

# 2026 Cargo Theft Tactics & Trends to Watch

Global, North American & European Cargo Theft  
Tactics & Trend Report



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# EXECUTIVE BRIEF

Cargo theft remains a persistent and evolving risk across global supply chains. While many theft patterns observed in recent years continue, the nature of cargo crime has become increasingly deliberate and, in some cases, digitally enabled. Organized criminal groups are targeting specific commodities, transportation modes, and operational vulnerabilities across regions, reinforcing that cargo theft is no longer an isolated or opportunistic issue. Instead, it reflects a broader systems level exposure that spans in transit movements, facilities, and the digital processes that support modern logistics operations.

This report, developed by BSI Consulting and co-branded for Roanoke distribution, examines cargo theft trends across Global, North American, Asian, and European markets. The findings highlight shifts in theft locations, modalities, and tactics, including the continued prominence of truck-based theft, increased facility related incidents in certain regions, and the growth of strategic theft methods such as fraudulent pickups and impersonation schemes. For logistics service providers and cargo owners, these insights are intended to support informed discussions around risk awareness, operational discipline, and supply chain resilience.

“Cargo theft has fully matured into a systems problem— attacking multiple parts of the supply chain, not isolated incidents.”

— **Tony Pelli**, *Practice Director, BSI Consulting*

“... no longer localized or opportunistic— it is coordinated, digital, and extraordinarily costly.”

— **Dr. Cyndee Garbrecht**, *SVP, Claims, MRSNGA*

# Global Cargo Theft Trends

Global cargo theft activity in 2025 remained broadly consistent with prior years, while continuing to reflect shifts in theft locations, targeted modalities, and criminal tactics across regions worldwide. Incidents were recorded across multiple geographies, reinforcing that cargo theft remains a persistent and geographically dispersed risk within global supply chains.

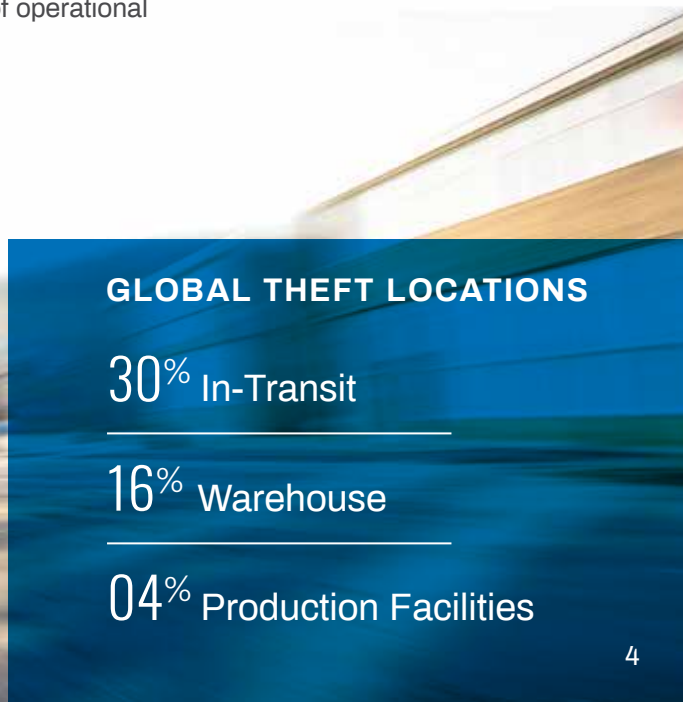


## Primary Theft Locations

In-transit theft continued to represent the most common theft location globally, accounting for approximately 30% of reported incidents. Theft from warehouses represented 16% of incidents, while thefts occurring at production facilities accounted for 4%. South and Central America remained notable regions of risk for in-transit theft, with Brazil and Mexico showing heightened exposure, particularly related to hijacking activity.

