



Grand Theft Cargo

Marine Forum 2026

Presented by Jannie Viljoen

Executive Summary

Counterfeit goods make up **2.3%** of global trade



Counterfeit goods make up **4.6%** of EU imports



Inspection rates **<2%** globally — most containers move unchecked.



UK solves only **5%** of crimes; **2%** of vehicle thefts minimal deterrent.

11,000 containers/day pass through Felixstowe (UK's busiest port).

Illicit trade is systemic and growing

Container shipping is structurally vulnerable

Marine Underwriters/Insurers need to treat this as financial crime risk

Illicit trade undermines public safety, legitimate businesses, and economic stability.

E-commerce growth and complex supply chains accelerate counterfeit flows.

Customs seizures show concentration in luxury goods, electronics, auto parts.

Criminals exploit false manifests (e.g., stolen cars declared as “teddy bears”).

Free Trade Zones and weak export controls create blind spots.

Source(s): OECD, 2025; WCO Illicit Trade Report, 2023

Criminal Incentives

- High margins, low risk: stolen Toyota Hilux worth £40k in UK → resold for more in West Africa.
- Thieves earn £1,500/night; syndicates reap multiples downstream.
- Encrypted communications enable global coordination.
- Weak enforcement and poor cross-border policing fuel growth.
- Insurance costs: 45% real-terms rise in UK car premiums since 2020.



Source(s): *The Economist*, Aug 2025

Fraudulent Documentation & Supply Chain Opacity

- False manifests disguise stolen goods.
- Third-party “identity services” alter VINs and paperwork.
- Chop shops dismantle cars into parts, shipped under generic codes.
- AI-generated fake rental paperwork increasingly used.
- Supply chain opacity across intermediaries and free trade zones makes detection difficult.



Source(s): *The Economist*, Aug 2025; TRACIT Global Report, 2023

Case Study – Stolen Cars & Phones

‘Gone in 60 seconds’

Cars	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ UK thefts up 75% in a decade; 130,000 stolen in 2024▪ Destination: West Africa (SUVs, Hiluxes highly prized).▪ Process: theft → fake plates → GPS jamming → containerized in <24h.
Phones	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ London = “phone-snatching capital of Europe” (70,000 stolen in 2024).▪ Destination: China (Shenzhen) — stripped for parts, resold globally
Tractors & GPS Kits	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Stolen from UK farms → shipped to Russia/Eastern Europe.
Supply chain model	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Multi-party syndicates (thieves, logistics handlers, document forgers).



Source(s): *The Economist*, Aug 2025

South Africa's Transport and Logistics Sector



9–10% of GDP
1+ million jobs



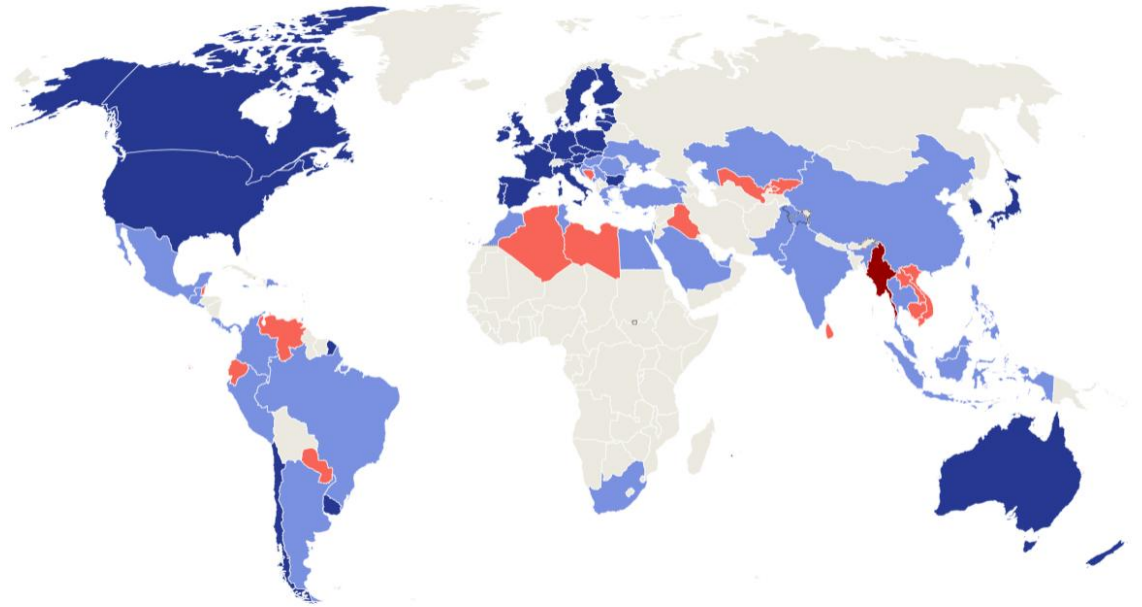
E-commerce growth:
R71bn in 2023
R100bn by 2026



