

profiling: much maligned maybe misunderstood

Simply the mention of the word

'profiling' in some aviation security circles draws emotional responses and generates heated debate. Whilst being considered a reasonable method for handling the security of high risk flights, many consider that the negative impact on customer service is too high a price to pay. Moreover, the traditional view of passenger profiling is seen as an attempt to identify potential threats to a flight often due to a passenger's nationality. Whilst the enemy might be a known entity for some states (and enable carriers such as El Al to target certain groups), others, including most European countries and the United States, would not now be able to reasonably 'profile' or on grounds of ethnographic classification.

However, profiling does not have to concentrate on a passenger's nationality. Indeed, basic questions that a check-in agent may ask a passenger regarding their baggage are, in themselves, a form of profiling. For profiling is simply risk analysis.

The question is then "What is the risk?" Different routes and carriers have experienced a range of different inadmissible passengers, from asylum seeking to criminals. With many governments now levying substantial fines on airline carriers transporting passengers in possession of invalid documentation, the need to educate both security and check-in staff in travel document checks has increased - it is significant that much of the training to identify impostors and other users of forged documents now incorporates profiling techniques.

For many, profiling means questioning. Yet, that does not have to be the case. The true essence of profiling lies in what we see and what we hear, rather than in what we ask, as **Philip Baum** explains.



Opponents of profiling concentrate their criticism of the system on the basis of it being an interrogation of passengers. In reality a good profiler only utilises questions in conjunction with his or her analysis of the passengers reactions, appearance and behaviour. Greater emphasis should be placed on the latent ability of the profiler to use their eyes, common sense and intuition.

I am not implying that in order to be a competent profiler that one needs a degree in psychology or any

the person who is being used, rather than a terrorist or asylum seeker who, presumably, is not going to declare any weapon or other illegal item!

Even with the asylum seeker the emphasis needs to be on the individual and their documentation rather than their baggage.

Some carriers leave profiling duties to airport security or private security contractors. American carriers, required by the FAA to implement passenger profiling in many countries outside the United States, utilise "specialists" who



Sometimes the purpose of travel is obvious.

advanced qualification in human relations. A basic education should suffice. However, probably the greatest assets are that of life experience and general knowledge. This could be expressed as being "streetwise."

If one accepts the fact that profiling, and indeed security, is dependent upon eye contact then the authorities must ensure that any person who is expected to implement passenger profiling techniques will not be expected to fulfil other duties that might distract them. This supports the argument against check-in agents being required to profile passengers as they are generally pre-occupied with customer service functions relating to seat assignments and baggage acceptance, let alone the pressure on them not to create queues in front of their counters.

Their questioning is generally limited to baggage control assessment and is often simply a method of paying lip service to security rather than actually implementing any real safeguard to aviation. Regular travellers know the questions they will be asked and frequently lie to avoid further examination.

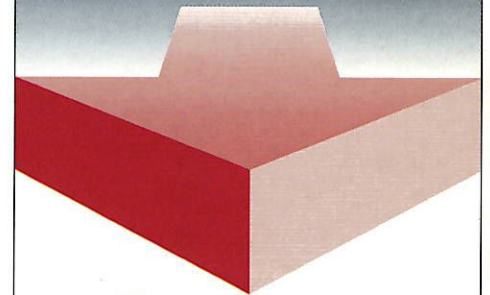
In some locations the questions are printed on cards on the counters and place the onus on the passenger to volunteer any declaration. All of this presupposes that one is trying to identify

are asked to identify potential threats and advise the airline accordingly. However, even they come under pressure to ensure that security is provided in a friendly and timely fashion as customer service and on-time-departures are performance standards. Yet, isn't security, after all, a form of customer service?

Every airport employee has the moral duty to play their role in ensuring the safety of passengers and every airport employee has the opportunity to implement profiling techniques. For many this will be passive observation rather than active questioning. Regardless, one needs to overcome the hurdle of non-security personnel feeling that any security dilemmas should be the sole responsibility of designated security staff. The cabin crew member who is wary of a suspicious passenger boarding an aircraft should not take the attitude that because the passenger has passed through security checks or immigration controls that they are necessarily safe to fly. They should report their fears immediately.

In every day life we all scrutinise each others reactions and body language. On entering a pub, train or any other public place most of us select who we are prepared to sit next to, or in the vicinity of, based on non-verbal communication and first impression. It

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ment of an individual as the applicant enters the interview room and uses questions to back up the first impression, or the physical attraction between the sexes can be almost instantaneous, so too the security or immigration officer should trust the initial impression created by a passenger and use other techniques to reinforce their feelings. The problem is that security based on the individual judgement of any one individual is very difficult to quantify or define in any written procedure. Whilst we can clearly state that an opaque object seen on an x-ray monitor must be resolved by the physical search of a bag or that certain questions must be asked of a passenger regarding electrical items in their possession, authorities may be reluctant to produce guidelines that allow for a decision to be made on the basis of gut reaction. Further still it is almost impossible to list all the factors that will lead to a decision to treat a passenger as a possible threat to the flight or otherwise inadmissible passenger. In training courses one cannot feed students with all the answers, but rather develop their sense of intuition and guide them to translate their daily analysis of others into a security tool.

Whilst one applauds all the technological developments that are being made to enhance aviation security at airports world-wide there needs to be much greater emphasis placed on the ability of the individual to note when something or somebody seems out of place or generates negative feelings. We need to overcome our fear of the need to quantify everything and to implement an approach based on our natural human instincts. There will still be occasions when advanced profiling skills are required, such as questioning, but this should be in proportion to the risk assessment. That does not mean, however, that the absence of questioning means the absence of profiling.



is this tacit classification of others that is the heart of profiling. The reaction to vibes generated by others. In the aviation security world it is the negative feelings that will result in the much feared in-depth questioning, yet it is on such occasions that questioning is appropriate as a potential threat might exist. The genuine passenger going on vacation or a business trip is identifiable as such within the first few seconds of contact in most cases and additional questioning is only necessitated by either government regulations or by the passenger generating a bad feeling for whatever reason.

So, despite its critics passenger profiling should not only be regarded as one approach to aviation security but as an intrinsic element of all passenger controls implemented at an airport. Whilst it has been said that observational profiling abilities are latent and that we use them in our everyday life, training is also necessary to sensitise personnel to the security implications of negative feelings created. In the same way that a personnel officer often makes his judge-

It's not only the face that tells a story.

Covert surveillance, by CCTV or roving observers.

