

August 2009
Volume 15 Issue 4

AVIATION SECURITY INTERNATIONAL

THE GLOBAL JOURNAL OF AIRPORT & AIRLINE SECURITY



One Small Step For Man, One Giant Leap For Mankind:

avsec lessons from Apollo 11

- No Fly Lists
- Explosive Detection Technology
- Cargo Security
- Biometric Access Control

www.asi-mag.com

Principal media sponsor to:

AVSEC World
2009

One Small Step For Man, One Giant Leap For Mankind:



Lessons from Apollo 11

by Philip Baum

As the world celebrates the 40th anniversary of the Apollo 11 mission and Neil Armstrong's Star Trek-style achievement to "bravely go where no man has gone before", even those of us who remember witnessing those first lunar steps struggle to comprehend the scale of technological feat. How on earth (!) did we manage to propel three men to the moon before the age of the internet and the mobile phone, when pocket calculators could not fit in your pocket and when computers had black and green screens and all inputs were made with 1s and 0s?

I recall my parents calling me in to watch history-in-the-making on our black and white television with the number of channels available being equal to the number of places on an Olympic podium. Even today, when everything seems to be computerised, it has hard to fathom out just how anybody could embark upon such a journey and live to tell the tale. As every anniversary documentary points out, the solution was borne out of a desire to realise our dreams. Ultimately, where there is a will, there is a way.

Apollo 11 unified the world. Despite the American-Soviet space race, it managed to galvanise our planet's population and break down barriers, if only for a fleeting moment, created by geopolitical borders and economic status. Neil Armstrong, Buzz Aldrin and Michael Collins represented each and every one of us, our dreams and aspirations.

The aviation security industry is also around 40 years old. Albeit that there had been many previous hijackings, the crime only became recognised as a scourge that needed to be tackled in the 1960s with flights to and from Cuba being subjected to acts of aerial piracy. The decade drew to a close with the emergence of hijacking

being a way for terrorist groups to make their point on an international stage. Whilst Neil Armstrong was making aviation history for all the right reasons, Leila Khaled and her ilk were making air travel within the Earth's atmosphere something to be feared.

A decade later, lunar landings had become a thing of the past even if space travel had not. The Jumbo jet had become the workhorse of long-haul air travel and the general public could, if they could afford it, travel faster than the speed of sound. The scale of our aviation achievements knew few bounds, save for that little matter of developing an effective way of screening passengers before they boarded. The checkpoint of 2009 bears a very close resemblance to that of 1969.

The problem is that we have not really appreciated what our goal is. Far too many people believe that it is simply the prevention of terrorist acts against civil aviation, perpetrated by known terrorist groups and their sympathisers. At international forums, the question (or point) is still often raised that we could solve our aviation security woes if we started addressing the root causes of terrorism. The Arab-Israeli conflict, being the one most closely associated with the hijacking and sabotage of aircraft, is portrayed as the reason we have a security discipline within the aviation industry.

This concept is fundamentally flawed for two reasons. Firstly, aviation security is about the prevention of any criminal acts against civil aviation, whether the perpetrator is a terrorist, asylum seeker, criminal or psychologically disturbed. Today (as I complete the final edit to this issue), George Sodoni walked into a branch of LA Fitness in Pittsburgh, fired 52 shots during an aerobic dance class, killing three women and injuring nine others. He then turned his gun on himself and committed suicide. Was he a terrorist? No. Was he

under surveillance? Probably not. Was he an Islamic fundamentalist? No. He was an unhappy loner; a misogynist with a history of failed relationships. A class filled with women aiming to look good seemed to be the perfect target. Sadly the world has many Sodoni-like characters and, in an age where air travel is now open to the masses, many of them take to the skies.

"...whilst Neil Armstrong was making aviation history for all the right reasons, Leila Khaled and her ilk were making air travel within the Earth's atmosphere something to be feared..."

