

# **CBP Commissioner Envisions Redefined Relationship with Trade Community**

At the annual WESCCON conference in San Diego Oct. 23, U.S. Customs and Border Protection Commissioner Alan Bersin gave a major policy speech outlining his vision for the future of CBP and its relationship with the trade community.

## **Refocus on Trade Mission**

Bersin said one of his top priorities is to refocus CBP on “the crucial role the flow of trade plays in maintaining our global competitiveness.” He asserted that rather than trying to find a balance between trade facilitation and security, he will look at these functions as “two sides of the same coin” that can both be achieved through the process of risk segmentation. Using trusted shipper and traveler programs to separate low-risk and high-risk goods and people “is essential for us to be able to effectively target potential threats within the volume of trade we deal with today” and can thereby improve the U.S. economy, help U.S. businesses and expand U.S. economic competitiveness globally.

## **Rethinking the Border**

Bersin also called for “a more holistic view of border management” that incorporates the concept of “securing the flow of people and products into, out of, and within the North American continent.” The U.S., Canada and Mexico should work together to secure the movement of commerce “from factory floor in one country through whatever mode of transit is used – ship, rail, truck, air – across the border to its ultimate destination, whether it’s a manufacturer or company.” He said this goal can be accomplished in four ways.

- improving risk targeting and segmentation through a “grand bargain” in which the trade community provides advance information necessary for security purposes in return for expedited treatment of secure cargo
- expanding trusted traveler and shipper programs like C-TPAT, SENTRI, NEXUS, FAST and Global Entry, as well as providing “increasingly meaningful and relevant” benefits for participation
- modernizing existing ports of entry and building new ones by “tapping into new sources of funding,” including “encouraging public-private investment”
- pushing the borders out by moving some border processing, including pre-screening and pre-inspection, away from the physical border itself and possibly establishing secure corridors for the transit of cleared, screened or inspected people and goods

## **Reassessing Trade Processes**

Bersin said CBP is in the early phases of developing several concepts that would improve trade processing.

- risk-based account management, which would seek to raise compliance by focusing on areas of risk rather than volume and by expediting trade with trusted partners through improved targeting and risk segmentation
- simplified entry and financial processes that would expedite legitimate trade, provide for earlier release decisions and streamline the submission of information and payments
- establishing centers of expertise and excellence, a virtual concentration of CBP personnel who

would leverage expertise and provide uniform guidance

- finding ways to leverage the investment made in the Automated Commercial Environment to ensure that it fully supports account management efforts

“Whatever form these initiatives ultimately take,” Bersin stated, “they signal a fundamental transformation of our relationship with the private sector” into one that “significantly enhances supply chain security, improves enforcement of trade laws, and expedites legitimate commerce.”

### **Customs Brokers**

Bersin reassured customs brokers that “the changes CBP is proposing will certainly not be the demise” of their industry. Instead, these changes will help brokers help their clients do business more efficiently. For example, brokers will be “critical” to making account management work, especially for small and medium-sized businesses. “With management by account, instead of managing shipment by shipment, we will be managing the larger final transaction,” Bersin said. “Customs will still have to determine the admissibility of shipments, but the overall process will be simpler and more efficient.” CBP also hopes that brokers will serve as the agency’s “boots on the ground” in efforts to intercept counterfeit goods and ensure import safety. “We can’t do our job without you,” Bersin said, “and I am committed to rebuilding our bonds of trust with you.”

### **Trade Input**

Bersin concluded by asking the trade community for its help as CBP moves forward. Specifically, he asked for ideas on ways to improve border management by better separating the high-risk from the low-risk, better aligning processes at the ports and reducing wait times by pre-inspecting goods and people away from the actual borders. CBP needs the trade’s help to come up with solutions, he said, which it can then put into effect by creating an amenable regulatory environment.