AT YOUR SERVICE

As the threat to goods and cargo security increases, Robert Goodhouse explains how Security Scanning as a Service is helping ports and authorities ensure they are complying with security regulations and procedures

For airports or sea ports across the globe, the need to have cargo scanning equipment has become a regulatory necessity in the fight against prohibitive goods being transported between countries, whilst simultaneously guaranteeing national security from terrorist threats.

But ensuring that the cargo security scanning equipment is always well maintained and at the peak of operational efficiency can be a constant challenge and is an area often underestimated by the customer, resulting in the systems falling into disrepair and not used sufficiently. Not only do you have to make sure that the equipment is always up and running, but the need for training staff, keeping up with constantly evolving technological developments whilst improving service can turn into a management headache. Include into this conundrum the need to be constantly compliant with the international regulations and the process can rapidly zap away all the cost and time resources available.

But what if it were possible to have this all taken care of for you? This would mean you're able to have the expertise of a security supplier, trained and experienced operations staff, and any maintenance work carried out without needing to track down the parts and labour required – and all for a manageable monthly fee. In the past, this Build-Operate-Transfer (BOT) arrangement has been plagued with problems for the customer, and as a result there has been a rapidly increasing trend from customers to challenge providers to offer a wider range of services and bespoke scanning solutions.

In the past, customers that required the full security scanning service would put their request out to tender and adopt the BOT project method. This involves selecting a consortium for the contract and, under the management of a developer, each of the individual parts of the project are put together by different companies before being handed over to the end customer as the full package in a ready-to-use ▶▶

format. The equipment, which is under the 'Build-Operate-Transfer' (BOT) period for 10 years, is then fully managed and maintained by the developer, with them holding full responsibility for ensuring that it is working at full operational efficiency.

However, this method has been plagued with problems as the nature of cargo security scanning requires technically advanced equipment to be maintained to a high level by expertly trained operators. The 'Achilles heel' for customers has been the ability to maintain the equipment at optimum efficiency due to the need to invest time and resources into keeping up with the software upgrades, the availability of replacement parts and installation. Moreover, due to the costs involved and with customers facing ongoing budget cuts, the equipment can easily appear to be run down and often doesn't last the full 10 years that it should under BOT, resulting in slow through-put as it is not working at its full operational efficiency.

Whilst the consortium business model may have been practical and functional previously, it is no longer working as the changing nature of the industry and the constant software updates required to the equipment has meant that a greater level of time and resources have to be allocated to maintenance. As a result, customers have been looking to security providers to offer a great scope of services to meet their business demands and challenges. Furthermore, there has been an increase in developing countries adopting security scanning procedures from scratch due to regulations being imposed on regions that are linked to the international threat levels brought about by terrorism, and the restriction on prohibited substances by advisory bodies. The challenge of bringing everything together, and meeting the regulations, can be daunting for those just starting out, as they may not know where to start from choosing the right equipment, how to maintain operational efficiency all the way through to training the operators so they know what to look out for.

Companies like Rapiscan Systems are now offering a Security Scanning as a Service Option offering customers the fully functional, ready to use scanning equipment as they would get with a 'Turn-Key' project. Using this model, instead of having to go to a consortium, customers are able to go directly to the manufacturer and have a consultation with experts regarding their specifications so that they essentially receive a bespoke service.

Working with your scanning provider, the equipment can then be installed, maintained and operated by their expert engineers. This removes the need for the customer to have to spend time and capex in hiring the staff needed and training them in all areas of the cargo scanning process, whether it is image analysis, field engineer, operations etc. These staff will automatically know what to look out for and how to remediate any problems that arise. Should any repairs or upgrades need to be undertaken they will be carried out by the service provider immediately. This means that the cargo operator will not suffer any

prolonged periods of downtime due to broken equipment, thus increasing their operational efficiency and ensuring maximum levels of throughput.

An additional benefit of this model is that it operates under a managed services contract, ensuring ultimate flexibility for the customer. For many airport groups or sea ports, they do not have the capital expenditure available to them to purchase the equipment needed, and this managed service model removes this problem. For a manageable, fixed service fee they are given a full, ready to use scanning solution that removes the need for capital expenditure. Dealt with by the customer through one direct point of contact, the provider is able to reduce headcount by providing experienced staff, supply parts for the equipment and improve the whole service, all at a lower cost and with less management headaches than a consortium. At the end of the contract, which similarly to the BOT period is normally 10 years, the provider pulls the equipment out of the environment unless the customer has the capex required and wishes to purchase the equipment outright from the provider.

The regulations laid out by the European Union for airports and ports conducting cargo security scans, actively promotes them to look for more cost effective methods of conducting the screenings and increase efficiency. This makes the Rapiscan S2 Global Screening Solutions an ideal package for many, for example the Puerto Rico Ports Authority who has recently adopted this new approach to a 'Turn-Key' solution.

For those authorities that have a lack of capex, it is also possible for them to make a real return on their investment by adopting a 'pay-per-scan' process.

This model is not only beneficial to the end customer, but also to the security scanner providers. In the past, the consortium provided a barrier as they often wouldn't ensure the maintenance of the equipment or pass on the information regarding problems or issues with the operational capability. This meant that when the equipment was beyond repairable the provider would often get the blame and be tarnished with a bad reputation. Rapiscan Systems S2 Global Screening Solutions can also develop operational software to sync-up the customers overall business operations for maximum efficiency. This method now enables the provider to have a 'hands-on' approach to the account and equipment and can ensure that it remains at full operational efficiency and is maintained by experienced staff. This means that the customer won't get any nasty surprises and is able to trust that the provider will carry out the required work.

For those countries adopting a security scanning procedures for the first time, offering Security Scanning as a Service is the ideal way of obtaining all the equipment and expertise required to ensure a high level of service and achieve greater throughput of cargo in a shorter period of time – ultimately improving levels of operating efficiency.

■ **www.rapiscansystems.com**