Does Customs check containers at transhipment port

Rik Schmidt had a question whether customs check containers at transhipment port..!!

Do containers go thru customs or duties checks during transhipment? i.e. In Singapore,Hong Kong, Busan?

What is likelyhood of a container being delayed for such reasons during transhipment?

Any insight on transhipment procedure rather than the obvious would be greatly appreciated.

For example I have heard that in some ports any container in port for 48hrs or longer is subject to customs inspection, possible duties etc? Am I misinformed?

Rik, after the 9/11 attacks in USA, many countries starting with USA, started applying the 24 hours advance manifest filing rule..

What is the 24 hour advance manifest rule and how does it work..??

I will use USA as an example here.. 24 hours advance manifest rule means that the complete manifest containing all cargoes that are to be discharged in the USA for local delivery or transhipment via USA must be sent to US Customs 24 hours prior to the loading of the cargo at the LOAD PORT..
Based on this manifest information, US Customs will do a security risk assessment to identify any high-risk shipments for purposes of ensuring cargo safety and security and preventing smuggling..

The load port cannot load cargo for which they have not received the clearance from the US Customs and if they do and the ship sails to the USA, then the entire ship runs the risk of being denied entry at the first USA Port. So you can very well imagine the hullabaloo that this could create if not monitored properly..

Apart from the USA, countries like Canada, Mexico, China, 27 member states of the EU, Japan to name a few have all implemented this rule..

Basis above advance manifest ruling, most countries already know what cargo is coming their way. Therefore they can always choose the container or cargo that they want to inspect based on their security risk assessment.

It is impossible for major transhipment hubs like Shanghai, Rotterdam, Singapore, Hong Kong etc to inspect every container that gets transhipped via their ports.
If they do pull out a few containers to inspect, the time frame for such inspection will depend on the severity of the risk assessment. But this is not a regular occurrence as far as I have seen.

Under normal and ideal circumstances there is no major procedure involved in the transhipment of cargo, other than the obvious, but to those who would like to know about the process of transhipment, please read my previous articles What is Transhipment and Different loading and discharging vessel..

About your statement "in some ports any container in port for 48 hrs or longer is subject to customs inspection, possible duties etc", I am not aware of such a situation, and I don't believe it to be true, because even in the most sophisticated of transhipment ports, there are a lot of cases where containers do wait for more than 48 hours.

But then each country has its own rules and this could be true possibly somewhere in the world.

If anyone knows of any countries that have such rules, or has any experiences of above or contrary to above, everyone would be pleased to hear your comments.