

CARGO THEFT INTELLIGENCE — H2-2026 OUTLOOK

Cargo theft numbers dipped. Don't let that fool you.

What the Q2-2026 data means for your 2027 security plan

By Marc Schrader • September 2026 • US, Mexico, and Brazil



605

US cargo theft incidents recorded in Q2-2026

230–260

Projected US incidents per month in H2-2026

28%

Southern California Red Zone thefts that were deceptive pickups

92%

High-value tech theft cases where deception played a role

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OVERVIEW

US cargo theft was down 6% in the first half of 2026 compared with the same stretch last year. On paper, that's good news. I'd be careful reading too much into it.

When I look at what our Global Intelligence Team tracked in Q2, the count matters less than how the thefts happened. Fewer of them involved force. More of them came down to stolen identities and fake paperwork. And the back half of the year is shaping up to be busier than the front half.

So if you're finalizing a 2027 security plan right now, here's the question I'd put on the table: are your controls built for the way theft actually happens today?

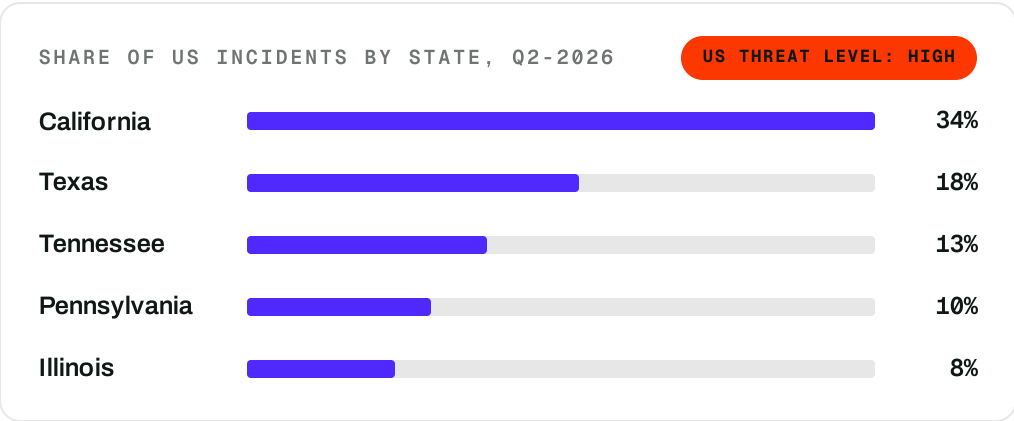
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US OUTLOOK

Where the US stands right now

We recorded 605 cargo theft incidents in the US in Q2-2026. That's up 5% from Q1 and down 5% from Q2-2025. Call it roughly 202 a month, or close to seven every single day.

The second half looks worse. Our team projects **230 to 260 incidents per month in H2-2026**, and we've rated the US threat level **HIGH**. Peak season and holiday inventory put more loads on the road, which gives crews more to pick from.



Electronics led all commodities at 23% of thefts. Miscellaneous freight came in at 20%, and clothing and shoes at 10%. One detail jumped out at me: batteries and panels made up almost a quarter of the electronics thefts. Energy storage has turned into a real target, and fast.

02

THREAT SHIFTS

What's actually changing

The total count only tells you so much. Four shifts in the Q2 data matter a lot more for planning.

28%

Red Zone thefts
via deceptive
pickup

Deceptive pickups are climbing

This is the one I'd lose sleep over. A deceptive pickup is when someone uses a stolen identity or doctored documents to collect your freight like a legitimate carrier would. It made up 11% of US thefts in Q2. In the Southern California "Red Zone" it hit 28%, up from 24% the quarter before.

The problem is that nothing looks wrong at pickup. You usually find out when the load doesn't show up. Locks and GPS won't catch a driver you willingly handed the freight to.

46%

US incidents
that were
pilferage

Pilferage is still the biggest bucket

Partial theft from trailers and containers accounted for 46% of incidents. Each hit is smaller. But it happens constantly, it's hard to spot at handoff, and a lot of the time nobody notices until the load reaches its destination.

17%

Red Zone thefts
tied to rail

Rail exposure is growing

Rail-related theft reached 11% of US incidents and 17% in the Red Zone. Intermodal freight sitting in yards and on sidings is getting a lot more attention from organized groups.

