

AVSEC *world* Sydney **review**

It was December, that festive time of the year. And I'm not referring to Christmas, Diwali or Chanukah. No, for the aviation security industry the year culminated as usual with the Avsec World conference and exhibition. And for 1996 the venue was Sydney, Australia. **Philip Baum** reviews events and offers some thoughts on the show.

The choice of venue was a subject discussed at some length by delegates and exhibitors alike.

The city of Sydney is one of the most enticing one's I have ever visited, giving much credence to the saying that "Sydney is one of the world's best kept secrets". One only hopes that the Olympics don't spoil that image. Whilst it is a sprawling metropolis, local government has managed to ensure that it appears clean, safe, tolerant and visitor-friendly. The weather was appreciated by most of those that arrived from their northern hemisphere winters, although it could be said to be partially responsible for the emptying of the conference hall during the afternoon sessions. The co-hosts, Qantas, in what first-time visitors to the country found to be typical of Australians in general, afforded us all a very warm welcome.

However, supposedly we were not in attendance to experience Australian hospitality, wonder at the Opera House or cuddle a koala. This was a business trip, and, as the limited number of exhibitors and overseas visitors demonstrated, many of the industry decision-makers were simply not in attendance. The vast majority of those who did make the trip had to give up two days to get there and two days to return, a hefty price to pay for three days of conference. Whilst it may seem unfair on the Australian and New Zealand contingent for such events never to be held in their region, the fact remains that Europe provides the greatest number of different states that attend such events, consequently increasing the number of different potential buyers. Thus, exhibitors may favour European venues. North America too, provides delegates in quantities, although some further study would need to be made as to what percentage of these actually are decision-makers.

Questions also need to be asked as to who this annual extravaganza is aimed at and what its purpose is. The original concept of IAASO (International Association of

Heike Werner and Wolfgang Weil, exhibition regulars from Frankfurt Airport explain the benefits of their FRA-BRS baggage tracking and reconciliation system.





Airline Security Officers) has now been transformed into Avsec World. The problem is that there are so many aviation security industry events taking place; most of the people that I spoke to in Sydney said the FAA-sponsored November conference in Atlantic City was a far better event in so far as knowledge gained and the exhibition itself was concerned.

Truth be told, there were relatively few airline security managers or directors in attendance in Sydney. According to IATA's delegate list 421 people either registered or were invited guests, 41 of whom were Qantas personnel and 9 worked for IATA. Yet of all the world's carriers only 59 were represented in Sydney. As always, South America, Africa and certain parts of Europe were poorly represented. Maybe IATA should consider the possibility of providing simultaneous translation facilities of proceedings into French and Spanish in order to stimulate interest from these regions.

But it's not only a language problem. Many of the developing country's carriers difficulties are simply not addressed. The impressive array of technological developments on display, and presented to delegates during the conference, are a distant dream for many carriers. The much heralded InVision CTX-5000 has, until recently, been beyond the pockets of American companies let alone those in less well off countries. Other explosive detection systems and

Adams Electronics, Robert Adams demonstrates one of his company's hand-held metal detection systems.

computerised accessories to security training are equally praiseworthy but would be better presented at a G7 (and special invited guests!) symposium than at an event originally aimed at the world's airlines' security representatives.

All the organisers put considerable effort into ensuring that such events are a success, but there was a general feeling amongst many of the exhibitors that the industry as a whole needs to review which global (as opposed to regional) conferences should be preserved and who the target audience is for each.

It is exceptionally important that the airline security representatives have their event, but big business must not be allowed to over-shadow the main purpose of such gatherings. That purpose being to share information and to communicate common problems; a theme much heralded at Avsec World '96 by Brian Wall and many other industry-spokesmen.

What a shame it was that arguably the three best presentations, given by Luppó Prins of the Tasmania Police, Larry Wansley of American Airlines and that of Brig. Mackenzie-Orr, were allocated the final sessions on each day of the conference; the time of day when the hall was showing considerable signs of delegate erosion.

After all the usual greetings from the hosts and local government, Avsec World '96 kicked off with the Keynote Address by Raymond Kendall, Secretary General of INTERPOL. Kendall stressed the importance of communication and called for a memorandum of understanding between IATA and INTERPOL and provided delegates with some useful statistics that may not be for general publication, so I will err on the side of caution.