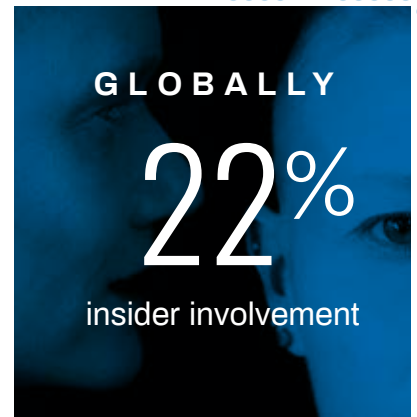
## Transportation Modalities

Trucks remained the most frequently targeted transportation modality, accounting for approximately 70% of global cargo theft incidents. While rail, sea, and river transport experienced fewer incidents overall, these modes continued to face notable theft activity in certain regions, reflecting the broad range of operational environments exposed to cargo crime.



## Regional Concentration and Insider Involvement

Cargo theft hotspots were observed across multiple regions, including Brazil, Mexico, India, the United States, Indonesia, Chile, China, Germany, and South Africa. In Asia, theft patterns shifted compared to the prior year, with a decline in truck-related thefts and a corresponding increase in thefts from facilities. Across all regions, insider participation remained a material factor, with approximately 22% of reported thefts globally involving some level of insider involvement.



## Commonly Targeted Commodities

Food and beverage products remained the most frequently stolen commodities globally, accounting for approximately 14% of reported incidents. Agricultural products represented 8%, followed by electronics at 6%. Construction materials, automotive products, and metals each accounted for approximately 3% of reported thefts, reflecting continued targeting of goods with high resale demand and logistical accessibility.

## High-Theft Commodity Groups Globally



# North American Cargo Theft Trends

Cargo theft risks across North America intensified in 2025, driven by the expansion of rail-related theft and the continued growth of strategic theft schemes. These trends reflect a shift away from opportunistic crime toward more organized, intelligence-led activity that increasingly blends physical theft with cyber enabled fraud.

## Transportation Modalities

Trucks accounted for 82% of incidents, underscoring the sustained vulnerability of in-transit freight, particular in Mexico, where hijackings are prevalent. While truck and facility thefts remained consistent with historical trends, rail cargo theft saw a continued increase.

## Rail Cargo Theft

Rail cargo theft emerged as one of the most acute security challenges in the United States, accounting for approximately 10% of all reported cargo theft incidents.

Organized criminal groups—often linked to transnational networks operating out of Mexico—executed coordinated attacks along key rail corridors, with heightened exposure observed in California, Arizona, and the Midwest. Major rail hubs, including Chicago, Memphis, and Southern California, were particularly affected.

Several structural factors contributed to the increase in rail theft activity. Criminal groups exploited slow moving trains in urban and semi-rural areas and employed coordinated tactics such as cutting brake lines, sabotaging signal equipment, and staging offloading operations supported by lookouts and radio communication. In multiple cases, thieves demonstrated prior knowledge of container contents and railcar placement, suggesting the use of insider intelligence.



