



“If you want to go fast, go alone; if you want to go far, go together.”

Ancient African Proverb

Overview of the role of Detector Dogs

As stewards of the national border, Customs administrations must balance the role of enforcement with the role of facilitating trade and the movement of people, in an efficient and effective way in order to achieve better economic outcomes for our respective countries.

These roles aren't mutually exclusive, and we must continue to innovate, collaborate

and leverage proven capabilities such as Detector Dogs – not just in terms of enforcement and facilitation, but also in response to current and emerging threats.

Transnational and serious organised crime groups generate significant revenue from a range of illicit trade, including commodities such as synthetic drugs. Their business models are predicated on identifying profitable markets, and exploiting vulnerabilities and complexities within the global supply chain and those who operate within it, including our Customs administrations and Border agencies.

Dogs possess an extraordinary sense of smell, estimated to be between 10,000 and 100,000 times more sensitive than that of humans. This remarkable olfactory capability allows them to detect tiny traces of substances, making them perfect for working across the border continuum to detect target odours from items such as narcotics, currency, firearms, tobacco and explosives.

Here in Australia and overseas, Detector Dogs are trained and able to detect multiple target odours (e.g. narcotics, currency and firearms).

Written by Superintendent Greg Dowse Detector Dog Program (DDP) Australian Border Force (ABF)

/ Edited by Marivi Martin ABF Assistant Director

Image above: Delegates at the 33rd Asia/Pacific Regional Contact Points Meeting pose for a group photo during a site visit to the ABF national Detector Dog Program facility in Melbourne, November 2023

Image on previous page: A Detector Dog and handler in the field take a break between inspections

The ABF Detector Dog Program (DDP) provides a deterrence effect at the border, and an invaluable non-intrusive mass screening tool that can be deployed with agility across multiple operating environments. Detector Dogs often complement technological screening, and in some cases they are used when other technological solutions can't be – thus creating a multi-layered approach.



Image: A prospective Detector Dog pup in training poses for a photo

Furthermore, our Detector Dogs and their handlers provide a positive public image for the ABF as a professional, contemporary and respected capability, both domestically and internationally. Handlers must be able to read their dogs' signals accurately and respond appropriately. The bond between a handler and their dog is profound, built on trust, continuous training, and the symbiotic relationship and ultimate reward of finding targeted goods.

Organisational Challenges

Noting the many benefits of using Detector Dogs, establishing and maintaining an effective Detector Dog program is not without its challenges, some of which include:

- Establishing an appropriate governance and regulatory framework that provides the requisite legislative powers, policy and procedural instructions; ongoing funding to sustain the program; and suitable risk and resilience management protocols;
- Building and maintaining fit-for-purpose infrastructure to kennel, feed, care for and support operational dogs, and, in the case of the ABF and some other Customs administrations, additional infrastructure for breeding and development, or training of dogs and handlers;
- Critical to the success of a Detector Dog program is the ability to continually source and train high-quality dogs, and then maintain their ongoing capability. This may include, for example, access to real narcotics or other commodities for use as training aides, rather than pseudo or synthetic training aids, and allowing dogs to train on live seizures in operational environments.
- Noting the varied operating domains our dogs regularly deploy across, and potential contact with different high-risk environments, there is a need to manage the potential risk of injury or exposure to harmful substances. The health and wellbeing of dogs, not only during their working career but also throughout their retirement, is critically important.
- The need for timely and actionable intelligence-informed taskings and reports to ensure that Detector Dogs are at the right place, at the right time, with the right capability and information to safely, efficiently and effectively support operational activities is crucial. Ultimately, this increases the probability of making detections and reduces the risk to both our people and our dogs.
- Finally, while several factors related to Detector Dog programs have not changed in decades, with the rapid change in trade and travel with the developments in artificial intelligence, science and other advanced technologies, there is a need to continually innovate, collaborate and share best practices.



International canine initiatives and projects

For over ten years, the WCO has been implementing a policy of **technical assistance** for customs canine units, through diagnostic missions, the creation of a network of accredited **Regional Dog Training Centers** (RDTCs), and holding a **Global Canine Forum** every two years.

The WCO, in collaboration with the Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL) of the United States (US) Department of State, has implemented the **Synthetic Drugs Detection Project**.

Through a multi-jurisdictional approach, this project is intended to reduce synthetic drug manufacture and trafficking by strengthening internal coordination and international cooperation, with three areas of focus: **General Aviation, Mail Channel and Canine**.

The ABE, including the DDP, as a WCO-accredited Regional Dog Training Centre (RDTc) in the Asia/Pacific Region, was honoured to host a **WCO INL Canine Expert Working Group** event in Australia in February this year.

Image: A Detector Dog and handler on the frontlines at an international airport inspects passenger baggage for illicit and prohibitive substances

The Critical Role of Detector Dogs in Border Protection

(Continued from page 9)

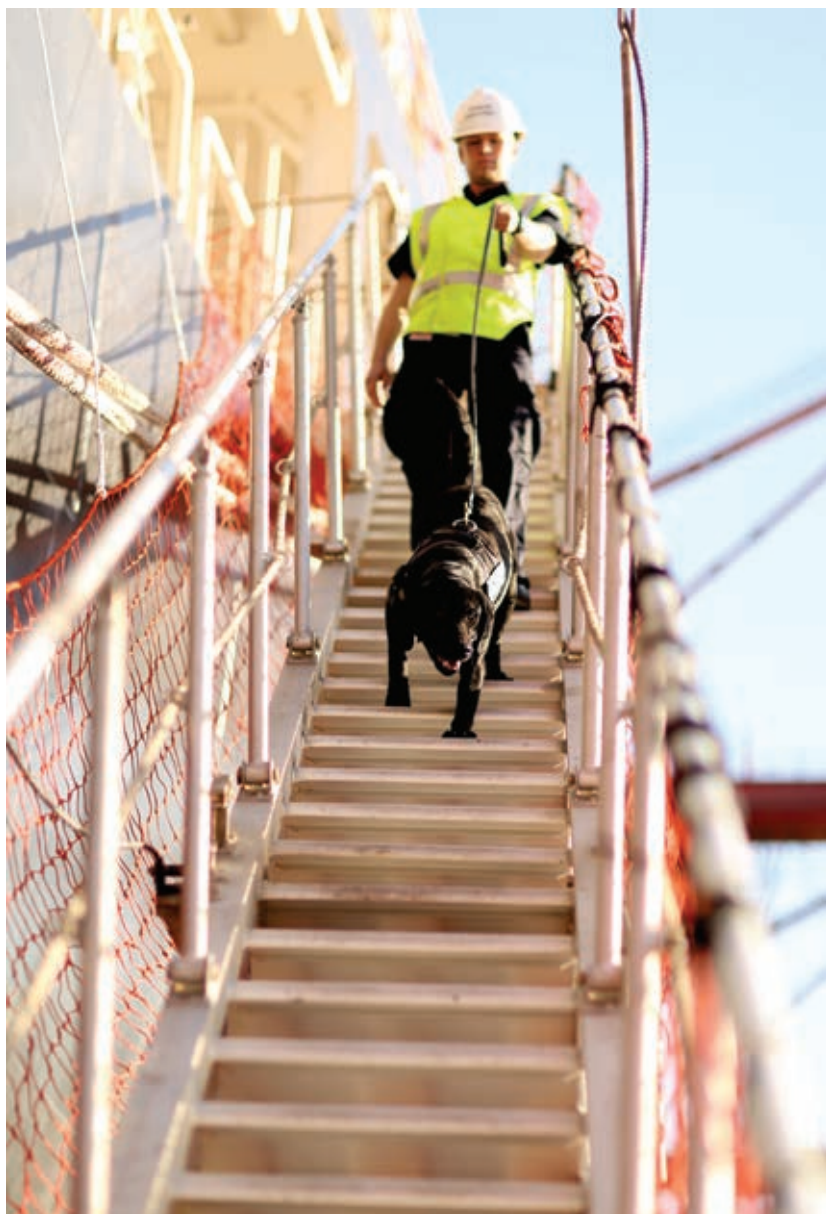


Image: A Detector Dog and handler on the frontlines inspects a cargo ship docked at an international port of entry for illicit and prohibitive substances

The event was attended by 22 delegates from the ABF, WCO, INL and an additional eight countries' Customs administrations – including: Brazil; the Czech Republic; Germany; Hong Kong, China; Hungary; New Zealand; the United Kingdom; and, the United States of America (US).

