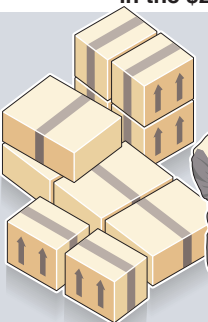# Flaws revealed in air cargo security
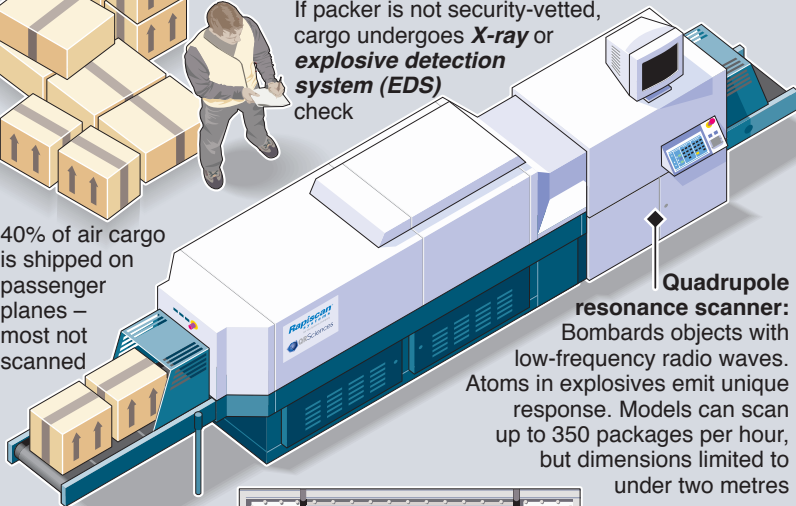
A failed Al Qaeda plot to bring down cargo planes with explosives packed in printer cartridges is prompting governments to shore up security in the $215 billion per year global air freight industry

Known consignors: Cargo packed by security-vetted shippers is not subject to further security checks – this applies to 65% of 26 million tonnes of air freight per year

If packer is not security-vetted, cargo undergoes *X-ray* or *explosive detection system (EDS)* check

40% of air cargo is shipped on passenger planes – most not scanned

Quadrupole resonance scanner: Bombards objects with low-frequency radio waves. Atoms in explosives emit unique response. Models can scan up to 350 packages per hour, but dimensions limited to under two metres

Air cargo containers: Provide most efficient use of aircraft capacity, speed loading and unloading, and enable use of automated handling systems

More than 6,000 containers in use worldwide every day

Neutron beam technology: Can scan containers but is slow – one container per hour

Inspection of all international air cargo would cost estimated $650m per year