Rail Theft  
climbed to  
10%  
OF ALL THEFT  
INCIDENTS

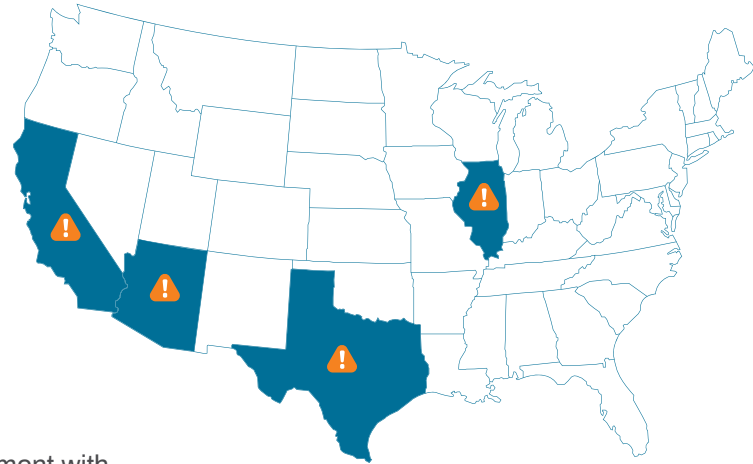
~30%

involve strategic theft incidents

## Strategic Cargo Theft

Strategic cargo theft expanded rapidly across the United States in 2025, representing approximately 30% of all reported cargo theft incidents. These schemes relied on deception, impersonation, and cyber intrusion rather than direct force. Criminal groups used phishing emails, spoofed domains, compromised credentials, and manipulated freight platforms to arrange fictitious pickups, submit fraudulent documentation, and divert high-value shipments.

Strategic theft activity was most concentrated in California, which accounted for nearly half of reported incidents, followed by Arizona, Texas, and Illinois. High-value and tightly controlled commodities—particularly pharmaceuticals—were disproportionately targeted, reflecting deliberate cargo selection and exploitation of trust based logistics processes.



## Targeted Commodities

Stolen commodities in North America reflected strong alignment with consumer demand and resale value. The most frequently targeted goods included footwear (31%), electronics (23%), apparel (8%), and other high demand consumer products. These patterns indicate that theft activity was driven by intentional targeting rather than random or opportunistic selection.

### NORTH AMERICAN HIGH-THEFT COMMODITY GROUPS



# Asian Cargo Theft Trends

Cargo theft activity across Asia in 2025 reflected a diverse and evolving risk landscape shaped by regional infrastructure, cross-border trade flows, and varying levels of supply-chain maturity. While overall theft patterns differed by country, incidents continued to affect both transportation movements and fixed facilities, reinforcing the region's exposure to multiple theft environments.

## Theft Locations and Modality Shifts

Across several Asian markets, theft activity showed a shift away from traditional in-transit truck theft toward increased incidents occurring at facilities, including warehouses, yards, and distribution centers. This change reflected both improvements in some transportation controls and the continued exploitation of access points within fixed locations where cargo is staged, consolidated, or temporarily stored.

Truck-related theft nevertheless remained a material risk in certain countries, particularly where high-freight density, congestion, and extended dwell times created opportunity. The diversity of operating environments across Asia contributed to uneven exposure, with theft patterns varying significantly by market.

## Geographic Concentration

Cargo theft incidents were reported across multiple Asian countries, with notable activity observed in India, Indonesia, and China. These markets reflected a combination of high-shipment volumes, complex logistics networks, and expanding domestic and cross-border trade. The concentration of theft activity in these regions underscored the importance of localized operating conditions in shaping cargo theft exposure.

Countries with Notable Exposure



Increasing Theft Incidents at Facilities



## Increasing Insider Involvement

### Insider Involvement

Insider participation remained a relevant factor in reported cargo theft incidents across Asia. In several cases, thefts were facilitated by individuals with access to facilities, shipment information, or operational processes. This trend highlighted how familiarity with cargo movements and schedules can be leveraged to support theft activity, particularly within facility-based environments.

### Commonly Targeted Commodities

Frequently targeted commodities in Asia included food products, agricultural goods, consumer electronics, and industrial materials. These goods were often selected based on resale potential, ease of movement, and demand within local or regional markets. Commodity targeting patterns varied by country, reflecting differences in domestic consumption, export activity, and supply-chain infrastructure.

#### ASIAN HIGH-THEFT COMMODITY GROUPS



# European Cargo Theft Trends

Cargo theft activity across Europe in 2025 reflected a complex risk environment influenced by cross-border trade, dense transportation networks, and varying national enforcement and security practices. Incidents continued to occur across multiple countries and transport modes, reinforcing Europe’s exposure to both in-transit and facility-based theft scenarios.

