

## PROTECTING THE POND: UK-US AVIATION SECURITY FOR 2009 AND BEYOND

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### **Introductory remarks.**

Very pleased to be here for your first event of 2009. Great opportunity to meet you all and to engage with you on matters of mutual interest.

Also sad to be in Washington given that one reason for visit is to say farewell to Kip Hawley, who has been a much valued partner over the past few years and who will be much missed on both sides of the Pond.

Under Kip's leadership of the TSA, much closer relationship developed with the UK, to the benefit of both countries - Governments and industry.

One of strengths of UK/US co-operation is our common understanding of the seriousness of the threat, based on information sharing.

Also better mutual recognition that security **outcomes** are what is important. We may arrive at the same place by different means. Equivalence rather than necessarily identical approaches.

And have recognised that, whatever the differences, both sides of the Pond have much better aviation security than in many other parts of the world, and that it is better to concentrate our joint efforts on making the weak links stronger than in picking holes in each other.

That said – there is more and more common ground as we share ideas and freely take from each other whatever seems to be the best practice, recognising that people like you in industry do benefit from as level a playing field as we can make it.

## **What did the world of aviation security look like at the end of 2008?**

Much shared history between UK and US in this field.

Year ended on a particularly poignant note for us all - 21 Dec marked 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the bombing of Pam Am 103 over the Scottish town of Lockerbie. 270 people lost their lives. The resulting demands for better aviation security led directly to the creation and development of many of the measures (especially HBS) we have in place today. **First major step-change** in avsec. Shift in planning assumption. Previous focus on dealing with hijacks for hostage taking. Now realise that terrorists want to plant bombs – and escape detection as well as surviving themselves.

**Second major step-change** came after 9/11 when the focus was not only on further improving ground security but also in-flight security. Former planning assumptions were overturned and security needed to respond to the threat posed by suicide bombers **in addition** to the existing range of potential MOs (including MANPADS post Mombassa 2002).

**Third step-change** following August 06 (liquids' plot "OVERT"). Last autumn eight people were tried for planning to bomb transatlantic flights using liquid explosives. The trial produced an inconclusive result and the Crown Prosecution Service is seeking to retry seven of the eight defendants. Graphic evidence made public in court showed that a generic capability existed which would enable terrorist to circumvent existing security controls to create and plant viable bombs on board an aircraft.

Level of threat remains at severe which means that an attack is highly likely. We don't foresee any imminent downgrading of such an assessment and it has in fact become "the new normal". OVERT confirmed the attractiveness of aviation as a target for a spectacular attack. History tells us that old methods and targets never go away, and so inevitably we need to keep adding security measures. Hard to justify taking any away.

Key feature for aviation security through all its phases has been the need for an international response. Aviation only as strong as

the weakest link. International agreements and standards are key. As is delivery. UK and US have worked in partnership in ICAO to establish where possible an even playing field, and with overseas partners to delivery the right product on the ground. This is good for commerce and good for security.

### **What are the plans for 2009 and beyond?**

In the UK, our strategy for the next 10 years or so for transport security draws both from the Government's transport strategy (developed by my Dept – importance of transport to the economy; security as one of the workstreams) and the Counter Terrorist Strategy (CONTEST) (work led by the Home Office; currently being refreshed; version to be published in the near future.)

Our strategy to enhance security in the transport sector focuses on reducing risk to the public and enhancing industry resilience, whilst ensuring that the impact of security measures on travellers and other transport users are minimised and confidence in the security regime is maintained. To achieve this, transport security regimes must be proportionate, effectively implemented, based on robust evidence, and developed through strong working partnerships with industry and others.

### **What sort of things will we be doing in 2009 to deliver this strategy?**

Lots of things to do in 09, but if I were to pick just three areas as priority for aviation security they would be – more effective partnerships, better technology, better integration.

On the first – **more effective partnerships** - we are seeking to develop with industry a greater joint understanding and ownership of threat and risk and response.

- Reform of our National Aviation Security Committee (chaired by the Transport Secretary) over past six months to facilitate this. Not just a bureaucratic change but a genuine attempt to do things differently.
- A joint Government/industry ExCo, with an independent non-exec Chair, will be a key means of identifying priorities for the aviation security programme, making recommendations to the Transport Secretary for action, and then ensuring that

the work is delivered to the satisfaction of both Govt and industry.