As a collective of subject matter experts and representatives in support of the canine component of the Synthetic Drugs Detection Project, work is underway to develop resource materials that can be used by WCO Member Administrations, including RDTc's, to enhance international canine capability, national and regional training – particularly in response to the ongoing threat of synthetic drugs – and other items that cause harm to our communities.

This project also featured at the March **2024 WCO 6th Global Canine Forum** in Hong Kong, China, which provided an opportunity for the WCO and participating Customs administrations to discuss Detector Dog operations and developments, trends, challenges and opportunities for Detector Dog programs, ways to enhance efficiency, and best practice in breeding and training.

Conclusion

As the ancient African proverb at the beginning of this article encapsulates, traditional 'siloed' approaches are inadequate in the face of the growing number of interconnected and global threats. No single organisation possesses all the requisite skills, experience, resources or capabilities, including Detector Dogs, to confront this challenge in isolation.

If we are to make any significant impacts against our adversaries, and in the complex world in which we operate, we must take the time to work collaboratively and to ensure each of us are capable to respond to the challenges of current and any emerging threats, so we can continue to play a crucial part in protecting our borders and communities.



The ABF stands ready to perform a key role in supporting the Synthetic Drugs Detection Project and other key international canine initiatives, forums and establishments. Delivery of this multidisciplinary strategy will further our ability to come together as a collective canine ecosystem – a network of networks – united in purpose, diversity, and resourcefulness, and greater than the sum of its parts.



Image: A Detector Dog and handler in the field take a moment to pose for a photo during sea cargo inspections

Image: Detector Dog Program Superintendent Greg Dowse, Australian Border Force (ABF)

Unleashing the Power of Detector Dogs: Enhancing Customs Security and Efficiency

The global effort to address the cross-cutting issues of climate change has seen the role of Customs evolve to include how Customs administrations can take steps to mitigate and adapt to climate change and its impacts



*Written by Mr Mahesh Jandera,
Assistant Commissioner,
Directorate of Logistics,
Central Board of Indirect Taxes
& Customs (CBIC)*

*/ Edited by Marivi Martin
ABF Assistant Director*

*Image: An CBIC Detector Dog
Unit searches through cargo for
prohibited substances in a mail
holding facility in India*

Detector Dogs, often referred to as a Customs Officer's 'best friend', play a pivotal role in safeguarding borders, intercepting contraband, and ensuring compliance with Customs regulations. With their exceptional olfactory senses and unwavering dedication, these four-legged Officers contribute significantly to enhancing security and efficiency at border crossings and Customs control.

The utilisation of Detector Dogs in Customs operations is rooted in their remarkable ability to detect a wide range of illicit goods, including narcotics, explosives, currency, and wildlife products within a mixture of aromas. Their keen sense of smell enables them to detect even trace amounts of concealed substances, making

them invaluable assets in the fight against smuggling and illicit trade.

One of the key advantages of deploying Detector Dogs is their non-intrusive nature, which allows for swift and targeted inspections without causing significant disruptions to legitimate trade flows. By quickly and accurately identifying suspicious items, Detector Dogs enable Customs Officers to focus their resources on high-risk shipments, thereby improving the effectiveness of Customs control measures.

Furthermore, the presence of Detector Dogs serve as a powerful deterrent to would-be smugglers, deterring illicit activities and reducing the incidence of Customs violations. Their mere presence at border crossings

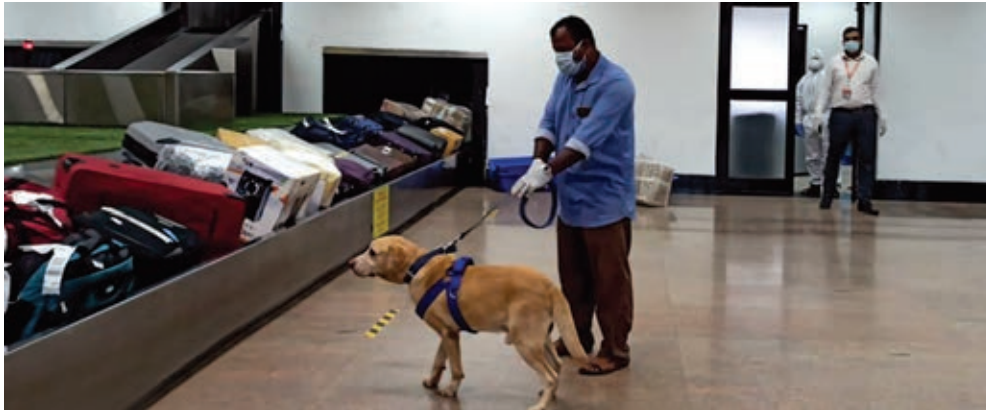


Image above: A Detector Dog inspects luggage at airport baggage collection carousel at Trivandrum Airport

Image below: A Detector Dog and handler undergo training at the CBIC Customs Canine Centre in Attari, India



sends a strong message that Customs authorities are vigilant and capable of detecting illicit goods, thereby enhancing the overall security posture of Customs administrations.

In addition to their role in enforcement activities, Detector Dogs also contribute to enhancing Customs efficiency by expediting the clearance process for compliant travellers and shipments. Their ability to rapidly scan cargo, luggage, and vehicles enables Customs Officers to identify legitimate passengers and goods quickly, facilitating smoother and more efficient border crossings.

To maximise the effectiveness of Detector Dog programs, Customs administrations

invest in comprehensive training programs for both handlers and dogs, ensuring that they are equipped with the necessary skills and capabilities to perform their duties effectively. Ongoing training and certification processes are essential to maintaining the proficiency and reliability of Detector Dog teams over time.

In conclusion, Detector Dogs are indispensable assets in modern Customs operations, playing a vital role in enhancing security, combating illicit trade, and facilitating legitimate trade flows. By leveraging their unparalleled olfactory abilities and unwavering dedication, Customs administrations can strengthen border controls, safeguard communities, and uphold the integrity of the global supply chain.

IN FOCUS

Indonesia's Directorate General of Customs & Excise K-9 Unit:

Protecting the country from drug smuggling across land borders and via maritime routes



*Submitted by
Indonesia's Directorate General
of Customs & Excise
(DGCE)*

*/ Edited by Marivi Martin
ABF Assistant Director*

*Image: An DGCE Detector Dog
Unit searches through cargo
for prohibited substances at a
maritime port of entry*

The Directorate General of Customs and Excise (DGCE) K-9 Unit, established in 1981, was first deployed at Soekarno-Hatta International Airport. The K-9 Unit is considered as one of the most important capabilities supporting DGCE in conducting effective inspections. With a sense of smell that is 10,000 times greater than humans, K9s can detect very minor traces of illicit substances.