In the last few weeks, we have witnessed some pretty bizarre stories in the skies. On 30th June, a passenger with a bipolar disorder stripped naked during a US Airways flight from Charlotte to Los Angeles and resisted a flight attendant's efforts to cover him with a blanket. The flight diverted to Albuquerque where Keith Wright was arrested. Like Sodoni, he was no terrorist. Yet, unlike Sodoni, he did become violent on board a passenger jet. We may well have sympathy for Wright and his mental health, but we cannot escape from the fact that he posed a threat to our industry and that it is our duty to respond.

It's not only a question of disruptive passengers. It is widely appreciated that airports are the workplace for many undesirable individuals. In what ought to be the most secure of working

environments, we still read numerous stories of criminal gangs operating airside and there are far too many incidents of illegal workers finding employment where they shouldn't. As an example, nine construction workers were arrested on 23rd July in Orlando when it was determined that not only were they not eligible for airport passes, they did not even have the right to be in the United States at all. The issue of background checks is a taxing one given the high staff turnover rates in certain sections of the airport community.

Even when background checks are correctly performed, airport security managers have expressed misgivings about the integrity of many legitimate pass holders. Checks of social networking websites, such as Facebook and Myspace, have revealed that many airport employees are members of groups that would be perceived as being less than desirable. Taking action is nigh on impossible as it impinges on laws protecting freedom of speech and personal privacy. That said, knowing that staff, in their personal life, are supporters of causes or religious doctrines that could

compromise security is a very real concern that needs to be addressed.

“...checks of social networking websites, such as Facebook and Myspace, have revealed that many airport employees are members of groups that would be perceived as being less than desirable...”

The second reason that the Arab-Israeli conflict is a red herring, even if one does mistakenly believe that aviation security is all about preventing Islamic fundamentalist acts alone, is that a resolution of the conflict would not result in a decline in the number of terrorist atrocities. In fact, quite the opposite may be true. The tragic plight of the







Palestinians is a unifying factor for the Arab world and is such an emotive issue that the real al Qaeda agenda is often obscured.

Qutbism is the core of al Qaeda ideology and, as such, the existence of a secular Palestinian state would be as abhorrent to its followers as is the current state of Israel. Qutbism (based on the writings of Sayyid Qutb) preaches religious observance and its followers' main targets are the Muslim states that have become tainted with Western values. Ultimately, the entire moderate Muslim world, as well as the Judeo-Christian world, is regarded as the enemy. The ultimate goal of the Qutbists is to convert the world to Islam and have it governed by sharia law.

Tackling religious extremism is of unquestionable importance, but in defining our aviation security strategy, we need to be realistic and set ourselves worthy, achievable goals. To do so, we need to appreciate and respect those we are up against. If some of the goals appear somewhat lofty, perhaps 40 years after the onset of international airline terrorism, we could at least take it one small step at a time to ultimately benefit mankind.

E.J. BROOKS
Security Products Group

Tamper-Evident Solutions for Total Aviation Security

<p>KNR</p>  <p>For Aircraft doors and hatches - no residue.</p>	<p>KC</p>  <p>Covert security label inspected with ultraviolet light*.</p>	<p>MRN</p>  <p>Colour matched to cabin interior to maintain appearance.</p>	<p>SECURSTOW™ Sealable Life Vest Storage (LVS)</p>  <p>For economy seats *The Markitwise LVS product meets the TSA criteria for acceptable sealed life vest holder* - US Transportation Security Administration (US TSA).</p>
<p>Secur Pull</p>  <p>High Security Seal suitable for duty free trolleys.</p>	<p>Security Tapes</p>  <p>For secure transportation of high value goods and merchandise.</p>	<p>Spring Lok</p>  <p>Easily applied and removed; suitable for catering trolleys and similar applications.</p>	<p>Baggage Security</p>  <p>Security labels for crew and passenger baggage.</p>

*Ultraviolet lights for verifying security labels, travel documents and currency are available.

E.J. BROOKS
Security Products Group
Homme Castle, Shelsley Walsh, Worcestershire, WR6 6RR
Tel: 01886 812 427 Fax: 01886 812 243
www.ejbrooksuk.com

BROOKS