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a challenge to TSA's new administrator

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COCKPIT PROTECTION:
WE NEED MORE THAN PERCEIVED SECURITY
by Philip Baum

For many years I was sympathetic to the calls, primarily from the pilot fraternity, that aircrew should be exempt from all but random screening. It is of course true that a pilot needs no gun, no grenade, no knife and no explosive device if they are intent on hijacking an aircraft or turning it into a weapon of mass destruction. They fly the aircraft and can do what they want, especially if they can get their colleague to leave the flight deck for a comfort break.

True, many airlines have instigated the 'rule of two' whereby, should one member of the technical crew have to leave the cockpit, they will be replaced by a flight attendant. To a certain extent we have mitigated the risk of a suicidal pilot being able to pull off their deadly act in private, yet we have also introduced somebody new to the flight deck – often an individual who may be a seasonal employee, who may have only received one month's training and about whom we have far less knowledge. It would be far easier for a terrorist to gain employment as a flight attendant than as a pilot given the recruitment process and training regime.

By our latest, post-Germanwings, knee-jerk reaction we have demonstrated yet again that we are held hostage to the requirement to deliver the *perception* of security rather than a carefully considered, risk-based, security regime.

The limitations of the enhanced cockpit door, exploited by a number of pilots over the last two years (Germanwings, Ethiopian Airlines, LAM and, who knows, maybe Malaysia Airlines) to perpetrate acts of unlawful interference, clearly need to be addressed. Simply introducing a flight attendant to the flight deck is not the long-term solution. Have we, by mitigating one risk, in the process increased our overall vulnerability?

My concern is no longer limited to the integrity of any one flight attendant. It is sad, but true, that the most significant in-flight attacks over the last two years have not been carried out by passengers, who have to endure an arduous screening regime, nor by flight attendants. Pilots have been the perpetrators and they have to accept that, in the same way that 99.999% of passengers pose no risk, but are treated with suspicion, so too must we evaluate our airmen and women. That doesn't mean we need to be using the same screening protocols that we use for passengers, but perhaps this would be the ideal community to target with a behavioural analysis-focussed screening regime.

In an August incident, which is easy to overlook as just another example of pilots having a few drinks too many, five airBaltic crewmembers were breathalysed upon their arrival at Oslo airport in order to operate a flight to the Greek island of Crete. All bar one were over the limit. The first officer had a blood alcohol level of 1.2%, the captain's level was 0.4% and two of the flight attendants had levels of over 0.2%. But why were they targeted? This was not a random breathalyser test. The invisible heroes of this incident were the employees of the hotel where the crew had their layover. Worried that the crew were drinking heavily in the bar the night before a 0545 departure, they called the airport police to express their concerns. The importance of reporting unusual behaviours simply cannot be emphasised enough, even though some would argue it encourages a Big Brother culture. The case also exemplifies the value of embracing the entire aviation community and, indeed, associated businesses.

Intoxicated pilots are not the same as pilots who might be members or sympathisers of terrorist groups. Whilst it was unfortunate that a March 2015 Australian Federal Police (AFP) report, marked 'For Official Use Only' was leaked to the press, its contents should serve as a reminder that some of the world's most ruthless organisations are determined to infiltrate the ranks of our pilots, and have already succeeded in doing so. The report stated that, "On 16 March 2015, information was received by the AFP that indicated two possible Indonesian pilots, likely employees of AirAsia and Premiair, had posted information on their Facebook pages that inferred support to the Islamic State."

> "…the most significant in-flight attacks over the last two years have not been carried out by passengers…nor by flight attendants. Pilots have been the perpetrators…"

In the case of Ridwan Agustin, he outlined some of his career with AirAsia. However, as of September 2014, he also "started posting material indicative of support to IS". Agustin disabled his account on 16 March, but the Australian authorities are concerned that the account opened up the next day in the name of Hobi Panahan belongs to one and the same person. Both names were linked, on Facebook, to a woman by the name of Diah Suci Wulandari, who used to work as a flight attendant for Star Air and then AirAsia. She may well be Agustin's (Panahan's) wife and is linked to Indonesian radical groups. Meanwhile, Panahan's account demonstrates a process of radicalisation and an interest in graphic IS imagery, including executions and beheadings.

Meanwhile, Tommy Abu al-Fatih (also known as Tomi Hendratno) had been a pilot for the Indonesian military and for Garuda Indonesia, but joined Premiair in 2012 (and left in June this year). The AFP report indicates that he is linked to pilots around the world, yet his social media activity also shows a disturbing interest in Islamic State exemplified by his 'liking' Agustin's posts on the subject.

Meanwhile, al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula's (AQAP) journal, INSPIRE, has continuously made it clear that aviation remains their number one target; last December's issue addressed the subject of aviation security in even greater detail than we do! INSPIRE also encourages lone wolf attacks and outlines the value of becoming an 'insider'.

So we need to take action and make sure that, as an industry, we develop strategies to mitigate the threat posed by the terrorist crewmember. Individual airlines can develop their own programmes but, when I consider that I live on the flight path into London Heathrow, and 80 different carriers fly there, a global response is required. My local authority is already suing the Civil Aviation Authority for failure to protect the local residents from stowaways falling from aircraft as landing gears are lowered. What if it was a rogue pilot deciding to crash a commercial aircraft into a city centre…and all because we opted for the perception of security? ■