Dear Sir

I refer to your article on the changing role of Customs which was published in the first issue of the World Customs Journal. In that article you discussed the traditional role and functions of customs authorities as well as their new emerging responsibilities. After reading the article, I thought it might be a good opportunity to write to you and inform you and the readers of the Journal of my research in the area of customs relating specifically to regulation of offshore oil and gas installations.

With the increasing number of offshore oil and gas platforms on the continental shelf areas around the world, their regulation is becoming a completely new area of responsibility for some customs authorities. Moreover, customs authorities that already have responsibilities in the regulation of the offshore petroleum industry may find that they have to devote more time and resources to fulfil these responsibilities.

Customs may be involved in the regulation of various activities relating to offshore oil and gas installations including the attachment of installations to the seabed, the movement of people, animals, ships, aircraft, goods and stores to and from offshore platforms, the export and import of platforms, as well as some operational aspects such as the export of oil and gas directly from platforms. More recently, as a result of developments in international maritime security law, many customs authorities have also become responsible for ensuring compliance with certain maritime security requirements applicable to offshore facilities. Customs officers usually have additional enforcement powers available to them under these maritime security provisions.

However, in the international context, my research has shown that, so far, no significant international initiatives have been pursued in this area of law by international organisations or individual countries. There are currently no commonly accepted international principles that specifically address the issue of customs control of offshore resources installations. The Revised Kyoto Convention is silent on the issue of customs regulation of offshore platforms and to the best of my knowledge, the World Customs Organization (WCO) has not issued any recommendations or guidelines with respect to regulation and control of offshore installations by Customs authorities. There is also a general lack of literature on this topic and information is not readily available.

I have previously raised this issue in Australia in a publication on this topic where I examined Australian legislation. Now the new World Customs Journal seems to be the most appropriate publication to raise this issue again, but this time on the international scale. The purpose of this letter is to draw the attention of readers and those involved in customs research to this topic, and to generate further discussion and interest in this area of research. It also calls on the industry, researchers and government officials to work towards developing international rules, recommendations or guidelines relating to customs regulation of offshore installations, and the extent of customs control over offshore oil and gas operations.

I thank you in advance for giving me the opportunity to comment on this matter and I also congratulate the Editorial Board on the successful launch of this exciting publication.

Yours faithfully

Mikhail Kashubsky, BA, LL.B, LL.M
Director, Centre for Offshore Energy Law and Policy (COELP)
Canberra, Australia