The session entitled 'Recent Acts of Unlawful Interference Against Civil Aviation' was somewhat disappointing. Not, I hasten to add, due to the speakers ability but due to the subjects selected for discussion themselves. In a year when TW800 had been destroyed mid-flight, that regardless of cause led to much speculation about security standards, and a year in which there had been a number of high-profile hijackings including one which resulted in the tragedy of the Ethiopian Airlines flight off the Comoros Islands, delegates were keen to hear of 'recent' acts. Instead we were subjected to yet another account of the FBI's investigation into Ramzi Yousef's activities two years earlier and a sketchy (for legal reasons) account as to the connection between the Unabomber and the use of the mail service for his bombs.

The first morning ended with regional reports on aviation security matters. The concept was great, and maybe next year we

shall hear from those representing Africa, South America and Eastern Europe who may have even more interesting tales to tell. The reports did, however, indicate the need for a warning light system to be flashed by the moderator when a speaker over-runs.

The European aim of 100% hold-baggage screening by the year 2000 was much lauded, and even Teun Platenkamp paid tribute to the United Kingdom's efforts of instigating it by the end of 1996. As David Lloyd of the British Department of Transport said from the floor "it's a matter of will" rather than cost. Platenkamp also discussed the European concept of a 'One Stop Security Programme' whereby passengers leave sterile, arrive sterile, remain sterile and move on sterile - not, I should

the aviation security industry. As the millennium approaches, Faktaufon indicated the need for the region to become more security conscious and less complacent. Not only will the Sydney Olympics in the year 2000 see an increase in the number of tourists visiting the region, but with the International Date Line cutting through the region, the year 2000 will take on an extra-special significance.

After lunch, the host government was afforded its opportunity to discuss regional programmes in place and Jeff Brown of Qantas spoke about crew involvement in the assessment of bomb threats. We then had our annual presentation by the FAA where specific reference was drawn to their aim to develop/authorise the use of an auto-

resulted in the deaths of 35 individuals and injury to 19 others, will testify that it being labelled 'of little importance' to the aviation security industry is extremely myopic. This was a tale of crisis management. This demonstrated the actions of a deranged individual. Next time, the target might not be a Scottish school or Tasmanian tourist resort but an international airline. The presentation, aided by gruesome video footage, brought all attendees down to reality.

Day Two and we were into the option of Breakout Sessions, making it harder to see who was there and who was skiving off. Those who attended the first breakout were treated to an un-programmed extra, with Air France's Danielle Thiery giving an account of a recent investigation - this was



report, a programme designed to keep control over Europe's population growth!

Most regional reports touched on the problems of unruly passengers and attention was drawn to the fact that as more carriers ban smoking on flights, the number of passengers resorting to drink has increased with a knock-on effect of passengers behaving aggressively or molesting fellow passengers or cabin crew. A few speakers referred to their support of further discussion into the creation of an International Aviation Security Inspectorate.

George Faktaufon, Secretary General of the Association of South Pacific Airlines, gave a welcome insight into an area of the world, presumably delighted to be, marginalised by

Manchester Airport's Andrew Brunton briefs Aeromar's Mario Peralta on how his airport approaches security issues.

mated profiling system designed to clear 80% of passengers from further scrutiny. The phasing out of active profiling was definitely indicated as being on the cards in the not too distant future, which is, no doubt, of concern to many of the employees of security companies servicing American flag-carriers overseas.

Many questioned the relevance of Luppó Prins of the Tasmania Police making a presentation about the Port Arthur massacre on Sunday 28th April 1996. Those who did hear the horrific account of the events that

practice, rather than theory. Whilst many talked only theory, others found ways to incorporate such thinking into either technology or practice. Doug Hills, Corporate Security Director of ADI, demonstrated Oscargo, a computerised one-stop cargo handling profile system and Ross Anderson, Security Manager of Air New Zealand, showed how his carrier had developed their own in-house training packages.

In the main hall in the afternoon of the second day, Mel Littler, Security Standards & Policy Manager of Manchester Airport, addressed the subject of 'Incorporating Security In Airport Design'. Michael Martin, Chief of Security at Ansett Australia, assisted by Geoff Wegg from the New South Wales

police, then gave an account of how his carrier had dealt with an extortion attempt against his carrier that started some five years ago. William Rathbone, who had been responsible for security at the Atlanta Olympics, also made a presentation of questionable value to delegates other than that it allowed us to continue the link between Avsec World '95, being held at the last Olympic city, and Avsec World '96, being held at the next Olympic city.