## Theft Locations and Modalities

In-transit theft remained a prominent feature of cargo crime across Europe, particularly along major road corridors and near logistics hubs where freight density and congestion create opportunity. Facility based theft—including incidents at warehouses, yards, and distribution centers—also remained a recurring challenge in several markets, reflecting the importance of access controls and operational discipline within fixed locations.

Truck transport continued to represent a primary exposure across much of the region, given its central role in both domestic and cross border freight movement. Theft activity was not limited to a single mode, however, underscoring the varied environments in which cargo is handled and temporarily stored throughout Europe.

## Geographic Concentration

Cargo theft incidents were reported across multiple European countries, with notable activity observed in markets such as Germany, the United Kingdom, Italy, and France. These countries reflect a combination of high-freight volumes, extensive highway networks, and critical logistics infrastructure supporting both regional and global trade flows.



Truck Transport  
Remains a  
Primary Risk





## Organized Theft Activity and Insider Involvement

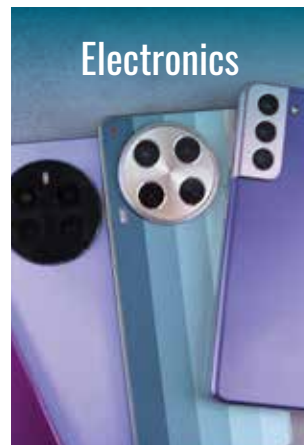
### Organized and Insider Enabled Activity

Organized theft groups continued to play a role in European cargo crime, particularly in thefts involving coordinated surveillance, timing, and rapid offloading. In some cases, insider involvement contributed to theft activity by providing access to shipment information, schedules, or facilities. These dynamics reinforced the role of planning and intelligence in European cargo theft incidents.

### Commonly Targeted Commodities

Targeted commodities across Europe frequently included consumer goods, electronics, food products, and industrial materials. These goods were often selected based on ease of resale, transportability, and consistent demand across domestic and cross-border markets. Commodity targeting patterns varied by country, reflecting differences in trade flows and local market

#### EUROPEAN HIGH-THEFT COMMODITY GROUPS





“Cargo theft has fully matured into a systems problem—attacking multiple parts of the supply chain, not isolated incidents.”

— Tony Pelli, *Practice Director, BSI Consulting*

## Cargo Theft as a Systems Level Risk

What stands out most in this year’s cargo theft trends is how clearly theft has become a systems level problem. Across the most affected geographies and commodities, the pattern is consistent: organized groups are selecting loads deliberately, exploiting predictable handoffs, dwell time, unsecured parking, and slow moving rail, and using insider access and weak verification to stay ahead. Theft is increasingly shaped by how supply chains are designed and operated—lane by lane, node by node, and system by system—rather than by isolated bad luck events.

That is why cargo theft must be treated as an enterprise risk spanning physical security, operational controls, and the digital layer underpinning modern logistics. Framing it as a standalone security issue no longer matches how losses are occurring.

## Applying a Structured Risk Framework

A supply-chain risk management framework helps keep the response practical and structured. BSI refers to this approach as MESH—Map the exposure, Evaluate the vulnerabilities, Strategize the mitigations, and Harmonize the controls so they scale. Mapping starts with clarity on what is being protected and where exposure is most concentrated: which products attract the most theft pressure, which modalities carry the greatest consequence, and which corridors or nodes create the highest concentration of risk.

Evaluation then forces harder questions: where trust is being relied on without verification, where single points of failure exist—such as a freight marketplace credential, a carrier onboarding step, or a yard access badge—and where weak inventory integrity allows long-term pilferage to go undetected. It is also where insider risk must be treated as a design requirement, with segregation of duties, auditability, and control testing built into daily operations rather than left to annual compliance exercises.

## Strategic Theft and the Digital Layer

The rise in strategic theft across North America is a clear signal that the threat model has shifted. When phishing, spoofed domains, and compromised credentials can trigger fictitious pickups or redirect high value loads, prevention cannot rely on physical controls alone. Identity, authorization, and transaction integrity at each handoff are now as critical as locks, fences, and GPS tracking.