28%

US thefts
between midnight
and 6am

The timing is predictable

Of all US thefts, 28% happened between midnight and 6am, the riskiest stretch of the day. And the quadrant of the country that includes Southern California accounted for 38% of all US incidents.

Our team expects these groups to keep getting more sophisticated through year-end. Expect more planning, better intel on what's in the trailer, and more fraud in place of force.

03

AI INFRASTRUCTURE

AI hardware is the new target

If you ship AI infrastructure, pay attention to this part.

\$150M+

Recorded losses of AI equipment

+34%

Thefts of data center equipment, components, and chips since 2024

+110%

Growth in total value stolen over the same period

92%

High-value technology cases where deception played a role

Our research has tracked more than \$150 million in recorded losses of AI equipment. Thefts of data center equipment, computing components, and chips are up 34% since 2024. The total value stolen is up more than 110%, so it has more than doubled. And deception played a role in 92% of the cases involving high-value tech shipments.

The exposure reaches well past the chipmakers. If you build, lease, or supply data center capacity, you're now moving loads worth millions, often on tight timelines and with carriers who don't normally haul high-value goods. That's exactly the setup organized crews go looking for.

04

MEXICO AND BRAZIL

What we're seeing in Mexico and Brazil

If you've got nearshoring operations or Latin American distribution, the risk looks different. It's a lot more concentrated.

MEXICO, Q2-2026

86.3%**of cargo theft in just 10 states**

The State of Mexico (18.0%), Puebla (17.9%), and Guanajuato (10.8%) made up almost half on their own. Food and drinks were the top target at 30%. Auto and parts, and construction and industrial goods, followed at 9% each.

BRAZIL, Q2-2026

97%**of incidents in just 10 states**

Food and drinks (32%) and auto parts (16%) were hit hardest. We expect cargo theft risk in Brazil to keep growing through 2026.

Two things in Mexico I'd watch closely.

Parked trucks are more exposed

Theft of parked units rose to 39.3% of incidents, up 5.3 points from a year ago, and a lot of it happens at roadside truck stops. Interception in transit is still the most common method at 58.8%.

The Bajío corridor is heating up

Guanajuato, San Luis Potosí, and Jalisco all gained share compared with Q2-2025. That's the manufacturing belt a lot of nearshoring strategies are built on.

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2027 PLANNING

Five questions to ask before your 2027 budget locks

The way I see it, the biggest risk for 2027 is building your plan around the 2023 version of the threat. Before budgets lock, sit down with your team and work through these.

01 Can we verify who's picking up our freight?

If a carrier's identity, documents, or dispatch details can be spoofed, your physical security doesn't matter much. How are carriers vetted today? How do pickup credentials get confirmed on site?

02 Where does our freight sit still?

Parked trailers, yard dwell, rail sidings, overnight stops. That's where most thefts happen. Map your dwell points against the midnight to 6am window and see what lines up.

03 Would we catch a partial theft before the customer does?

Pilferage is close to half of US incidents. Are seal integrity and load counts checked at every handoff, or only at origin and destination?

04 Has our risk model caught up with what we ship?

Batteries, energy storage, and AI hardware carry very different risk than they did two years ago. If your commodity risk tiers haven't changed, they're probably out of date.

05 Do our nearshoring lanes have their own plan?

Mexico's Bajío corridor and its parked-unit exposure need controls built for those lanes. A copy of your US playbook won't cut it.

Here's the deal. Theft is moving away from force and toward fraud, and more of it happens at the handoff than out on the highway. If your 2027 plan accounts for that, you'll be ahead of most.

MARC SCHRADER, OVERHAUL

WANT THE FULL NUMBERS?

Get the Q2-2026 cargo theft reports

Everything in this piece comes from our quarterly reports, and they go a lot deeper on each region and commodity. If you want to talk through what this means for a specific lane, email me at marc.schrader@over-haul.com.

United States Q2-2026 Cargo Theft Report

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Mexico Q2-2026 Cargo Theft Report

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Brazil Q2-2026 Cargo Theft Report

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AI Infrastructure Intel Report

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ABOUT THE DATA

Every number here comes from Overhaul's Global Intelligence Team, which tracks cargo theft across the US, Mexico, and Brazil every quarter. The H2-2026 figures are projections, not recorded counts.

Source: Overhaul Global Intelligence Team, Q2-2026 Cargo Theft Reports.



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