

NEW ILLICIT DRUGS / NARCOTICS CUSTOMS SNIFFING DOG DETECTION TECHNIQUE (POOLING TECHNIQUE) FOR STACKED SEA CONTAINERS

The use of customs dogs has been a successful tactical tool for detecting smuggled and hidden illicit drugs and narcotics worldwide for more than 65 years.

The World Customs Organization (WCO) has created a network of 18 Regional Dog Training Centers for the training of Customs dogs in different detection techniques.

Organized crime is increasingly using the regular transport of goods in containers as a means of transport for their drug shipments. In Europe, the main ports of entry are the seaports in Belgium and the Netherlands and also the German seaports of Hamburg and Bremerhaven.

The control of containers is difficult because they have to be individually filtered out of the stacked containers and effectively controlled, which is time-consuming and costly.

A new customs dog technique was developed at the main customs office (Hauptzollamt) Bremen, with which the air can be sucked out of several containers and collected and fed to the sniffer dogs for sampling.

This new technique makes it possible to inspect more containers and to carry out this inspection faster and more cost-effectively. This technique should lead to more targeted and better results when detecting drugs in containers. It was developed by the Bremerhaven customs dog handler Horst-Dieter Träger (Pooling-Method oder Träger-Method) and it is now also being trained and distributed in the customs dog schools of the General Customs Directorate. In the future, this should not only be limited to Germany but should lead to an improvement in the detection rate of drugs in containers worldwide within the framework of the World Customs Organization.

Key words: Container, Customs controls, Illicit Drugs, Narcotics, Smuggling, Detection Dogs, Drug detection, Dog Training, Sniffing Dog, World Customs Organization, War on Drugs.

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Introduction. The use of customs dogs has been a successful tactical tool for detecting smuggled and hidden illicit drugs and narcotics worldwide for more than 65 years. In Germany, for example, there have been two customs dog schools for training customs dogs since 1958 (*BMF, zoll.de*).

The first dogs were used in Germany for border control and customs matters as early as 1907 (*BMF, 2007*). The idea of a customs detection dog is as old as 1911 (*Roddies, 2021*). Privately owned suitable Customs dogs as protective dogs have been used as early as 1922 in Germany's Customs service (*Roddies, 2021*). In 1969 the first illicit drugs / narcotic detection dogs were trained in Germany (*Roddies, 2021*).

The World Customs Organization (WCO) is organizing the global capacity building of the customs authorities of its member states and their customs officers also in the field and on the topic of dog training - it has therefore created a network of 18 Regional Dog Training Centers (RDTC) for the training of Customs dogs (*WCO, 2022*). Dogs can be trained to detect different commodities such as smuggled money (bank notes of different currencies), illicit drugs / narcotics, tobacco, explosives, weapons or wildlife (*Roddies, 2021*).

Organized crime is increasingly using the regular transport of goods in containers as a means of transport for their illicit drug shipments. In Europe, the main ports of entry are the seaports in Belgium and the Netherlands and also the German seaports of Hamburg and Bremerhaven – in the top ten ranking there are of course also harbors in Spain, France, Italy and Greece (*porteeconomics.eu, 2023*).

The customs control of containers coming directly from the ships on the sea side is difficult because they are directly stacked in high clusters and have to be picked up and filtered individually out of the stacked containers to be effectively controlled in detail e.g. by help of a detection dog, which is time-consuming and costly.

A new customs dog technique was developed at the main customs office (Hauptzollamt) Bremen, with which the air can be sucked out of several containers and collected and fed to the sniffer dogs for sampling. This technique makes it possible to inspect more containers and to carry out this inspection faster and more cost-effectively. It was developed by the now retired customs dog handler *Horst-Dieter Träger* (pooling method or *Träger* method) and is now also being trained and distributed in the customs dog schools of the General Customs Directorate of Germany.

Newly developed sucking and pooling technique for illicit drug detection dogs. The Main Customs Office Bremen has presented a newly developed method for detecting narcotics in sea containers on the terminal site in the Bremerhaven free zone which can be tracked on site (*Main Customs Office Bremen, 2023*).

The method was developed by the main customs office (Hauptzollamt, HZA) in Bremen with the participation of the customs dog school of German Customs dog training center in Bleckede (General Customs Directorate). The new technology expands the potential for use of drug detection dogs at customs and complements the previously successfully used techniques to prevent drug smuggling.

The newly invented pooling technology can be used on three stacked containers in a row and is sucking the air out of the container. The extraction technology creates an odor carrier that can be detected at a later point in time, protected from external influences, so that the use of this technology would also be possible if the sniffer dogs were to be tied down by parallel deployments (*Main Customs Office Bremen, 2023*).

In addition, an odor carrier can be created by a lighter backpack solution. With the rucksack, the interior air can also be extracted in places where a container is stored that is particularly difficult to access, for example in cramped conditions or at greater heights with containers stacked on top of one another (*Main Customs Office Bremen, 2023*).

