WEIGHING IN

When it comes to issues of money laundering, tax evasion or capital flight as it relates to trade, Florida International University professor of finance John Zdanowicz is the man in the know. Often cited for his work on abnormal trade pricing as a way to detect money laundering – as in, why did that kilo of Vitamin C cost $3,000? – the trade guru has now launched a new study into abnormal weights as a way to detect terrorist shipments of explosives and weapons. His work will help the Division of Homeland Security expose terrorists operating across US borders by helping target previously random trade inspections. The term for this new work? The science of cargo profiling. So far, Zdanowicz – along with professor Donald Chambers of Lafayette College – have come across some pretty strange transactions. These include shipments of 200-pound briefcases and 181-pound pens, both from Malaysia, and 1-kilogram shipments of coffee from Indonesia – tipping the scales at 1.26 kilograms each. No comment on what happened to those heavy-weight shippers.