Over time, Indonesia Customs has significantly expanded its Detector Dog Unit nationwide, to safeguard Indonesian society from harmful substances such as drugs, explosives, and other illicit goods. As of 2024, the DGCE K-9 Unit boasts a total of 87 handlers, including 12 female handlers, and 66 active dogs. This includes 19 dogs and 31 handlers stationed at headquarters, and 47 dogs with 56 handlers distributed across various DGCE regional offices covering the

expansive Indonesian Archipelago, spanning 1.9 million square kilometres. While primarily deployed to support operations at international airports, the DGCE K-9 units have also developed advanced programs tailored for land and sea border operations. This article provides an overview of the Border Dog and Sea Patrol Dog Patrol Programs.

Dog Training Program 2024

A basic course for detector dogs is designed to improve the ability of narcotics detection. The course takes 12 weeks to complete; eight weeks with the instructor and instructor assistant and four weeks with experienced dog handlers. Following the basic training course, the dogs are trained to specialise in various fields such as containers, marine, border, and sea patrol as well as an advanced training program for currency dogs.



In 2024, the DGCE K-9 Unit has two flagship programs to enhance the supervision of narcotics' smuggling. These initiatives include the Border Dog Program, which focuses on land borders in North Kalimantan (Segumon and Entikong), and the Sea Patrol Dog Program, conducted in collaboration with Marine Customs patrols.

Border Dog Program

The Border Dog Program, initiated in 2019, includes a one-week training session for self-defense in forest environments and vehicle tracking. This is followed by an additional week of training in operational areas covering both official and unofficial land borders. The Program includes advanced instruction in field tracking techniques, such as uncovering modus operandi of buried contraband, with all training conducted at the Cross Border Post. In 2023, the DGCE K-9 Unit launched an upgraded iteration called

the Field Tracking Dog program. These specially trained dogs are deployed to enhance border security by sweeping through forested and unofficial border areas between Indonesia and Malaysia in Segumon and Entikong, North Kalimantan.

In May 2024, the Headquarter's K-9 Unit team provided assistance to the K-9 Unit of the West Kalimantan Regional Office to conduct surveillance operations with the RI / Malaysia PAMTAS Unit, Yon Armed 16, Segumon. During the operation, the team found a plastic package around the trees in the Indonesia-Malaysia border area. An examination was carried out and the dog found clear crystals, which happened to be methamphetamine mixed with coffee and sugar (gross weight 212.5 grams), as well as other types of generic drugs. The owner of the goods is still at large with all evidence handed over to the local police (Entikong Police Station).

Image above: Satellite map of forested border areas in Segumon, North Kalimantan

Images below: A Border Dog K-9 unit patrol in North Kalimantan in May 2024 discover hidden packages of illicit and prohibited substances along forested border areas

Indonesia's DGCE K-9 Unit

(Continued from page 15)

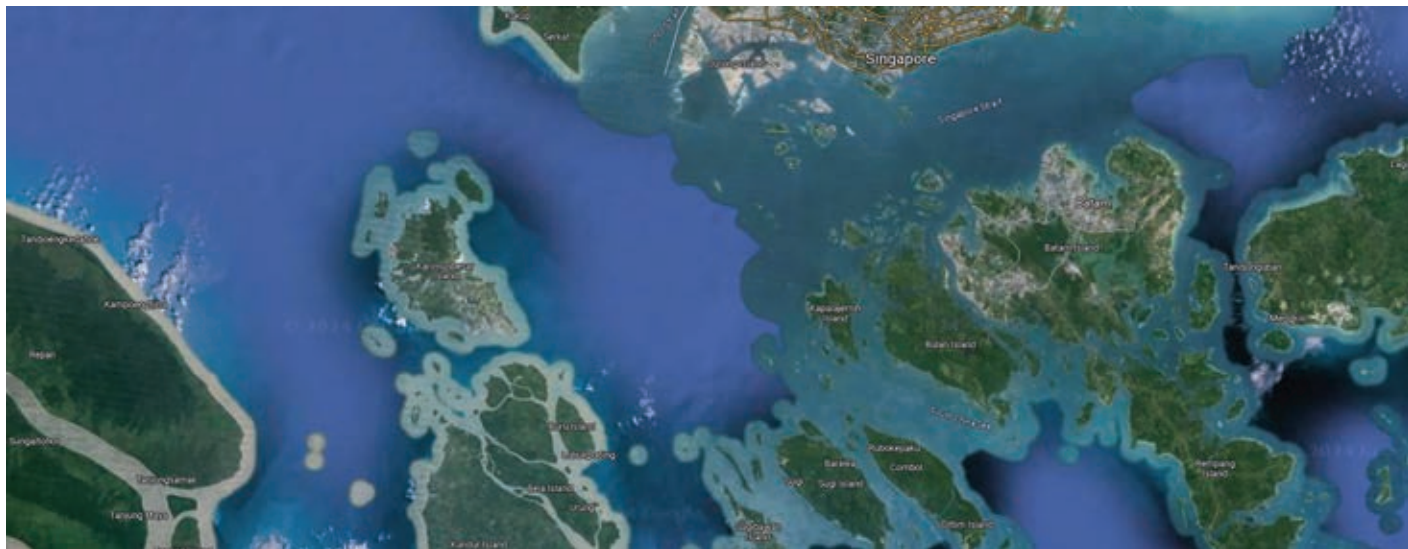


Image above: Satellite map of the Straits of Malacca and Singapore illustrate the complex operational environment

Image below: A DGCE maritime K-9 unit prepares to inspect commercial shipping transiting Indonesian waters

Image on following page: Prospective Detector Dogs puppies line up in formation for inspection during training

Sea Patrol Dog Program

The Sea Patrol dog is the latest Program of DGCE, developed in 2023. It is a more developed and advanced course of the Marine Dog Program. The K-9 Unit conducts joint operations with Customs Marine patrol team.

At the end of 2023, the DGCE K-9 Unit carried out a joint patrol with Marine Customs at the Tanjung Priok area. In March 2024, the Headquarters K-9 Unit

team provided assistance to the K-9 Unit of Primes Customs Office of Batam in the Riau Islands, as well as carried out joint sea patrol activities with the Marine Customs of Tanjung Balai Karimun.

With the establishment of DGCE K-9 Unit as a Regional Dog Training Centre (RDTC), Indonesia is committed to supporting the capacity building activities for Detector Dogs and Members of Asia/Pacific Region to address increasingly complex border challenges. Indonesia's RDTC also provides a platform for building professional networks across the Region, enabling the exchange of knowledge and experience between Member countries, as well as forming stronger links between institutions.

The Indonesia RDTC is located at DGCE Headquarters, Jalan Ahmad Yani By Pass, Jakarta, Indonesia, 13230

REGIONAL NEWS, EVENTS & CAPACITY BUILDING



The Sixth WCO Global Canine Forum

The 6th WCO Global Canine Forum was hosted by Hong Kong Customs & Excise (HKCE) from 5-7 March 2024 in Hong Kong, China and brought together over 120 participants from 46 Customs administrations worldwide



Submitted by Hong Kong Customs & Excise (HKCE)

*/ Edited by Marivi Martin
ABF Assistant Director*

Image: The Secretary for Security of the Government of the HKSAR of the People's Republic of China, Mr Tang Ping-keung (centre), the Commissioner of HKCE, Ms Louise Ho (left) and the WCO Director for Compliance & Facilitation, Mr Pranab Kumar Das (right) officiate at the opening ceremony of the 6th WCO Global Canine Forum

The 6th WCO Global Canine Forum was hosted by Hong Kong Customs & Excise (HKCE) in Hong Kong, China from 5-7 March 2024.

