

AVIATION SECURITY INTERNATIONAL

www.asi-mag.com



THE GLOBAL JOURNAL OF AIRPORT & AIRLINE SECURITY



Unruly Passengers: is alcohol the only cause?

ALSO:
FROTTEURISM
RISK PERCEPTION IN IRAQ
CREW RESOURCE MANAGEMENT
X-RAYS IN FOCUS

MEDIA SPONSORS TO:

AVSEC World

**CATSA
CONTRACTS**
SEE PAGE 12



**PASSENGER
RESTRAINT**
SEE PAGE 28



THE PALESTINIAN-ISRAELI CONFLICT:

part and parcel of avsec history

by Philip Baum

Almost every lecture on aviation security history reminds the present day practitioner of the fact that the Arab-Israeli conflict has shaped many of the measures we currently implement to prevent acts of aerial hijacking and sabotage.

The audacious actions of groups such as the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine in Europe resulted in the deployment of checkpoint screening operations worldwide and, for the Israelis at least, in the development of highly effective sky marshal and passenger profiling programmes.

More recently, Islamic fundamentalists – who may cite the Palestinian cause in order to try to gain some sympathy from fellow Muslims, yet perpetrate their callous acts for far more self-centred reasons – have also influenced the way in which we control passengers and limit what they can carry on board aircraft. Both kinds of terrorists – the ethnic nationalist/separatist-cum-social revolutionaries a la PFLP and the religious fundamentalists of the al Qaeda brand – have created, in western society, an atmosphere whereby the stereotypical terrorist is a Muslim and, as a result and quite unfairly, many followers of Islam experience racial profiling when they travel.

Sadly the Palestinian cause is still making the international headlines and the human tragedy that continues to unfold in both Gaza and Israel generates disturbing television images. Whereas the world was sympathetic to Israel when the likes of Leila Khaled and co were skyjacking planes in the 1970s, now that it has become a regional superpower and is marketed as an example of democracy and freedom within the region, Israel now faces unprecedented criticism from friends and foes alike.

For many Muslims, Israel can do no right, and for many Jews and Christian fundamentalists, Israel can do no wrong. Supporters on both sides are partisan in the extreme. Those who are neither in one camp nor the other form their opinions on the basis of media coverage, especially when images of traumatised or, worse still, dead children are broadcast. Of course, we all have our own opinions and are biased, but one of the most troubling aspects of the dispute seems to be the inability of the masses to recognise that neither side is right and neither side is wrong...both have legitimate claims, concerns and aspirations.

Israel has taken certain steps to safeguard its population – the separation barrier (aka the Security Fence) is a case in point. Like many a homeowner who tries to protect his property or, for that matter, every international airport which erects fencing to maintain the sterility of the airside areas, the State has created a barrier. The line it has been built on may be controversial, but its effectiveness cannot be questioned.

The country has been accused of using disproportionate force in its response to the rocket attacks from Gaza. Then again, in 2011 alone, 630 rockets launched from Gaza landed in Israel...and there was no military response. Hamas supporters intentionally launched the rockets from population centres so, when the response did come, civilians were not only bound to die, but were intentionally sacrificed in order to gain world sympathy.

“...Islamic fundamentalist terrorist acts...have nothing to do with the existence or not of the State of Israel...”

Don't get me wrong, Israel is no paragon of virtue. The blockade on Gaza has only heightened resentment amongst the local population and the continued construction of settlements in disputed areas of the West Bank is something that many of Israel's staunchest supporters condemn. Prime Minister Netanyahu's announcement, the day after the United Nations voted (138 to 9, with 41 abstentions) to give Palestine non-member 'observer status', that 3,000 new units would be built in East Jerusalem and the West Bank smacked of a petulant child's hissy fit...except the consequences could be far more serious. The construction project does not, in reality, change anything as ultimately, if there is peace, a deal will involve land swaps whereby both Israel and Palestine will gain and lose some of their existing territory. However such pronouncements are inflammatory.

So too are comments from other politicians. The Turkish Prime Minister, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, using words unworthy of a leader wishing to be a peacemaker, accused Israel of being a "terrorist state" in the midst of the recent conflict.

We have grown to expect the even more extreme proclamations of the Hamas leadership. Khaled Meshaal, since the ceasefire was announced, stated that, "Palestine is ours, from the river to the sea and from the south to the north. There will be no concession on an inch of the land. We will never recognise the legitimacy of the Israeli occupation and therefore there is no legitimacy for Israel, no matter how long it will take." Not much, as Israel often reminds the world, to negotiate on there!

Yet, despite this, Hamas has gained respect both within Gaza and even amongst overseas powers. And there is hope. After all, it has always been the right-wingers who have brought about peace. Many expressed horror when Menachem Begin became Prime Minister of Israel, yet it was he who, together with Anwar Sadat, brought about peace with Egypt. The right carry the left with them. And maybe, with Netanyahu and Meshaal, despite the rhetoric, peace is an option.

But does that mean safer skies? No. Why? Because, whilst the Palestinian cause may have been behind the hijackings in the post-Six Day War era, whilst Islamic fundamentalist terrorist acts are still perpetrated, they are just that – religious fundamentalist in nature and nothing to do with the existence or not of the State of Israel. ■