The objective is not to slow operations, but to make them more trustworthy by design—reducing opportunities for criminals to insert themselves into the chain of custody through digital or procedural gaps.

“Mapping, evaluation, strategy, & harmonization keep the response practical—and scalable.”

“Criminals are increasingly attacking the process, not just the shipment.”

## Harmonizing Controls Across the Network

While theft tactics vary by region—from rail corridor targeting and facility based theft to app enabled impersonation—the underlying control-themes are consistent. Reducing dwell time and exposure, standardizing verification, strengthening facility access and inventory controls, and linking physical events with digital monitoring are foundational across markets.

“The tactics differ by region, but the control themes are remarkably consistent.”

Harmonization is where many programs gain traction or stall. An end-to-end approach—rather than siloed responses—helps organizations measure maturity, benchmark progress over time, and improve continuously. Done well, it turns cargo theft from an unpredictable cost of doing business into a managed, measurable risk that can be reduced through smarter design, tighter governance, and stronger operating discipline across the network.



“Strategic theft is no longer emerging—it is a mature, highly organized criminal enterprise.”

— Dr. Cyndee Garbrecht, *SVP, Claims, MRSNGA*

## Strategic Theft as a Mature Threat

The most significant escalation in 2025 was the continued growth of strategic theft, commonly referred to as fraudulent pickups. Now representing approximately 1/3 of all cargo theft incidents, these schemes are driven by sophisticated criminal networks using AI enabled impersonation, digital identity theft, fictitious carrier creation, MC number cloning, and double brokering. By exploiting vulnerabilities in the freight ecosystem, criminals can impersonate legitimate carriers, secure loads under stolen credentials, and disappear before the fraud is detected.

Industry estimates place annual losses from these organized schemes between \$3.5 billion and \$10 billion, underscoring the scale and complexity of a threat that continues to intensify across the transportation, insurance, and logistics sectors.

## Implications Looking Ahead

Looking ahead into 2026, cargo theft can no longer be viewed as an isolated or regional crime. Its effects extend across the supply chain—impacting shippers, brokers, carriers, insurers, drivers, and ultimately consumers through higher costs, claims pressure, and operational disruption. No single measure will solve the problem; progress depends on coordinated, multilayered action across technology, people, process, and governance. Even then, organized cargo theft will continue to evolve alongside the supply chain itself.

“Cargo theft is no longer localized or opportunistic—it is coordinated, digital, and extraordinarily costly.”



## Connect Screen

### A Platform You Can Trust to Enhance Decision-Making & Build Supply Chain Resiliency

**BSI Connect Screen** is an integrated platform that employs a risk-based approach to supply-chain risk management programs. It targets the biggest global supply-chain threats to help organizations inspire trust and build resilience through data-driven insight. Our platform contains the largest proprietary global supply chain risk intelligence database that looks at more than 20 risk ratings in over 200 countries. BSI Connect Screen provides services and solutions to accelerate your understanding of supply-chain risk and gain insight to empower decision making to build a more resilient supply chain.

These services include:

- Custom intelligence services
- Powerful, interactive risk mapping
- Daily updates and notifications
- Custom report builder
- Supply-chain incident database
- Connect Screen auditing system
- Advisory services
- Training services

**Contact BSI Consulting:**  
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## About Roanoke

Roanoke Insurance Group Inc. is a specialty insurance brokerage focused on serving supply-chain logistics businesses operating in complex, regulated environments. Founded in 1935, Roanoke provides insurance, surety bond, and ATA Carnet solutions for customs brokers, freight forwarders, logistics service providers, and organizations that support global trade. Guided by our brand promise, Solutions That Go the Distance®, Roanoke is a trusted partner known for deep industry expertise, accuracy, and long-term client relationships.

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