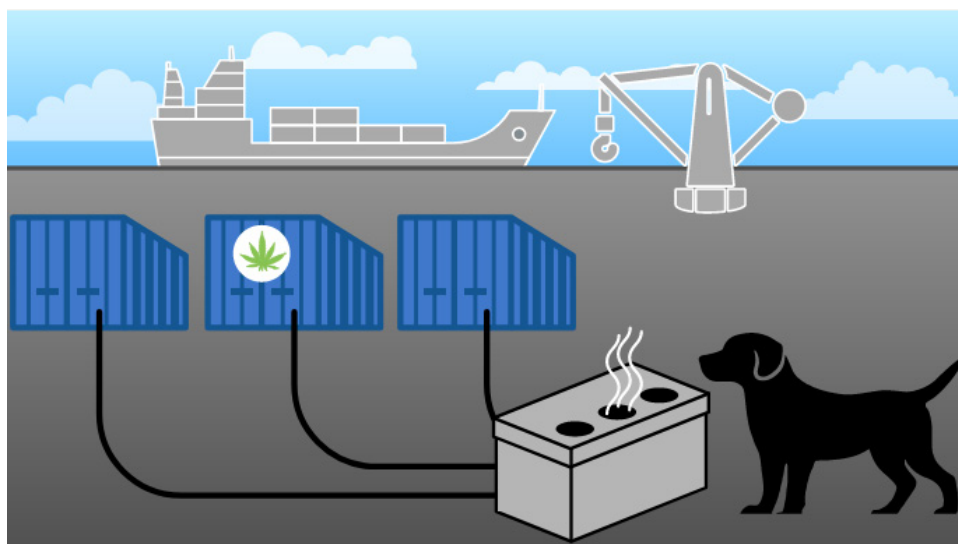


Pictures 1 and 2

Use of air extraction technology on the container (Source: Hauptzollamt Bremen)

Source: Hauptzollamt Bremen, HZA-HB: Einsatzmöglichkeiten von Spürhunden des Zolls erweitert, Durch Absaugen der Containerinnenluft können Spürhunde Drogen anzeigen, Press release as of 9/8/2023, URL: <https://www.presseportal.de/blaulicht/pm/121225/5576841>.

The customs officer *Horst-Dieter Träger* has developed a device that sucks air out of large shipping containers. Customs dogs then use this air to sniff out whether there are drugs in the container, such as cocaine or cannabis. Germany's Customs Service has demonstrated the method in the Free Zone of the Bremerhaven Container Terminal on site - three containers can be checked at the same time. A hose then leads into the container. The other end is in the developed device, a knee-high metal box. The sucked air is led through the device. The dogs can sniff at holes that are at the top of the box - if they hit a detected smell, they indicate their find (*Benecke/Schmitt, 2023* and *dpa, 2023*).



Source: *Benecke/Schmitt, Mit dieser Technik sollen Zoll-Hunde in Bremerhaven mehr Drogen finden, 9/8/2023, URL: <https://www.butenunbinnen.de/nachrichten/bremerhaven-zoll-drogen-hund-106.html>.*

Conclusions. The customs detection of illicit drugs / narcotics in global container sea transport is of the utmost importance in order to better detect and control the illicit trade of these commodities. The customs control of highly stacked containers is costly and time consuming, because they must be individually picked and opened for customs sniffer dogs to control the containers.

A newly developed pooling technique allows the pooling of air samples and its sniffing dog detection from containers which are stacked and therefore in place. This new pooling or *Träger* method allows the storage of the air particles for the later detection and has been developed by help of Germany's RDTC of the General Customs Directorate located in Bleckede.

This new technique should lead to more targeted customs controls and better results in Container controls at sea ports by help of the use of customs sniffing dogs. It should not only be available in the sea ports of Germany but must be aquired and trained by all RDTC of the WCO worldwide in order to better control the global smuggling of illicit drugs / narcotics in sea containers.

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НОВИЙ МЕТОД ВИЯВЛЕННЯ НЕЗАКОННИХ НАРКОТИКІВ/НАРКОТИЧНИХ РЕЧОВИН У МОРСЬКИХ КОНТЕЙНЕРАХ ЗА ДОПОМОГОЮ СЛУЖБОВИХ СОБАК (МЕТОД ОБ'ЄДНАННЯ)

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Використання службових собак є вдалим тактичним інструментом для виявлення контрабанди та прихованих заборонених речовин і наркотиків у всьому світі вже понад 65 років.

Всесвітня митна організація (ВМО) створила мережу з 18 регіональних кінологічних центрів для навчання службових собак різним методам виявлення.

В рамках організованої злочинності все частіше використовуються регулярні перевезення вантажів у контейнерах як засіб транспортування наркотичних засобів. В Європі основними портами ввезення є морські порти Бельгії та Нідерландів, а також німецькі морські порти Гамбурга і Бремергафена.

Контроль контейнерів ускладнюється тим, що їх потрібно відфільтрувати зі штабелів і ефективно контролювати, що займає багато часу і коштів.

У головному митному управлінні (Hauptzollamt) Бремена було розроблено нову технологію використання митних собак за допомогою якої повітря можна відсмоктувати з декількох контейнерів і давати нюхати службовим собакам для виявлення незаконних перевезень. Нова методика дозволяє оглядати більшу кількість контейнерів і проводити огляд швидше та ефективніше з меншими витратами. Методика спрямована на досягнення бажаних та кращих результатів при виявленні наркотиків у контейнерах. Вона була розроблена митним кінолог з Бремергафена Хорстом-Дітером Трегером (Pooling-Method oder Träger-Method) та наразі вивчається та поширюється у кінологічних школах Головного митного управління. У майбутньому це не повинно обмежуватися лише Німеччиною, а має призвести до підвищення рівня виявлення наркотиків у контейнерах по всьому світу в рамках Всесвітньої митної організації.

Ключові слова: контейнер, митний контроль, незаконні речовини, наркотики, контрабанда, службові собаки, виявлення наркотиків, дресирування собак, службовий собака, Всесвітня митна організація, війна з наркотиками.