The day ended however, with a *tour de force* from Brigadier Mackenzie-Orr OBE in what possibly should have been the keynote address. Not only did he, as an accomplished speaker, grab everybody's attention with his humour but he gave the whole conference relevance through his interpretation of current trends in international terrorism. He appeared to be the only speaker prepared to hazard a guess as to the cause of the explosion on board TW800 and the only one to challenge the establishment. "We are training to meet the requirements of regulation", he said "rather than to stop the terrorists". And how right he is. His call for let's get real should be the theme for Avsec World '97. Other than Jim Hanney of the United States Postal Service, who correctly indicated that the technology is not there yet for his domain, Mackenzie-Orr appeared alone in appreciating that "technology is always a generation behind" the terrorists.

On the last morning the British Airways team took the platform and gave an informative presentation of their loss prevention programme. I doubt they would wish too many of their trade secrets to be laid open on these pages, particularly when the measures they are taking to reduce loss and theft are still being employed. In any case it's the subject for a whole new article.

Larry Wansley had the dubious privilege of being the last speaker. The current



Metorex local agent, Tamil Selvan shows how easy it is to calibrate one of his company's magnetometer security arches.

Managing Director of Security of American Airlines gave a chilling account of the crash of AA965 in Cali, Colombia and how he and his team, fought against physical and natural barriers in attempting to find survivors and to salvage evidence that would enable the cause of the disaster to be determined. Wansley "hoped and prayed" that no other delegate ever has to go through what his people went through in the cruellest of conditions under the harshest elements. His description as to the workings of the American Airlines CARE (Customer Assistance Relief Effort) team and their total commitment to the well-being of all those affected by the disaster was the trigger for a number of delegates to return home to review their equivalent programmes. And that's what Avsec should be about -

talking, suggesting, communicating and learning from our peers.

And what of the exhibitors? To start with there were not that many. The x-ray manufacturers were there as usual, no one of them being able to unilaterally decide on non-participation. There were a number of Australian companies keen to demonstrate their wares, including Landis & Staefa, suppliers of solutions for security access management. The Kangan Institute of TAFE were there to market their vocational education and training programmes.

Honeywell Australia concentrated their efforts on their identification badge system, whilst local representatives of both 3M and Metorex assisted their company's sales efforts. The exhibition provides an excellent opportunity for industry employees to monitor the advance of technology, and many were so drawn to view March Industries Yellow Box aircraft intruder monitoring system, Ion Track's Itemiser, Imagebase Technology's Photophone, both KLM's IBRIS and Frankfurt Airport's FRA-BRS baggage reconciliation systems, Barringer Instrument's Ionscan, and InVision's CTX-5000 amongst others.

Renful Aviation Security were one of the only companies present offering an all-inclusive service by developing or recommending equipment and implementing procedures according to the needs of a client's security operation. The perennial Safe Passage were there in force demonstrating their new range of computer-based security training programmes. Adams Electronics were keen to demonstrate their latest hand held metal detectors, whilst Aero-Tech Security put on display their aircraft inspection devices.

Manchester Airport, recently voted world's best airport, were first-time exhibitors and were marketing their own training services at their state-of-the-art facilities as well as Green Light's Hijack Management seminars.

Another year, another conference. Overall, those who attended enjoyed the experience and some even found it profitable. We need to ensure more airlines participate in the future and that events are neither monopolised by the legislators nor excessively based on new technology. If symposiums are to be used to communicate, they are in effect training sessions for management. And accordingly, I end with the words of Brig Mackenzie-Orr, on that sunny Sydney afternoon in December, we need to train "to stop the terrorists".



The reporter is Managing Director of Green Light Ltd, a London-based aviation security training company specialising in Hijack Management, Passenger Profiling, Security Supervision and Threat Appreciation courses.

Representatives from the following Airlines attended World Sydney

Aer Lingus, Aeroflot, Aeromar, Air Canada, Air China, Air France, Air Mauritius, Air New Zealand, Air Niugini, Air Pacific, Air Seychelles, Air Tanzania, Air Ukraine, Air Vanuatu, Air Zimbabwe, Alitalia, ANA, American Airlines, Ansett Australia, Austrian Airlines, Britannia, British Airways, Cathay Pacific, China Northern, China Southern, China Southern Xiamen, Egyptair, Emirates, Eva Airways, Federal Express, Garuda Indonesia, Gulf Air, Iran Air, Japan Airlines, KLM, Lufthansa, Malev Hungarian, MEA, Northwest, Qantas, Qatar Airways, Riga Airlines, Royal Brunei Airlines, Royal Jordanian, Sabena, Saudia, SAS, Singapore Airlines, SAA, Swissair, Syrian Air, TAAG Angola Airlines, Tarom, Thai Airways International, TWA, United, UPS, USAir, and Virgin Atlantic.