

ISLAND SECURITY POLICY INSTITUTE

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POLICY BRIEF

Supply Chain Insider Risk in Island Ports

When the Port Employee Is Both the Security Officer and the Longshoreman

Research Pillar: Insider Threat & Workplace Security Policy

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- **Island port workforces are characterized by multigenerational employment, family connections, and deep social embeddedness that systematically suppress insider threat reporting.**
- **Cargo-based insider threat vectors — diversion, contraband concealment, manifest manipulation — are structurally different from the access-based vectors that standard port security frameworks primarily address.**
- **CBP's Insider Threat Program was developed for high-volume continental port environments and does not adequately address small island port workforce dynamics.**

In 2021, a federal investigation into cargo diversion at a Hawaii port identified systematic patterns across multiple employees and departments. Behavioral warning signs had been visible for months — unreported because the employees involved were well-known members of the tight-knit port workforce community.¹

The Island Port Insider Threat Environment

A major continental port may employ thousands of workers with relatively low social density between them. Hawaii's commercial ports, Pacific Island territory ports, and Caribbean island ports typically employ workforces measured in hundreds, with multigenerational employment patterns and family connections running deep through the port workforce community. ISPI's practitioner analysis indicates that cargo-based insider threat in island ports requires detection frameworks built around cargo flow anomaly detection and documentation pattern analysis — not primarily around access control.²

Policy Recommendations

1. Develop island port-specific insider threat detection frameworks addressing cargo handling vector risks through cargo flow anomaly detection.
2. Reform CBP port insider threat assessment protocols for small island ports to account for workforce social density dynamics.
3. Fund shared third-party behavioral threat assessment services for small island port operators that provide professional assessment capacity without requiring individual ports to maintain it internally.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

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The Island Security Policy Institute (ISPI) is a nonprofit, nonpartisan research organization based in Honolulu, Hawaii. ISPI produces practitioner-led research, policy analysis, training programs, and commissioned research on public safety, emergency preparedness, insider threat, and security policy for island and coastal communities worldwide. ISPI is registered as a federal contractor on SAM.gov under NAICS 541720. Warren Pulley, Founder & Executive Director.

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