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## Security on the Back Burner

Other than a speech by Tom Ridge, former secretary of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS), at RFID Journal LIVE! 2005 in April, there has been little news about the need to prevent terrorists from sneaking a weapon of mass destruction into a country through a cargo container, or blowing up an airliner by hiding a bomb in the cargo hold.

The DHS is pressing ahead with plans to test RFID with paper forms that foreigners entering the United States would be required to fill out. RFID tags on the stubs of the forms, which the visitors retain, would be used to monitor their movements. But funding for projects involving electronic seals—battery-powered RFID devices that communicate whether a container has been tampered with—has not been renewed. And a project that used RFID to track goods made in the Philippines as they traveled to the United States has been shelved for lack of funds.



You have to give people the ability to control what information a store does—or doesn't—collect.

At RFID Journal LIVE!, Ridge said that security is not about erecting barriers in the supply chain. Rather, it is about “creating partnerships, sharing information and pioneering innovation, for which your industry—the technology community and the RFID industry—is perfectly suited.” In a recent interview with rfid journal, he added that the need for private companies to increase profits and secure their goods is what will make the supply chain safer (see *Around the World in Real Time*).

End users at major U.S. companies say they are concerned about

security but don't want to be the first to secure containers with electronic seals because the RFID devices, infrastructure and network needed to track containers would increase their costs. Seaports and airports are also reluctant to invest heavily in an RFID infrastructure because it is not clear whether carriers and logistics providers would pay for its use.

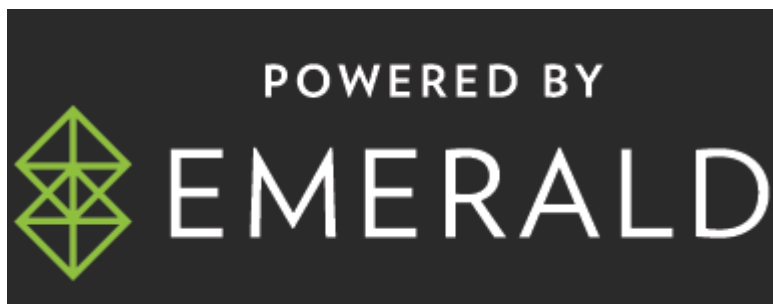
Without government funding, it will be a while before RFID catches on as a means to track and secure cargo containers. The danger is that terrorists will exploit the openness of the global systems of transportation and commerce to harm the United States or another country. If that happens, securing the supply chain will be in the news again, and no cost will be too big for companies and for governments.



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