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Air Cargo Advance Screening (ACAS) — Frequently Asked Questions

What is ACAS?

ACAS was designed to provide CBP with data concerning the parties and commodities involved in air cargo *prior to loading on an aircraft at a foreign port.* With information about inbound air shipments further back in the supply chain, CBP will be able to better indentify high-risk shipments into the United States. In addition, the program will speed the movement of lower-risk shipments while resources can focus on higher-risk shipments for additional screening.

Why was the ACAS initiative created?

The ACAS pilot project was created in response to attempted terrorist threats discovered in October 2010. Both of the flights involved had undergone physical screening. In addition, at the time, electronic cargo manifest information was required 4-hours before arrival— *not* prior to departure. This system was vulnerable since potential threats could only be discovered after takeoff. CBP determined that it could strengthen air cargo security if electronic cargo information was transmitted prior to loading at a foreign port. This is an additional security requirement that goes one-step beyond post-departure Air AMS.

What is the current status of the ACAS regulation?

Much like previous security initiatives, ACAS is currently in the preliminary or pilot phase. The pilot allows for CBP to collaborate with the industry to better determine the most effective and efficient means of achieving the desired regulatory results without impacting the speed of air cargo operations.

Are there plans to make ACAS a mandatory program?

Yes. CBP has clearly stated that it intends to issue a regulation to require advance data submission to ACAS for all international shipments either destined for or travelling through the United States.

How far in advance does data have to be submitted for ACAS?

CBP has stated that the timely submission of ACAS data prior to consolidation and loading the cargo on an aircraft will be required. The sooner the information is submitted, the sooner screening or Do Not Load (DNL) messages can be communicated.

What is the ACAS Pilot timeline?

The ACAS pilot is structured in a tiered approach. After feedback from the trade, the pilot has been amended to include six implementation phases. The US has conducted initial trials with the air express industry and has now started similar endeavors with freight forwarders as well as passenger airlines that carry cargo. Currently, the ACAS pilot is in the second of the six phrases:

- Phase 1: The first phase of ACAS was focused on reviewing shipment data from express carriers such as FedEx and UPS.
- **Phase 2: The second phase currently covers passenger airlines and freight forwarders.**

- Phase 3: This phase incorporates the key concept of the 'Trusted Shipper' into the ATS (Automated Targeting System).
- Phase 4: During this phase, the ACAS pilot program will expand to include all remaining passenger air carriers as well as freight forwarders that carry higher volumes of cargo.
- Phase 5: This phase will include small to medium cargo volume passenger air carriers and freight forwarders.
- Phase 6: This final phase will expand the ACAS pilot program to include heavy all-cargo air carriers and a global implementation.

What is a 'Trusted Shipper'?

The concept of a 'Trusted Shipper' is one of the core tenets of the ACAS initiative and is of key importance to CBP/TSA as well as the air cargo community. Automatically determining a data-driven 'Trusted Shipper' designation will speed the movement of low-risk cargo and better focus resources and time on higher-risk shipments. This concept will become more quantifiable as a result of the ACAS program, and will assign intelligent, risk-based numeric values to shipments. For example, if a known shipper repeatedly transports the same merchandise on the same route, it may be subject to less intrusive inspections than an unknown company moving its first shipment. Trusted cargo may only need to undergo x-ray imaging while a shipment about which little is known may need to undergo more scrutiny. The ultimate result will be faster lead-times for legitimate cargo.

What are the ACAS data elements?

The following seven data elements are currently included in ACAS pilot program:

- House Airway bill (AWB) number
- Message sender
- Shipper name and address
- Consignee name and address
- Weight
- Piece count
- Description of goods

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Are there different ways to file with the ACAS pilot?

Yes. There are currently three methods to submit information to the ACAS pilot:

For Carriers		For Forwarders
Two-Part Carrier Filing	**Single Air AMS / ACAS Filing**	**Forwarder and Carrier Dual Filing**
In a two-part carrier filing, the air carrier transmits advance shipment data for security filing while subsequently transmitting post-departure Automated Manifest System (AMS) data in accordance with Trade Act requirements.	Air carriers transmit the AMS information to CBP prior to loading cargo, and perform all required screening. The pre-loading AMS transmission would be used by CBP to satisfy both ACAS and AMS requirements.	In a freight forwarder / air carrier dual filing, the freight forwarder may transmit House Air Waybill data directly to CBP to meet pre-loading targeting and manifest requirements. Both the forwarder and the carrier receive ACAS responses prior to consolidation and delivery to air carriers. Air carriers accept forwarder cargo for transport after confirming the successful ACAS transmission, and perform any required screening.

Why is ACAS different?

Although often dubbed "ISF for Air", there are several key differences that distinguish the ACAS initiative while also benefiting the industry:

- CBP is accepting pilot ACAS transmissions in various types of industry formats and mapping them to its database rather than requiring companies to adapt a government-imposed message structure.
- The pilot was specifically engineered to ensure a cross-section of the industry is represented to fully encompass the dynamics and nuances of each industry niche.
- ACAS was initiated in a matter of weeks due to the close cooperation of the air express industry and the clear need for electronic filing before take-off.
- Previously, advance information had been provided to CBP via the Air Automated Manifest System (Air AMS), however not all parties were AMS filers. The ACAS model will enable all forwarders to provide advance house bill information into the ACAS targeting system should they choose to participate.
- All of this is being done in a collaborative nature because the industry and CBP clearly saw the security hole with post-departure EDI transmission and the need for a quick rollout.

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Who is currently participating in ACAS?

The pilot initially included American Airlines, Delta, Lufthansa, and British Airways, as well as forwarders Expeditors, DHL Global Forwarding, FedEx Trade Networks, BDP International, SEKO and Kuehne + Nagel. As of the summer of 2012, an additional twelve passenger carriers, two all-cargo carriers, and fifteen freight forwarders are in the process of testing or development to become operational ACAS pilot participants or have actively expressed an interest in doing so.

Statistics:

- ACAS initially covered 28 countries in the Middle East and North Africa before expanding to Europe. The program has now grown to 99 countries worldwide.
- CBP has received more than 12 million transmissions through the ACAS pilot in the first year. Less than one percent of that number have required follow-up.