

Aerodrom Ljubljana: organisation of the year

A few eyes were raised when, at Avsec World 2000, the organisation award for outstanding contribution to aviation security went to Aerodrom Ljubljana. Less than a decade ago the airport was simply one of the former Yugoslavia's provincial terminals. Now as Slovenia's capital gateway, it is not only a highly modernised example of small airport efficiency, but it is also playing the role of regional adviser on security matters to other airport authorities emerging from civil war. **Philip Baum** visited Ljubljana to see why it deserved such acclaim.

In June 1991, the Slovenian parliament declared its independence from Yugoslavia and immediately began the task of developing a national infrastructure that was self-sufficient. One element of the new infrastructure was the creation of a Civil Aviation Authority. Yet there is a difference between declaring independence and achieving it, and the latter only became a reality on 26th December 1991 when Belgrade finally relinquished control. As a result of the largely bloodless civil war, Ljubljana airport, which was under the control of the Yugoslav civil aviation authority throughout war, closed between September 1991 and January 1992.

THE CHALLENGE

From the very onset, the Chief Executive

Officer, Vinko Moze, appreciated that the development of a safety and security department needed to be an intrinsic part of the airport's strategy. In order to compete internationally, they needed to play the game by the international rule book. With this in mind Moze chose Bojan Lucovnik, a man with twenty years ground handling experience, to head up the security team. I say 'team', yet in the beginning it was a one-man-show. A decade on, it numbers some eleven people.

For the fledgling airport authority there was a steep learning curve, and Lucovnik had to ensure that the learning was quick, yet comprehensive, and that the ambitious goals they had set themselves were met. Initially it was a revelation that ICAO annex 17 existed at all.

The authority, however, adopted the attitude that if Slovenia was to develop as a trading partner for other European countries and beyond, and was to cultivate its potential as a year-round tourist destination, it would also need to offer airlines, tour operators and cargo handlers an airport that met international safety and security standards.

In their first year of independent operations, around 250,000 passengers used the airport. By the start of the new millennium, less than a decade later, that figure had increased to 1 million passengers per annum.

SECURITY DEVELOPMENT

Lucovnik himself was Deputy Director of Ground Handling, yet, by 1992, they realised that security had to be separated from operations. The tasks to be achieved were substantial. 1993 was the key year in which the security strategy was set to paper and objectives were clarified.

- The development of an access control system
- The defining of secure areas
- The establishment of airside/landside borders
- Risk assessment
- The drafting of an airport security programme
- The creation of a security ID badging system
- The clarification of passenger and



baggage screening procedures

- Risk management

Some of the tasks were simpler than had been thought, granted the assistance of the Airports Council International (ACI), and certain foreign airports, such as Munich and Vienna. Indeed Ljubljana found itself able to draft its airport security programme based on the ICAO/ECAC model.

Whilst 100% Hold baggage screening is still a thorn for many European airports, for Ljubljana it was one that was solved from the onset. 100% Hold baggage screening was inherited by Ljubljana, using conventional Heimann X-Ray systems, from the Belgrade-led regime.

A national Aviation Security Programme has yet to be finalised, but as the airport points out there are many other countries lacking the single document.

Ljubljana airport became the focus of the Civil Aviation Authority's attention despite the fact that there are two other provincial Slovenian airports. Ljubljana is not only the capital, but is also so centrally located that, given the size of Slovenia, it is easily accessed by road from anywhere in the country.

Group 4 has the concession to man all the physical security positions, hold baggage screening and cargo screening, as the airport itself is only responsible for airport security. Passenger screening remains the responsibility of the police.

In January 1997 Aerodrom Ljubljana was privatised and has been developing its business plan in conjunction with the national airline Adria Airways to become a mini regional hub competing with the likes of Vienna and Zagreb to offer transfer facilities for passengers travelling between Western and Eastern Europe.

It was largely due to the airport's involvement with the ACI that led to the international recognition it deserves today. Back in 1993 the Chief Executive Officer recommended Bojan Lucovnik to the European ACI Security Committee. As a result Lucovnik found himself receiving all sorts of technical papers on aviation security, which gave him many ideas he considered worthy of implementing in Ljubljana. On the committee he became the leading spokesman for smaller airports on security issues. Last year he was deputy chairman of the committee and now, in 2001, he is Chairman of the European ACI security committee.

Participation in international committees has not led to a dereliction of duty back home. Lucovnik regularly participates in the weekly security meetings with the Chief of Police, Head of Customs, Security Manager of Adria Airways and the Group 4 Security Manager.

REGIONAL ASSISTANCE

As Bosnia-Herzegovina emerged from the ashes of civil war it too set about developing an independent civil aviation authority. Ljubljana was there to lend a hand and Banja Luka, Mostar, Tuzlar and Sarajevo have all benefited from Slovenian expertise. Their history, as a former Yugoslav republic, was obviously similar and it was the FAA's Civil Aviation Security Liaison Officer in Vienna that identified Ljubljana as a model to be followed. With language skills being one of the barriers to overcome, the Slovenians had little problem in communicating with their Bosnian cousins in Serbo-Croat.

Security Managers from the Bosnian Herzegovina airports visited Ljubljana, met with Lucovnik both there and at international conferences, and still regularly seek the Slovenians advice by telephone, fax and email.

Lucovnik claims that it is not only an act of generosity of their part. Ljubljana has flights to and from their airports, and it recognises that, by improving their security, it also enhances its own.

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In 1998 the project for Technical Security Implementation (access control and CCTV) was started. To the Managing Board and CEO Vinko Moze (who is also a member of the Board responsible for aviation security and investments) it was crystal clear that the provision of quality airport services included, by definition, good security practices and equipment. It was appreciated that this would necessitate considerable investment.

Key elements of the project included investing in the modernisation of screening devices and the construction of a security operations centre. The costs exceeded 5 million DEM, a significant sum for one of Europe's smaller airports.

They have developed their own access control system, and integrated it



Bojan Lucovnik, Head of Security, Aerodrom Ljubljana

with a CCTV network of some 46 cameras, all of which are linked to a very impressive control room situated alongside the Security Manager's office.

At the passenger screening point, the police utilise Heimann X-Ray equipment and CEIA archway metal detectors.

Checked baggage is screened through one of two Heimann automated explosive detection systems at level one. At level two, Group 4 security screeners can analyse the rejected bags and, if a decision can be made in 20 seconds, clear them. Bags still suspect can then be examined more closely at level 3 without any time constraints and failing that, subject to hand search at level 4. The airport is now considering the purchase of explosive trace detection equipment too.

All cargo is X-rayed, again using Heimann equipment.

CONCLUSION

It is easy to over-focus our attention on the achievements of the world's premier airports – the Heathrows, the JFKs, the Charles de Gaulles – and to overlook the efforts of the smaller, no less important, airports that can play an equally vital role in the aviation security community.

Many other airports and airlines, most of which are far more familiar household names, were nominated for the organisation award for outstanding contribution to aviation security, yet Ljubljana's efforts were applauded by the selection committee and the airport can take pride in its achievement.