The three-day event brought together over 120 participants from 46 Customs administrations worldwide, along with representatives of local law enforcement dog teams, to share their expertise and best practices on a wide spectrum of canine topics, from breeding and training to enforcement and management. The event offered participants the opportunity to share their insights and update their counterparts on their respective individual roadmaps towards elevating their canine enforcement capabilities.

The Forum covered three major topics, each offering valuable discussions and insights. The first topic focused on exploring new trends, challenges, and opportunities for canine forces. Participants exchanged ideas on innovative approaches to enhance the effectiveness of Detector Dog programs. The second topic covered modernisation and efficiency improvement efforts of these programs in addressing and incorporating the latest advancements and best practices. Lastly, the Forum explored a variety of best practices in breeding and training, as well as the management of dog training facilities.

During the Forum, several noteworthy events took place. The Forum began with a cocktail reception, setting the stage for guests to familiarise themselves with each



Image above: The Chief Secretary for Administration of the Government of the HKSAR of the People's Republic of China, Mr Chan Kwok-ki (second row, seventh left); the Commissioner of Hong Kong Customs & Excise (HKCE), Ms Louise Ho (second row, seventh right); and the WCO Director for Compliance & Facilitation, Mr Pranab Kumar Das (second row, sixth right) officiate at the inauguration ceremony for the WCO RDTC of HKCE



Image below: The Secretary for Security of the Government of the HKSAR of the People's Republic of China, Mr Tang Ping-keung (front row, fifth right); the Commissioner of HKCE, Ms Louise Ho (front row, fifth left), the WCO Director for Compliance & Facilitation, Mr Pranab Kumar Das (front row, fourth right), and other guests attend the opening ceremony of the 6th WCO Global Canine Forum

other and the efforts of their respective Customs administrations. The opening ceremony was officiated by the Secretary for Security of the Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) of the People's Republic of China, Mr Tang Ping-keung, who welcomed participants and highlighted the crucial roles Detector Dogs play in supporting Customs enforcement and promoting an anti-drug message.

A significant highlight of the Forum was the Inauguration Ceremony for the WCO Regional Dog Training Centre (RDTC) of HKCE, which was officiated by the Chief Secretary for Administration of the Government of the HKSAR of the People's Republic of China, Mr Chan Kwok-ki and the visit to the newly established RDTC. Participants had the opportunity to witness a variety of Detector Dog demonstrations and learn about recent achievements and the latest developments of the HKCE Canine Force, particularly in areas such as 'Smart Collar', 'Smart K9 Management System' and canine breeding initiatives.

To enrich the cultural experience, delegates enjoyed an excursion to the Hong Kong Palace Museum, immersing themselves in the local Chinese culture on the last day of the Forum. The Forum concluded

with an official closing ceremony, where the Commissioner of HKCE, Ms Louise Ho emphasised the significance of the Forum in facilitating knowledge exchange and collaborative networks among Customs administrations worldwide.

Following the Forum, HKCE organised a "Heads of RDTC Meeting" with a number of attending RDTC representatives. The meeting aimed to discuss the improvement of accreditation standards and procedures for existing RDTCs, further enhancing professionalism and collaboration among canine forces.

Overall, the 6th WCO Global Canine Forum provided a valuable platform for Customs administrations worldwide to exchange experiences, explore innovative ideas and strengthen collaborative efforts. It showcased the commitment of HKCE and its WCO counterparts in advancing the field of canine enforcement and ensuring international standards of excellence.

SPOTLIGHT

Fiji Revenue & Customs Service Honours First Female Narcotic Dog Handler in the Pacific

Senior Customs Officer Joana Duabaubau is the first female Narcotic Dog Handler in the Pacific. Ms Duabaubau graduated from the New Zealand Police Dog Training Centre in Trentham, Wellington after nine weeks of training



*Submitted by
International, Fiji Revenue &
Customs Service (FRCS)*

*/ Edited by Marivi Martin
ABF Assistant Director*

*Republished with permission
from FRCS; first published by
FRCS on its Customs website
online in 2023*

Senior Customs Officer Joana Duabaubau is the first female Narcotic Dog Handler in the Pacific. Ms Duabaubau graduated from the New Zealand Police Dog Training Centre in Trentham, Wellington after nine weeks of training. Ms Duabaubau shares her journey on becoming a certified narcotic drug dog operational handler, as she transitions into her new role in the Fiji Detector Dog Unit (FDDU) in Suva.

How did you decide to become a K-9 handler?

My interest developed during the open day organised by the Fiji Revenue and Customs Service (FRCS) and Fiji Police Force to encourage female staff to become K-9 handlers on 22nd October 2022. The instructors from Trentham's Dog Training Centre in New Zealand shared their experiences and highlighted

the significance of dedication and hard work in safeguarding the border from illegal substances. This event piqued my interest and inspired me to become a part of the team.

Can you describe your training in dog handling?

I completed a nine-week training course at the New Zealand Police Dog Training Centre in Trentham to become a certified narcotic drug dog operational handler. The training involved various activities including kennel management and getting to know our drug Detector Dogs. We attended lessons both in the classroom and in the field where we received practical exercises. Our instructors emphasised the importance of understanding our roles as dog handlers and trained us on how to



recognise specific substances and respond when our dogs detected them. During the training, we also had the opportunity to bond with our dogs and participate in physical exercises. Despite the challenges, I thoroughly enjoyed the experience of learning my trade with the other Pacific participants.

Dog handling is typically seen as a male-dominated profession, what are some of the challenges that you faced during your training or while carrying out your work?

I must say that the physical pressure of the job is one thing that I have psyched myself for. Dog handling is physically demanding. It requires handlers to be on their feet for extended periods of time to perform tasks such as running, lifting heavy objects and controlling strong large dogs. I also had to balance work and my family responsibilities. However, I am thankful that I have a supportive team and family that understands the nature of my work and supports me when I need it.

In your view what can the female dog handlers do to make them stand out in this profession?

I believe that offering women a chance to take on new roles can increase their self-assurance. I firmly believe that

women have the same level of capability as men and have unique perspectives to contribute. Creating a supportive atmosphere can be very beneficial for women who may face obstacles due to societal norms and gender prejudices. Embracing fresh challenges has revealed positive qualities and personal traits that I may not have discovered if I had remained in my comfort zone.

How has FRCS assisted you in pursuing your aspiration to become a K-9 handler?

As a Customs Officer, I have never had to question whether or not I was fit for the role because I am a female. Women in Customs are sent to sites for inspection, raids, vessel clearance and boarding. We have always had supportive mentors and supervisors that looked after our wellbeing and supported us when we needed support.

What are your future plans?

My aim is to first advance in this position by improving the efficiency of our work processes and work towards a leadership role.

Image above: Ms Joana Duabaubau poses with her partner 'Frost' for a photo during training at the Fiji Detector Dog Unit (FDDU)

Image previous page: Fiji Revenue and Customs Service (FRCS) Colleagues, CEO Mark Dixon and Director of Customs Ms Shelini Sangeeta Kumar celebrate with recent graduate Ms Joana Duabaubau on her achievement in becoming the first female handler in the FRCS FDDU, and also in the Pacific

New Zealand Customs Service: Dogs Disrupting Crime Across the Pacific

Customs Detector Dogs are an invaluable asset for Customs administrations and Border agencies in protecting borders and communities including in the remote oceanic regions of the Southwest Pacific and its small islands economies



*Submitted by the New Zealand
Customs Service (NZCS)*

*/ Edited by Marivi Martin
ABF Assistant Director*

*Image: Pacific Detector
Dog Programme (PDDP)
participants at the
New Zealand Police Dog
Training Centre*

Across the vast Pacific Ocean Region, 18 New Zealand trained Detector Dogs are hard at work, preventing illegal drugs from entering communities and enabling intelligence to be collected on drug smuggling methods and shared between border and enforcement agencies in the region.

