

AVIATION security *international*

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In almost every country in the world regulations, either legally empowered or in the form of recommendations, exist regarding aviation security. The responsibility for the implementation of the resultant procedures remains a moot point.

The third approach is for the government to take responsibility itself and to empower one of its agencies with the task of providing aviation security measures. Many countries in the developing world adopt such an approach, as do many European countries including Spain and Italy. The choice of agency may vary, from the police in one country to the army in another or even an aviation security force that is part of the local civil aviation authority, but the answer as to who is responsible remains the same. The government.

aircraft many governments have abdicated their responsibility.

Most airport authorities with responsibility for the provision of security measures do take their obligations seriously. They can generally afford to pay staff a reasonable salary as the security bill is passed on to the airlines in the form of landing fees. No airport wants to be seen as a soft touch.

Putting airlines in the position where they have to employ the services of contract security companies does however jeopardise security. Contract security companies, like the airlines, are in competition with each other and are keen to win any contract put out for tender. The result, however, is that companies are forced to employ personnel at the lowest possible rate leading to a poorly qualified workforce being entrusted with our lives. If the industry's mood is to continue along this path then measures need to be put in place to guarantee a minimum wage to employees, commensurate with the responsibility of the job (as is the case in Belgium for example). It simply cannot be right that an airport cleaner or waiter earns more than a person who is responsible for human life.

In the aftermath of every aircraft hijacking or bombing, airport security measures are subjected to considerable scrutiny and the carriers and airports are assessed by the government and media alike. Of course, both have investigative roles to play, but it is the government who must actually take responsibility. The cynic might argue that the authorities appreciate that the chances of detecting the well-rehearsed terrorist are slim and that the consequences of

Who's Responsible?

by Philip Baum

Some advocate that airport authorities, be they state-owned or private, are best placed to ensure our safety in the skies. The requisite controls are, after all, carried out on their property. Screening at British airports is a prime example of this, albeit that carriers are permitted to supplement the basic security measures with those of their own in order to respond to the varying risks that they face. Generally such additional measures are provided by contract security companies. The advantage of the airports remaining responsible is that a level playing field is created with all departing flights receiving the same basic degree of security.

Another approach is to place the burden of security on the airlines themselves, such as in the United States. In this case the carriers may be responsible for the security of all flights departing from a given terminal and contract security companies are utilised to implement the federal requirements. The airline is deemed to have a moral responsibility to ensure that its passengers are provided with the requisite level of security. In the same way that British airports are audited by Department of Transport inspectors, so too the contract security companies operating in American airports are subject to the scrutiny of Federal Aviation Administration inspectors.

Terrorism is not the fault of the airlines. Terrorist acts, whatever the actual target, are generally carried out as a demonstration of opposition to government. Accordingly, it can be strongly argued that not only is government responsible for the development of procedures but it is also responsible for the enactment of the procedures.

It is somewhat surprising that every other 'control' offered in an international airport is provided by a government agency. Few would argue that responsi-

"when it comes to the safety of passengers lives aboard aircraft many governments have abdicated their responsibility"

bility for customs or immigration matters should be delegated to a private company. And the very concept of neighbourhood security being taken out of the hands of the police or the military ceasing to have control for national security is abhorrent. Yet when it comes to the safety of passengers lives aboard

such failure would reflect badly on the government. Once responsibility has been delegated there is always someone else to blame. Fortunately for the security contractors terrorist incidents are few and far between and the deficiencies are rarely exposed. Many companies gamble on this low risk by cutting back

Staffing to secure

by Homer A. Boynton

on their training programmes to the bare bones and offering little to motivate their staff, all in an attempt to reduce costs. By no means are all guilty of these practices and some air carriers do not necessarily go with the cheapest price, yet neither the airlines nor the security contractors should ever be afforded the opportunity to use an underpaid, ineffective and frustrated workforce.

If governments do consider that they can entrust this responsibility to the private sector, then clearly-defined standards need to be established against which they can be judged. There is little

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value in saying that a security guard needs to attain a certain score in a written test if the level at which the test is set is left to the contractor; we can all prepare tests that will guarantee either complete failure or total success. Drills are an intrinsic part of any security system, however a minimal quantity of staff will ever be subject to government-organised drills, so alternative methods need to be found. And lastly, but by no means least, governments have a duty to introduce minimum levels of pay that will attract quality personnel and will ensure that they are motivated to stay with their job.

Aviation security should not be a commercial game.

Prior to the World War II battle at El Alamein, Winston Churchill in talking to the British Army Commander, General Montgomery, suggested that Montgomery study logistics in order to improve the capability of his troops. Montgomery replied that he didn't think he should become involved in such technical matters and said 'after all, they say that familiarity breeds contempt.' Churchill replied, 'I would like to remind you that without a degree of familiarity we could not breed anything.'

Within the past several years the level of sophistication of equipment designed to detect explosives on board aircraft has increased substantially. The funding necessary for the development and installation of this equipment has also been substantial. One major airport has estimated that 30% of the costs is the equipment with the remainder installation costs. For an Explosive Detection System (EDS) that costs from \$500,000 to \$1,000,000 the total cost would be approximately \$1,700,000 to \$3,500,000. When multiple installations at an airport are considered the funding needs are bordering on astronomical. And what about the operators or screeners? What is being done to assure that this complicated, expensive and 'state-of-the-art' equipment is being operated correctly? These expensive EDS cannot detect explosives without human intervention. Therefore, for the foreseeable future at least, airline security will continue to be as much about people as it is about equipment. The screeners therefore must be familiar with and knowledgeable about the equipment and not leave technical matters to others.

What is being done to assure that the abilities of the screeners are commensurate with the capabilities of the expensive EDS? Screeners are the individuals who are responsible for one of the most critical functions in the airline industry. It is not government regulators,

Airport Authorities or Airlines Security Directors that have the day to day and on-the-scene interface with potential hijackers or suspect baggage. It is the screeners!

To improve the entire aviation security system, as much attention and more funding must be provided to human factors. Not enough attention has been directed to qualifications, selection, training, salary benefits or motivation of screeners. What qualifications are appropriate for screeners? Should qualifications include previous work experience, education, health, age and other personal characteristics? Absolutely! Should motivation include special awards? Certainly! Is psychological testing of screeners necessary? Absolutely! To assure cognitive skills necessary for quickly identifying suspicious items of course psychological testing is important. An innovative and comprehensive human factors program is an absolute necessity to be certain that the new and expensive EDS equipment is operated at optimum effectiveness.

While the primary focus should be on the screeners, management or supervision of the screeners is of equal importance. Here the selection process for promotion and special management training is very important. There should also be training in customer relations and the handling of belligerent or troublesome passengers where screeners operate equipment that interfaces with passengers. This is an area that has received little attention yet is an important element in any focus on human factors.

Aviation Security, whether handled by airlines, airport or governments, must place greater emphasis on the human factor in airline security. The development of employment standards for the qualification, selection, training, testing and other aspects of the screener position are essential in maintaining a credible, effective airline security system.