

AVIATION SECURITY

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For nearly four decades, the aviation industry has had to counter and respond to the threat of terrorism. Air transport has been a high-profile target for terrorists that seek to publicize their cause and further their aims on the international stage. While the number of attacks has declined significantly, the threat has not. The emergence in the past decade of religious fundamentalism and the suicide terrorist presents a very real and present threat to civil aviation.

Whereas the earlier attacks on civil aviation were largely focused against aircraft inflight, the modern trend reflects a broader front of attack, with the aim of causing mass fatalities. We have seen other public transport infrastructure (such as railway systems and underground mass transit systems) targeted by suicide bombers, resulting in very high loss of life. But civil aviation and airports remain a high profile target to the terrorist and other criminals. ACI member airports are on the front line and aviation security remains one of the highest priorities.

A State responsibility

The real target of international terrorism is not an airline or an airport. It is the State, its government and its policies. States have the unequivocal responsibility for protecting their citizens and other nationals within their jurisdiction. This not only involves establishing legal measures to prosecute offenders and to empower law enforcement personnel, it involves establishing a national security framework that ensures that the threat is continually assessed and that commensurate preventive counter measures are in place.

It also involves maintaining a well organized counter terrorism intelligence capability that cooperates closely with counterparts internationally, so that terrorist plots can be foiled at the planning stage. The security measures at an airport, while still absolutely vital, are at best a last line of defence.

Therefore, as aviation security measures form part of a State's counter terrorism strategy, so the funding of these measures should be borne largely by the State. Unfortunately,

in many countries, this is not the case. Too often, governments mandate additional security measures that the aviation industry is required to implement, but provide no funding. Airports are left to shoulder this expense and, where permitted, pass some of the cost onto passengers.

This is neither equitable nor sustainable. Airports accept that they have a responsibility and duty of care towards their passengers, staff and other members of the public using their facilities but it is not reasonable to burden them with the full cost of counter terrorism security measures or aviation security. Airports will continue to accord public safety the highest priority and will continue to provide all reasonable resources to achieve that. However, a more equitable and sustainable mechanism for recovering these costs from the respective national authority needs to be found.

Risk management approach

A core principle in security is that the measures to protect and prevent an attack should be commensurate with the risk. This should be kept under continual review, with measures increased and decreased, commensurate with changes in the risk. Traditionally, authorities have employed a 'layered approach' to aviation security.

As new threats emerge, an additional layer of measures is applied. The theory goes that in doing so you counter the specific threat and provide a level of redundancy should another measure fail. There is growing realization that this approach is not sustainable.



The efficiency of airport and airline processes has been degraded by these layers of security measures, with questionable effectiveness in terms of security.

The balance between the needs of security and the needs of facilitation has been altered, particularly in the 'post-September 11' era. There is a need for a new, risk management based, approach to aviation security. The piecemeal approach of the past needs to be superseded by a more holistic and risk managed approach. And new security requirements that are applied in response to a change in the risk assessment need to be subjected to a periodic regulatory impact assessment.

There is also a growing realisation that we need to make the routine passenger screening processes more intelligent. The implied logic of the traditional 'one process for all' suggests that each passenger presents an equal probability of being a terrorist or someone who could present a danger. Clearly, this is not the case. ACI is working with the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) and the International Air Transport Association (IATA) to develop the concept for a Next Generation Security Process (NGSP), which:

- Looks at the security of the end-to-end passenger journey;
- Leverages intelligence and advanced passenger information to assess individual passengers;
- Filters passengers according to their risk profiles; and
- Focuses additional security screening measures on the passengers that present the higher risk.

The NGSP represents a fundamental change in the approach to passenger screening and preventive aviation security measures. The concept will need to be adapted to different airport environments and proven through operational trials, which will hopefully begin in 2011.

Lifting the restrictions on the carriage of Liquids, Aerosols and Gels (LAGs)

The current restrictions on the carriage of LAGs have been in place since late 2006, following the disruption by the UK Police of a plot to blow up airliners bound for the U.S. using improvised explosive devices fashioned out of homemade, liquid-based explosives and soft drinks containers. The threat from such attacks remains and so the lifting of these restrictions should only be considered when screening technologies are available that can detect liquid explosives. Progress has been made in this area of technology but it has not yet reached a state of maturity where it could be deployed operationally at airports. The technical capabilities of the new Liquids Explosive Detection Systems

(LEDS) assessed in laboratory tests need to be validated operational, as part of airport screening processes. In the meantime, passengers will be better protected by retaining the restrictions.

ACI advocates that ICAO should coordinate plans internationally for a lifting of the restrictions. Given the state of development of LEDS, it is unlikely that this could be achieved globally before 2013. A coordinated approach to the lifting of the restrictions is necessary to avoid the passenger facilitation problems that would arise from different rules being implemented in different States.

Accordingly, ACI believes that the European Commission plan to begin with a partial lifting of the restrictions from 29 April 2011 is unworkable. Although well-intentioned, the plan creates significant problems for airports in the European Union and has the potential to cause confusion among passengers travelling through Europe. ACI urges the EC to postpone this plan and to focus on lifting all of the restrictions in 2013, if the necessary arrangements are in place by that time.

Securing the supply chain

The transportation of products by air has become increasingly important in a globalized economy, where the supply chain crosses national boundaries and time is critical. Securing that supply chain and maintaining the uninterrupted flow of air cargo is essential both to the aviation industry and to economic development in general.

ACI supports a 'secure supply chain' approach to air cargo, where the integrity of the consignment is established at the entry point to the supply chain and the chain of custody is maintained to prevent unlawful interference. Any screening of consignments should be done as early as possible in the supply chain before consolidation takes place. Once cargo is made up into bulk shipments and palletized ready for transport on wide-bodied aircraft, it is very difficult to screen effectively. Thus the secure supply chain should extend through its journey by air so that when consignments are transhipped at airports en route, the consignments should not need to be re-screened.