The Pacific Detector Dog Programme (PDDP) was established in 2018 and is jointly managed by the New Zealand Customs Service (NZCS) and New Zealand Police, and funded by New Zealand's Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade.

The scope of the PDDP includes an operational focus across the Southwest Pacific and forms an important part of the relationship between Pacific agencies and their New Zealand counterparts, including close operating partnerships in Fiji, Samoa, Tonga and the Cook Islands.

Chief Customs Officer (PDDP), Dave Huff says the Programme was set up to help combat the growing threat of drug smuggling across the region and builds on a strong history of close cooperation in the region.

"The Pacific region is a known transit point for illicit drugs, driven by transnational organised crime groups attracted by the rising demand and high drug prices in New Zealand and Australia. Detector Dog operations and deployment supports wider efforts to combat this growing threat and helps build the wider Pacific intelligence picture."

New Zealand authorities have developed strong relationships of close collaboration, intelligence sharing and training with Pacific border and enforcement partners. Mr Huff said *"it is recognised that by helping Pacific Island countries protect their borders, Customs is better able to protect New Zealand's borders too."*



“With both domestic and international partners working together, we have been able to effectively target transnational organised crime syndicates operating in the region.”

“In January 2024, New Zealand-trained detector and patrol dogs and handlers were called to an operation which uncovered two shipments of methamphetamine in Fiji totalling 4.2 tonnes. That’s methamphetamine that was potentially destined for communities not just in Fiji, but in New Zealand and Australia.”

The New Zealand Police Dog Training Centre

The PDDP is based at the New Zealand Police Dog Training Centre in Trentham, near Wellington, which breeds and supplies the dogs, and brings the handlers to New Zealand for their training. The PDDP hones Detector Dogs’ skills in

detecting cash, drugs, explosives and firearms, among other illicit substances.

NZCS and Police training advisors are sent to Pacific Island countries to assist their transition into the operational environment as well as assisting Pacific countries to build the long-term sustainability of the Programme and their own capabilities.

An equally important part of the Programme is developing skills in leadership, policy and communication, investigation and the use of legal powers, as well as targeting and profiling to enable effective tasking and deployment.

“Our goal is for the Pacific Detector Dog teams to become as self-sufficient as possible. To achieve this, dog units need to be effectively led, operate within the law, and follow organisational policy and practice. This ensures that Pacific communities and partners have trust and confidence in them,” Mr Huff said.

Image: Chief Customs Officer, Pacific Detector Dog Programme, Dave Huff

Image on page 20: ‘Cricket’, who now serves as a Detector Dog in Tonga



Dogs Disrupting Crime Across the Pacific

(Continued from page 23)

Looking ahead

With the size of the Pacific Ocean – the world's largest – the biggest risk to the region through transnational organised crime comes from the maritime environment. The programme's priority is to continue to improve and expand on the targeting and profiling of craft to achieve better intelligence on what's being smuggled across the region.

The PDDP is also expanding its presence, with an additional six new Detector Dog teams being trained for deployment across the Pacific in the immediate future, including in Fiji and Tonga. NZCS has also established new partnerships, such as the recent initiative to provide the French territory of New Caledonia with a Detector Dog, along with the required training and in-country support.

Throughout 2024, NZCS advisors from the Dog Training Centre will continue their busy schedules with regular visits to Pacific Island Countries. Their tasks include certifications, reinforcing dog handling skills, operational deployment and checks on the dogs' health and well-being.

"It has been very rewarding to assist the Pacific Island countries and see the progress they have made within their dog units over the years since the inception of the PDDP six years ago," says Mr Huff.

Current Status of Drug Detector Dogs in Japan

Japan has a long history of employing Detector Dogs in Customs in the drug detection role; over the past 25 years, Japan Customs' Detector Dog cohort has increased to an impressive force and expanded its capabilities

The history of drug Detector Dogs in Japan Customs dates back to 1979, when the first two drug Detector Dogs were introduced with the cooperation of United States (US) Customs, with the aim of preventing the increasing frequency and sophistication of smuggling of illicit drugs. As the introduction of drug Detector Dogs proved effective in preventing the smuggling of illicit drugs, the training and development of drug Detector Dogs began locally in 1980, and in 1987, the Japan Customs Drug Detector Dogs Training Centre was established to handle all these activities.

Drug Detector Dogs in Action

Currently, about 130 dogs are deployed at Customs offices across Japan, inspecting import and export cargo, passengers' personal effects, and international mail at various locations such as ports, airports and international post offices. Major cases include the seizure of approximately 30 kilograms of methamphetamine from the belongings of a passenger at Narita International Airport and 6.7 kilograms of marijuana plants within international mail.

Since their introduction, the employment of drug Detector Dogs have contributed to the detection of a cumulative total of more than four tons of illicit drugs.

Cooperation with Foreign Customs Authorities

Since 2000, a partnership has been established with Australia as part of technical cooperation and personnel exchange in relation to the breeding and training of narcotics detection dogs. Staff from Japan Customs Drug Detector Dogs Training Centre regularly visit the Australian Border Force's (ABF) national Detector Dog Program facility to share best practice and exchange lessons learned.



Over this period, a good relationship has been established between staff from the ABF and Japan Customs through the sharing of knowledge and exchange of information on the maintenance and improvement of drug Detector Dogs skills.

New Initiatives

In addition to drug Detector Dogs, Japan Customs has already introduced explosives and firearms Detector Dogs as counter-terrorism and firearms countermeasures. And now, as a new initiative, Japan Customs is considering introducing currency Detector Dogs to prevent the import and/or export of illicit cash monies, such as part of passengers' personal effects, along with other items carried from abroad.

*Submitted by
International Cooperation
Division, Japan Customs*

*/ Edited by Marivi Martin
ABF Assistant Director*

*Image: Japan Customs Officers
pose for a photo with an ABF
Detector Dog handler during a
visit to the NDDPF, 2024*

The 25th Session of the WCO Asia/Pacific Regional Heads of Customs Administration (RHCA) Conference in Sydney, Australia 14-18 April 2024

The 25th session of the WCO Asia/Pacific Regional Heads of Customs Administration (RHCA) Conference was hosted in Australia by the Office of the WCO Asia/Pacific Regional Vice-Chair in Sydney, Australia 14-18 April 2024



Submitted by the
Secretariat Office of the WCO
Asia/Pacific Vice-Chair (APVC)

Image: World Customs Organization (WCO) Asia/Pacific Regional Vice-Chair (APVC) Michael Outram APM welcomed more than 100 delegates and representatives from 31 Asia/Pacific (A/P) WCO Member Customs Administrations, along with the respective Heads of the Regional Intelligence Liaison Office (RILO A/P), the Regional Office of Capacity Building (ROCB A/P), the Regional Private Sector Group (RPSG A/P) the WCO as represented by the WCO Secretary General, Mr Ian Saunders, and their delegates to the 25th session of the WCO Asia/Pacific Regional Heads of Customs Administrations (RHCA) Conference at the Four Seasons Hotel in the city of Sydney, Australia over 14-18 April 2024.