The Illicit Trade Environment Index
Developed by Economist Impact
South Africa: Score 63.5 Rank (49/87)



420 trucks hijacked in Q2 2025 (SAPS)
2,670 cargo theft incidents,
R577m losses (TAPA EMEA)



Score 0-100 where 100=best performance
Rank out of 87 countries where 1=best. '-' denotes tie in rank.

Source(s): Infrastructure News, Feb 2026; Business Unity South Africa (Busa), Citizen (May 2023); Economist Impact

Truck Hijacking Fleet Security Crisis

- 1,996 truck hijackings in 2023 (Statista)
- Gauteng = 60% of incidents; N1, N3, N12, N17 corridors exposed
- Syndicate tactics: fake police lights, GPS jamming, insider collusion, cyber attacks
- Mitigation: layered security (jam-resistant GPS, covert trackers, AI dashcams, geofencing, cyber resilience)

Theft & Hijack Incidences per 1,000 trips



What does this mean?

- Marine Underwriters are 2.5x more likely to suffer a loss vs HCV GIT counterparts
- Without Risk Management, Marine Underwriters are 5x more likely to suffer a loss from these Perils

Source(s): DigitFMS, April 2026

Risk Mitigation Strategies

7 Key Takeaways

ContainerVault

Proudly South African Container solution backed/Reinsured by Lloyds via Resilea/Gallagher Re

Nicholas will unpack more in his presentation

Revise Cargo & Marine Policy Exclusions

Require verified electronic Bills of Lading for high-risk cargo/routes. Explicit exclusions for materially false manifests. Enhanced requirements for sensitive ports and high-GTRIC1 economies

Develop Port & Route-Specific Risk Pricing

OECD sensitivity indicators as pricing signals. Example: Felixstowe (2.47) vs Antwerp (0.71). Electronics, clothing, leather goods, cosmetics, toys = highest counterfeit exposure.

Invest in Supply Chain Due Diligence

Require adoption of ICC/BASCAP Declaration of Intent standards. Incentivize compliance with premium discounts.

Geopolitical & Sanctions Risk Monitoring

Russian sanctions boosted demand for stolen UK farm equipment. Flag commodities/routes linked to sanctioned-market demand. Treat GPS kits/agricultural machinery as elevated-risk classes.

Engage with Regulatory & Industry Initiatives

Support adoption of electronic manifests, RFID tracking (ISO 17363), and UNODC-WCO Container Control Programme. Insurers should advocate reforms via trade boards.

Scenario Planning for Geopolitical Shifts (1)

A series of crises in recent years, eg COVID-19, has shown how easily the global trading system can be thrown into chaos. The desire to reduce dependence on particular chokepoints for both commercial and geopolitical is natural.

Scenario Planning for Geopolitical Shifts (2)

Chinese port investment (e.g., Piraeus volumes up 6x since 2010). Medium-term risk shifts in Mediterranean flows. The scramble for ports in Greece is part of a global contest to control the plumbing of maritime trade. Impact on Illicit flows to be seen

Source: *The Economist - The global scramble for ports, April 2026*

Our Call to Action

Grand Theft Cargo is not just about stolen goods — it is about honouring the responsibility that comes with the trust bestowed on Marine stakeholders as part of the commerce value chain. Our time to act is now.



Greater Responsibility

For Marine Cargo Underwriters, Insurers, and Reinsurers, illicit trade is not just about stolen goods — it is about living up to the greater responsibility that comes with the trust already placed in our industry. It's not only protecting financial outcomes but reinforcing the integrity of global trade itself.



Widening Gap on Loss Ratios

Loss ratios in marine cargo are already outpacing heavy commercial vehicle lines, and without proactive intervention, the gap will widen. With stricter warranties and documentary conditions, underwriters can drive behavioural change across the supply chain. We have the technology and tools to help us.



KYC (Know Your Cargo)

At its core, it's the discipline about Knowing Your Client and What they are transporting ("Know your Cargo"). Yet discipline alone is not enough. We must also invest in innovative solutions that outpace the criminals — smarter tracking, verified electronic documentation, and intelligence-led risk pricing. To protect commerce, we must be one step ahead, not one step behind.