- On our part, we plan to share more sensitive information with a small sub-group of industry representatives who will be security cleared to a higher level than those on the main committee. This will not be entirely straightforward and there will be constraints on us from those in Government who own the information that we see. But we are really keen to get across to our industry colleagues the rationale behind the security measures and a much better informed sense of the threat that we all face currently.
- On the industry's part, they have said that they want to work more closely with us in devising risk mitigations and have told us that they are prepared to commit resources (ie operational experts) to it. Not clear exactly how this will work in practice, but we want to move beyond our current system of consultation of industry reps on committees to a much closer engagement, perhaps through joint project teams or secondments

This year will be challenging while we get the new way of working to bed down and become productive. Some of you might like to note that foreign airlines will continue to be represented on the main NASC by BAR-UK and we will welcome active participation of them and their members.

On the second – **better technology** - we need technology to help us align security to today's threat. A lot of work now on both sides of the Atlantic to find a technological solution to the screening problem that would allow passengers either to carry separately greater quantities of liquids and/or carry liquids inside cabin baggage. Collaboration with US very important not only in finding solution but in finding one that can be "sold" internationally. Consistency of approach essential. Moving from the current regime, where the risk is mitigated by restricting liquids, to one where screening becomes a viable option, will not be easy. Introducing something different will have its downsides as well as advantages.

On the third – the importance of **better integration** of security and the operation, so that security becomes as embedded as safety, cannot be understated. For too long, security has been grafted onto the operation, rather than designed in. This is not the recipe

for effectiveness or efficiency, and increases costs at a time when the industry is under huge economic pressure.

I would like to see more attention paid by industry to creating operational processes that lend themselves to good security from the outset. And some attempt to review existing practices to see where operational changes could both improve security and reduce the burden. Consider how much purely commercial activity – unconnected with moving passengers and goods from A to B - takes place in sensitive areas of the airport, for example, selling duty free goods. And yet I see little sign of new, innovative ways of doing business that would take the need for security out of the equation. Equally, if the joint airport/airline operation were better able to transport passengers' belongings in the hold and deliver them quickly and safely at the other end of the journey, thus removing the need for so much to be carried in the cabin, there would be both improvements and cost savings on the security operation and a much improved passenger experience.

On the positive side, I have been impressed by the work which TSA have been leading on how to introduce new screening technology into the search comb, and combining this with their work on passenger self-selection (the Black Diamond regime.) I think that we can learn from this.

Rather differently but still related to the general topic of integration, we in the UK are working with airports and police to achieve a more **holistic approach to security**, with one Airport Security Plan, based on a common threat and risk assessment. This will be put onto a legislative footing and will require airport operators to pay for any policing which they need to mitigate identified risks. But it should bring all security stakeholders together and result in a better overall regime for users.

In addition, for all our transport programmes, we are working with industry to improve approaches to **personnel security**, following an independent review last year. We already have strong physical security in place, which extends, for example, to the staff who work at airports and ensures the same level of screening as for passengers. The review confirmed that we are right to regard this as important and we will continue to urge the TSA to follow our example. But we were recommended to be more systematic, and to give more weight, to the sort of non-physical checks which might

identify a potential “insider” either before they join an organisation or to spot them and deal with them before they are able to abuse their position. Our starting point is for industry organisations, with help from us and from experts elsewhere in Government, to be more methodical in risk assessing those positions where an insider could do harm so that we can focus any new measures accordingly.

**Will the UK/US relationship be as strong in years to come as it has been?**

Very confident that it will be so. Strong foundations and many established links and mechanisms for exchange of information and analysis. We have worked together on some very difficult issues and have established ways of doing this that will transcend the transition to the new administration.

As well as our shared understanding of the threat, we have a shared understanding of our economic dependence on aviation: for US to connect a large country; for UK to connect a small country with its markets. For both of us, if we can manage the current step-change to dealing with today’s threat and then really focus on embedding security into the way aviation industry operates, without buck passing, then not only will both of us be the stronger for it but will also be in good position to be a role model for the rest of the world.

**Questions?**