Delegates participated in a range of discussions, exchanging ideas on various strategic and operational customs and

border-related issues. Members endorsed Cambodia's proposal to accredit their National Customs School as a WCO Regional Training Centre; supported India's proposal to attach a third Customs Training Centre to their already existing Regional Training Centre; endorsed the draft WCO Resolution on Strengthening Customs-Industry Resilience; and endorsed the WCO Asia/Pacific Communiqué on Gender Equality and Diversity.

The event commenced with a welcome reception at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Circular Quay and an observance of a traditional 'welcome to country' and 'smoking ceremony' performed by indigenous Australians from the Gadigal People of the Eora Nation. Commissioner Outram welcomed members at the official opening of the 25th RHCA.



Image: Delegates were welcomed to the 25th session of the Asia/Pacific Regional Heads of Customs Administrations (RHCA) Conference with a welcome reception at the Museum of Contemporary Art (MoCA), overlooking Circular Quay, the Sydney Harbour Bridge and the Sydney Opera House at the Rocks in Sydney, Australia on 14 April 2024



Image: ABF Commissioner Michael Outram APM, greets guests to the 25th RHCA Conference in Sydney Australia during his welcome remarks at the MoCA overlooking Circular Quay in the Rocks in his capacity as the Asia/Pacific Vice-Chair on 14 April 2024



Image: Regional Heads of Asia/Pacific Customs Administrations, their senior representatives and delegates, along with the Heads of the RILO A/P, ROCB A/P and RPSG A/P, join with WCO Secretary General Mr Ian Saunders and Asia/Pacific Vice-Chair Michael Outram APM at the 25th RHCA Conference at the Four Seasons in Sydney Australia 15 April 2024



Image: Mr Jun Tajima delivers his presentation on the occasion of his confirmation in the role as the next Head of the Regional Office of Capacity Building for the Asia/Pacific (ROCB A/P) to succeed his colleague and predecessor Mr Norikazu Kuramoto after his five-year term

Image: Asia/Pacific Vice-Chair Michael Outram APM welcomes guests to the Official Closing Dinner at Sydney's iconic Taronga Zoo for the 25th Regional Heads of Customs Administrations (RHCA) Conference, 17 April 2024



Image: Assistant Commissioner of Hong Kong Customs & Excise (HKCE), Mr Kin-Kei Li provides remarks and information on arrangements for Commissioner Ms Louise Ho during her tenure as the succeeding 2024-2026 WCO Asia/Pacific Vice-Chair and forthcoming activities and events in Hong Kong, China from July 2024



Image: WCO Secretary General Mr Ian Saunders delivers his closing remarks to Members and their delegations at the 25th RHCA Conference in Sydney, Australia, 18 April 2024



Image (from right to left): WCO Secretary General Mr Ian Saunders, Asia/Pacific Vice-Chair Michael Outram APM and his Secretariat Ms Kimberlee Clydesdale thank and congratulate Members for their support in conclusion of a successful meeting in Sydney, Australia on 18 April 2024



The first day of proceedings of the 25th RHCA Conference included presentations of the regional reports delivered by the APVC, the RILO A/P, the ROCB A/P and the RPSG A/P, along with discussions on development of the 2024-2026 WCO Asia/Pacific Regional Strategic Plan (RSP) and its draft Terms of Reference. Day One finished with confirmation and endorsement of Mr Jun Tajima by the Region to take up the role of Head of the ROCB A/P, following the conclusion of Mr Norikazu Kuramoto's five-year tenure at the helm.

Day Two heard on the progress of Members from RSP Focus Area Co-coordinators and participants of the Asia/Pacific Plastic Waste (APPW) Project on their ongoing efforts. The Region also heard from and endorsed Cambodia Customs on its proposal to accredit their National Customs School as a WCO Regional Training Centre (RTC), followed by support for India Customs' proposal to attach a third Customs Training Centre to their already existing Regional Training Centre. The Region also gave its support and endorsement for the draft WCO Resolution on Strengthening Customs-Industry Resilience and noted and discussed an update from the Secretary General on WCO Modernization, including organisational arrangements, the appointment of Directors and the WCO Modernization Plan. Day Two concluded with an update on the WCO Canine Expert Working Group and observed a Detector Dog demonstration.

On Day Three, Members noted campaign nominees and presentations on their respective candidacies for Asia/Pacific representative positions on WCO committees. Day Three also included Member presentations on WCO Projects on Smart Customs and Supply Chain Security and a joint Asia/Pacific - Americas/Caribbean Bi-Regional Workshop on Gender Equality and Diversity, along with Member presentations focused on the WCO Customs theme for 2024 on 'Customs Engaging New and Traditional Partners with Purpose'. Day Three concluded with the Official Closing Dinner for the 25th RHCA, hosted by the APVC at Sydney's iconic Taronga Zoo.

The event concluded on Day Four with reflections from the Asia/Pacific Vice-Chair and an update from Hong Kong, China on its preparations as the succeeding WCO Asia/Pacific Vice-Chair designate for 2024-2026.

Commissioner Outram noted *"The (RHCA) Conference allows us to gather our Regional Heads and senior executive in a forum that provides us with the understanding, respective positions and ideas that we can bring forward as a Region to the WCO, and this collective voice is critical to the Asia/Pacific's contribution to the WCO and its Membership and I'm very proud of the contribution we make as a Region".*



Commissioner Outram and his Office of the Asia/Pacific Regional Customs (APRC) would like to express appreciation and thanks to all participants at the 25th RHCA Conference for their contribution in stimulating the growth, security, unity and prosperity of our Asia/Pacific Region.

You can read more about the 25th RHCA and its outcomes along with the ability to view a larger collection of images capturing the event online at www.wcoasiapacific.org.

QR Code: Closing video of the WCO Asia/Pacific 25th Regional Heads of Customs Administrations (RHCA) Conference at the Four Seasons in Sydney, Australia, 14-18 April 2024

IN DEPTH

Indian Customs Canine Squad – the Force Multiplier

Detector Dogs are a critical element of every Customs administration's anti-smuggling strategy. Their success in detecting prohibited goods is well documented and recognised

*Written by
Superintendent Veena Rao,
Customs Canine Centre, Attari
Central Board of Indirect Taxes
& Customs (CBIC)*

*/ Edited by Marivi Martin
ABF Assistant Director*

*Image: A Detector Dog handler
and their partner undergo
training at the CBIC Customs
Canine Centre in Attari, India*

*Image on following page:
Detector Dog Units march in
formation during training at the
CBIC Customs Canine Centre in
Attari, India*



Detector dogs are a critical element of every Customs administration's anti-smuggling strategy. Their success in detecting unauthorised cross-border movement of narcotics, explosives, weapons, currency, tobacco, pests and pathogens, and wildlife products is well documented and recognised.

The work of Customs agencies across the world involves the use of technologies such as x-rays, trace particle detection devices, and chemical analysis toolkits, but canines have provided an excellent complementary detection capability alongside these technologies.

Customs Canine Centre, a step forward

India's Central Board of Indirect Taxes & Customs (CBIC) developed its Canine Detector Dog Programme to support its anti-smuggling and enforcement activities, and the first canine sibling trio was deployed at Sahar International Airport, Mumbai, and Indira Gandhi International Airport, New Delhi, in 1984. The K9-teams over the years made excellent detections,

leading to the seizure of thousands of kilograms of contraband at international airports, and also served as an effective deterrent until its conclusion in 2018, following which it transitioned into an expanded Programme.

