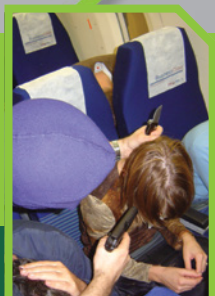




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# GASeP:

## WORDS TO BE TRANSLATED INTO ACTION

by Philip Baum

Call me cynical, but I just can't get excited about this November's approval, by the ICAO Council, of the Global Aviation Security Plan (GASeP). Certainly, we should welcome any initiative which strives to improve the effectiveness of aviation security protocols and which drives states to achieve globally accepted minimum standards designed to respond to the multitude of threats and risks to which the industry is exposed. However, as Alexandre de Juniac, Director General and CEO of IATA, pointed out in his 5 December briefing, "Today it is only words".

We like words, we like high level declarations, and we like resolutions. Just over a year has elapsed since the United Nations Security Council passed Resolution 2309, which calls upon ICAO, States and stakeholders "to comply with their treaty obligations and international responsibilities as they relate to aviation security." But we also need action, and states, including the majority of those who profess to be the world's leading purveyors of aviation security best practice, have a somewhat unimpressive record in turning headlines into meaningful legislation or of ensuring that standards are met through robust audit programmes with associated penalties for non-compliance.

The security world has significantly changed since the Beijing Convention was signed with much fanfare back in 2010. Yet more than seven years later it has not yet come into force. At the time of writing, whilst the Convention has 32 signatures, it only has 12 ratifications, eight accessions, and one acceptance – one short of the requisite number to bring the Convention into force. In 2017, only Bahrain, Benin and Uganda added their names to the list. And, of the Western countries who should have been leading the way, only France, Netherlands and Switzerland have 'ratified' it. Slightly more progress has been made on the Beijing Protocol (2010); it comes into force on 1 January 2018 now that 22 states have, as of November 2017, taken appropriate steps (11 ratifications, ten accessions, and one acceptance) to move good intentions into legislation.

Even in the less politically sensitive area of legislation addressing the surge in unruly passenger behaviour, and the belated efforts to update the 1963 Tokyo Convention, the Montreal Protocol of 2014 has a

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paltry four ratifications and eight accessions, with Cote d'Ivoire, Egypt, Portugal and Uganda putting pen to paper in 2017. True, many are supposedly about to do so, but when one considers how long it took us to even get agreement with the wording of the Protocol back in 2014, it illustrates that such declarations are to be welcomed, but the individual efforts of specific states are far more newsworthy.

The machinations of government do, indeed, take time and each state has its own domestic political agenda, with associated legislation, to pass through its own respective parliament. Yet, especially if we are to be proactive in our response to the terrorist threat, initiatives that are worth heralding are those that aggressively combat the evolving modus operandi of those who wish to target aviation. Substance rather than framework.

With annual international air passenger traffic "expected to reach 6 billion by 2030 from about 3.3 billion today", according to ICAO, and air cargo transported "expected to increase to 125 million tonnes from 50 million" radical new approaches to screening need to be embraced based on differentiation. But, more importantly, we need to address our lax tolerance for failure.

In the US, recent reports indicate that between 70% and 80% of covert tests are failing. Whilst that is an improvement on previously published figures, when one considers that tests – unlike actual terrorist plots – are intended to be passable, the rate is truly horrifying. No doubt the TSA signs up to the objectives of the GASeP, but if they are struggling to achieve even basic screening standards, one has to question whether even those countries who can afford to invest in aviation security countermeasures should be focusing on the international framework rather than on rectifying their own deficiencies.

Ideally the two should go hand-in-hand. We all have a vested interest in ensuring that aviation operates in a secure environment. The stakes are enormous, not only in terms of protecting the lives of those who fly, but also in economic terms. The 11 September hijackings were reported (in the New York Times), a decade after the attack, to have already cost US \$3.3 trillion, whilst last year's Brussels Airport suicidal bombing "caused losses as high as US \$4.47 billion as a result of close to two weeks suspension of airport and airline operations, repair to infrastructure, and other losses". Yet the pay packet for those on the frontline remains unacceptably low given the importance of their role and the potential cost of their failure.



Aviation continues to be targeted, not always in high profile actions. According to the 'Risk Context' set out in the GASeP, "sixty-nine acts of unlawful interference were recorded between 2011 and 2016. Twenty-one out of 69 incidents had fatalities (a total of 884 deaths). Facility attacks represented the highest number with 24 incidents (or 32 per cent), followed by unlawful seizure with 18 incidents (or 26 per cent), sabotage with 15 incidents (or 22 per cent) and other acts with 12 incidents (or 17 per cent)". The real number is actually much higher as the quoted statistics are limited to those cited in ICAO reports.

"Governments are ultimately responsible for aviation security", said Nick Careen, IATA's Senior Vice President, Airport, Passenger, Cargo and Security, at IATA's 2017 Global Media Day. Yet even the very achievable standards of Annex 17 meet with only 71% global compliance. So, what are more than a quarter of the world's nations doing to address their inability to meet the lowest common denominator? And, more importantly, where are the sanctions for those that fail to do so?

ICAO is not the global regulator for aviation security. It is a United Nations body which, through no fault of its own, remains toothless. It can, and does, promulgate best practice, but it is down to sovereign states to implement measures at its own airports and to audit those measures taken at airports in overseas states, if departing flights operate to, or overfly, its territory.

**"...the very achievable standards of Annex 17 meet with only 71% global compliance..."**

ICAO, after all, recognises (as cited in the GASeP) that there is "inadequate access control measures to Security Restricted Areas (SRAs); deficiencies in the implementation of airport personnel identification and vehicle pass systems; lack of airport-level human and technical resources for aviation security; ineffective screening and security controls of non-passengers granted access to the SRA." Yet which airports are internationally blacklisted? In the realm of safety, as always more aggressive in its approach to failings, the European Union has a list of 178 airlines it bans from EU skies...for safety reasons. Many of these airlines wouldn't operate to the EU even if they could. Such listing forces carriers to rectify problems; the latest list has resulted in Mustique Airways, based in St. Vincent and the Grenadines, and Urga, from Ukraine, being removed from the list after making sufficient improvements to their safety standards. On the other hand, Venezuela's Avior Airlines has now been added.

The GASeP includes a roadmap that "outlines 94 tasks, accompanying 32 actions under five key priority outcomes" and "a set of indicators and target dates", all by 2019. Good stuff designed to raise the level of implementation of Annex 17. I just hope that, in 2019, I'll be eating my words... ■

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