The setting up of an in-house training facility in 2019 provided the next evolutionary step forward and expansion. CBIC aims to produce excellent Detector Dogs through scientific and systemic training courses with modern training facilities and advanced training programmes. It will focus its efforts on interdicting narcotics, currency, wildlife and tobacco smuggling.

Programme Goals

The establishment of an in-house training facility, a first of its kind in India, has paved the way for professionally trained K9-teams to deploy at entry points across the country to counter and thwart attempts to smuggle contraband. Moreover, it is also essential in adapting to and meeting the ever-changing operational challenges faced in the field.



Through this expansion of the Programme, CBIC K9-teams are able to continually improve by efforts to:

- INNOVATE and come up with a multi-faceted and dynamic training module aligned with the best international practices and catering to the specific needs of Customs;
- DEVELOP and maintain highly trained and well-disciplined K9-teams that are capable of undertaking effective operations;
- CONDUCT regular refresher courses to consolidate basic training, where olfactory skills of the dog are honed, and the handlers are updated on the latest developments on operations in the field;
- MAINTAIN monthly maintenance trainings and annual refresher training schedules with evaluations of general performance standards and certifications; and
- CARE for the welfare of K9-teams during the service and on retirement.

The Training Module

A training module was developed first with the aim to give CBIC's K9-teams a cutting edge. This necessitated a yearly refresher with information-sharing sessions on the challenges encountered in the field duties at various places of deployment and updates in trends and modus operandi of smugglers.

Through the redevelopment of a renewed and updated Programme, CBIC recorded increased successes. The K9-teams have detected more than 300 kg of narcotics. The variety of narcotics detected (heroin, cocaine, hashish, methaqualone, ketamine HCl, mescaline, Ganja, and khat) is an example of the versatility of the K9-teams to learning about and detecting different target odours.

Indian Customs Canine Squad – the Force Multiplier

(Continued from page 31)



Detector Dog handlers are provided in-depth training to prepare them for operational deployment in the field, including development of:

- The knowledge of various narcotic substances and explanations of the details and modus operandi of smuggling from past and recent cases by Officers of CCC with first-hand knowledge in the field.
- The understanding different methods of concealment of narcotics of various types in luggage, mail, electrical items, gift items, personal effects, etc.
- The differences of target and non-target odours and common masking agents employed to avoid detection.

A challenge of designing training modules for the Programme itself was to provide a

comprehensive approach while remaining responsive to the ever-evolving modus operandi employed by smugglers. As such, it was recognised that exposing K9-teams to training in the actual work environments in close to real-life conditions as possible was an important aspect to help transition K9-teams to operational deployment, including the screening of large areas with transiting passengers moving back and forth.

Handlers were immersed with the challenges that they would encounter on deployment and encouraged to use their intelligence on a situational basis in order for the handler and Detector Dog to work effectively as a K9-team. The interaction with the senior handlers gave insights into past K9-detection cases, including methods of concealment.

K9-partnerships

While training Detector Dogs on treats as reward is a typical approach, handlers are also encouraged to observe the preferences of their canine companions and their positive responses to verbal praise and patting, in order to enhance their enthusiasm and persistence to work. The K9's disposition at work should be docile yet firm, and the handler should carry a polite gesture while screening the luggage of an international passenger. In addition, K9-teams are also exposed to larger formations as part of intelligence functions at respective ports of deployment.

Handlers are school taught the importance of leash control (holding and manipulating to control the K9 for total coverage of the area to be screened) and voice commands, which play an important role in drawing the attention of Detector Dogs. However, although K9-teams first undertake on-leash training, handlers are also trained in how to relinquish close-control to allow Detector Dogs to perform their role independently at times, where appropriate.

Adapting to Realistic Conditions

Masking agents are frequently used by smugglers to prevent detection of the target contraband by K9-teams. Based on information gathered from previous detections, different masking agents were introduced into the training to further reflect real-world methods and to make the training as realistic as possible. This provides K9-teams with an advantage by familiarising them with what they would encounter in the field, including the mixture of aromas from variety of contents within baggage. CBIC's K9-teams have proven successfully in differentiating between different aromas, such as coffee beans, chilli powder, protein powder, fish powder, body lotion, shampoo, salt, alcohol etc., and the illicit cargo these masking agents have been employed.

Animal Welfare

The four pillars of welfare management for maintaining a highly professional K9 squad are Housing, Feeding, Grooming, and Health. CBIC is committed to the welfare of its K9-teams be it the handler or its 'pawesome' partner. CBIC's four-legged Officers are an inseparable part of our preventive network; they diligently serve in their Customs role until the age of nine



when, on retirement, they are provided a comfortable life to enjoy in their older age.

On retirement, the handler and their family is provided the first right to adopt his loyal K9 partner. In such cases, the handler is also supported financially by way of reimbursement for ration allowance for entire lifetime of the retired K9. Alternatively, the K9 retires to a comfortable life at the Customs Canine Centre.

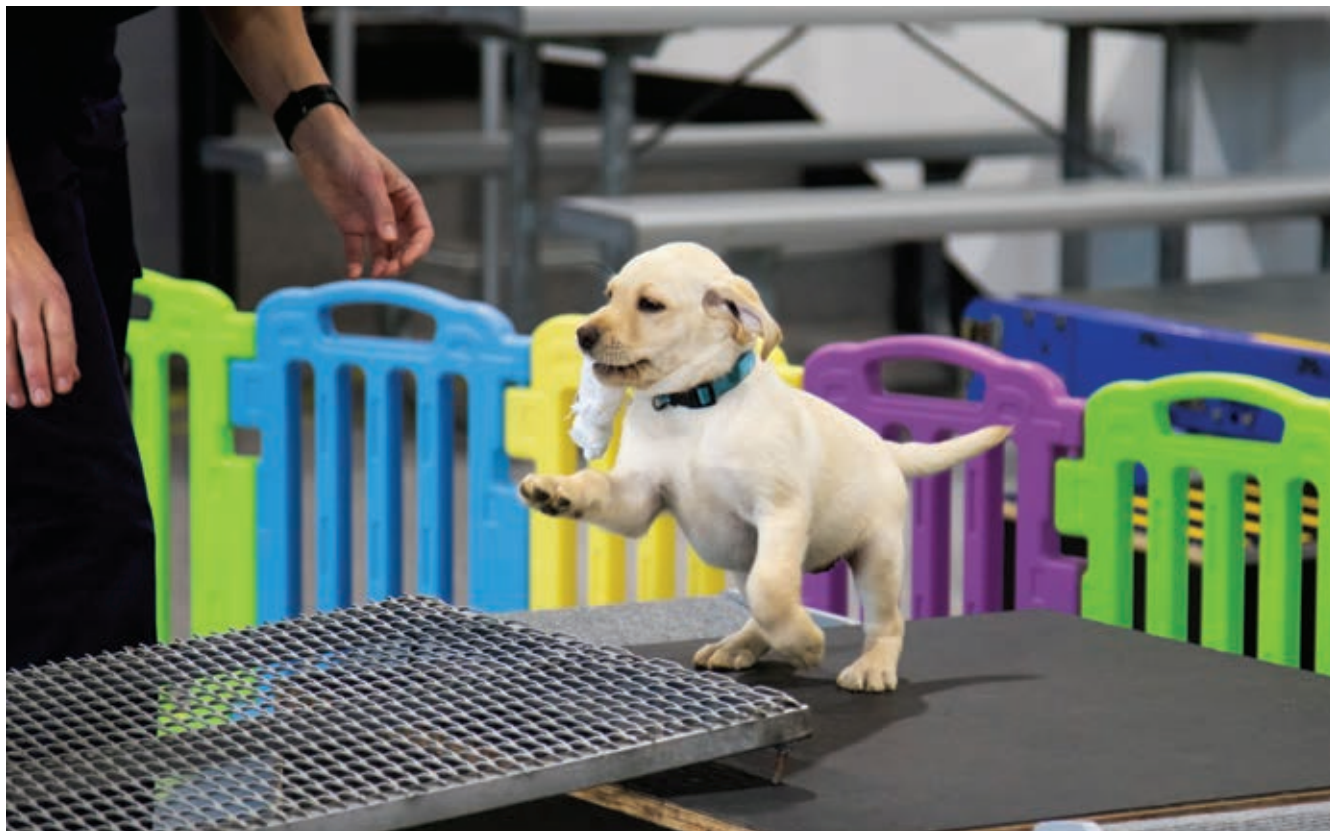
Images above: A Detector Dog poses for their photo ahead of graduation ceremony

Images below: Principle Commissioner Mr Shri Jagreeti Sen Negi awards K9 team 'Snow Boy' and his handler, Mr T Sathya Narayan their certificate of recognition at their graduation ceremony

Image on previous page: A Detector Dog during obedience training poses for a phot as part of its Grooming session at the CBIC Customs Canine Centre in Attari, India

ABF Detector Dog Program

Australian Border Force (ABF) Detector Dog Foster Carers play an integral role in helping to develop ABF-bred puppies towards a career as working dogs for the ABF, and international and domestic partner agencies



*Submitted by the
Australian Border Force (ABF)*

*/ Edited by Marivi Martin
ABF Assistant Director*

*Image: A prospectice Detector
Dog puppy during training
demonstration display for the
Foster Carer family event at the
ABF National DDP facility*

Foster Carers play an integral role in helping to develop Australian Border Force (ABF) bred puppies towards a career as working dogs for the ABF Detector Dog Program (DDP), and international and domestic partner agencies.

The volunteers who undertake the responsibilities to rear the puppies into candidates provide a critical service and an essential capability for the DDP. The essential role that Detector Dogs provide to the Australian community would not be possible without the help of volunteer Foster Carers.

Detector Dog Program Foster Carer Event

In recognition of the invaluable service and support volunteer Foster Carers provide,

their hard work, dedication and time and patience was acknowledged at the Annual Foster Carer Event at the National ABF DDP Facility in Melbourne, Victoria (Australia) on 23 February 2024.

Over 300 Foster Carers and their families attended the event, which included tours and dog demonstrations. The event acknowledged nine volunteer Foster Carers with an official DDP award of recognition.

The ABF continually seeks Foster Carers located in the Melbourne and greater Geelong community areas to raise and care for Labrador retriever puppies for up to 12 months, preparing them for a working career with the ABF or a number of domestic and international partner agencies. The ABF draws on volunteers

from current and former Foster Carers and networks as well as through an annual public media campaign.

Detector Dog Foster Carers provide a safe home for the puppy as well as acquainting them with the sights, sounds and smells of their urban or suburban environments. This socialisation helps prepare the puppy for a rigorous 12 week ABF or other partner agency course (in Australia or the Region) to become a dedicated Detector Dog on the frontlines.



Image left: Prospective Detector Dog puppy, Franco



Image above right: Franco, enjoying his formative years with a Foster Carer family in the Melbourne region

Image below: Participants of the ABF DDP Foster Care Program enjoy a Detector Dog display during the annual Foster Carer family event at the ABF National DDP facility

The ABF supports Foster Careers and volunteers by covering associated costs including food, veterinary care and relevant equipment, along with expert advice and training for Foster Carers, which are provided by experienced canine development Officers to ensure that prospective Detector Dogs can perform to their best abilities.

Prospective Detector Dog candidates are typically raised and cared for by Foster Carer families for up to 15 months, after which they undergo further tests and final assessments to determine their suitability.





RECENT AND UPCOMING WCO EVENTS

April 2024 33rd Revised Kyoto Convention Management Committee Meeting (Brussels, Belgium 8-12 April)

25th WCO Asia/Pacific Regional Heads of Customs Administration (RHCA) Conference (Sydney, Australia 14-18 April)

58th Technical Committee on Customs Valuation (Brussels, Belgium 15-19 April)

243rd/244th Permanent Technical Committee (Brussels, Belgium 23-25 April)

May 2024 **6th Authorized Economic Operator (AEO) Global Conference (Shenzhen, China 8-10 May)**

Asia/Pacific Regional Caucus ahead of 90th Policy Commission (23 May)

June 2024 **90th Policy Commission (Brussels, Belgium 24-25 June)**

143rd/144th Sessions of WCO COUNCIL (Brussels, Belgium 27-29 June)

Handover Ceremony of the WCO Asia/Pacific Regional Vice-Chair (Brussels, Belgium 27 June)

July 2024 -

August 2024 -

September 2024 74th Harmonized System Committee (Brussels, Belgium 16-27 September)

October 2024 34th Revised Kyoto Convention Management Committee (Hybrid, 2-4 October)

58th Technical Committee on Customs Valuation (Brussels, Belgium 14-18 October)

245th/246th Permanent Technical Committee (Brussels, Belgium 23-25 October)

MESSAGE FROM THE SECRETARIAT OFFICE: **Newsletter Article Submissions**

We hope you have enjoyed reading Volume #71 of the Asia/Pacific Customs News on '[Detector Dogs](#)' and we look forward to the next issue, Volume #72 on '[Engaging Partners with Purpose](#)' in June/July 2024



Thank you to all the many contributors from Asia/Pacific Customs administrations and local commands that submitted articles and photos for the March/April 2024 issue of the Asia/Pacific Customs News, including:

- Australian Border Force (ABF)**
- Fiji Revenue & Customs Service (FRCS)**
- Hong Kong Customs & Excise (HKCE)**
- India's Central Board of Indirect Taxes & Customs (CBIC)**
- Indonesia's Directorate General of Customs & Excise (DGCE)**
- Japan Custom**
- New Zealand Customs Service (NZCS)**

The WCO APVC Secretariat Office was again very grateful to all contributors and was delighted to feature the topic of '[Detector Dogs](#)', and in particular photos of our furry Customs companions.

We would also like to extend special thanks to Superintendent Greg Dowse of the Australian Border Force (ABF) Detector Dog Program (DDP) and his dedicated team, who have closely supported both the development of this Issue, and past Issues, of the Asia/Pacific Customs News over the period 2022-2024, but also at many of the events for the tenure of the WCO 2022-2024 Asia/Pacific Vice-Chair (APVC).

Finally, we would like to take this opportunity to invite WCO Asia/Pacific Customs administrations to consider submitting an article for the next (June 2024) issue, **Volume #72**, which will touch on the WCO Customs Theme for 2024 on '[Engaging Traditional and New Partners with Purpose](#)', while reflecting on the past two years, both within the Region and the WCO. This next issue will bookend the tenure of the WCO 2022-2024 APVC. Please email your submissions, including photos, to the APVC Secretariat Office group mailbox at apvc-wco@abf.gov.au.

Image: The Team of the Asia/Pacific Regional Vice-Chair Secretariat Office, along with Member of the Australian delegation, at the Welcome Reception of the 25th Asia/Pacific Regional Heads of Customs Administrations (RHCA) Conference in Sydney, Australia, 14 May 2024, overlooking Sydney Harbour Bridge and the Sydney Opera House at Circular Quay

NOTES





ASIA/**PACIFIC** CUSTOMS NEWS

Volume #71 Mar / April 2024

DETECTOR DOGS

Growth | Security | Unity | Prosperity