



Advancing the interests of our members and the profession

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Senator Glenn Sterle
Chairman
Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport References Committee
PO Box 6100
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Our Ref: S20-0014

Dear Chairman,

SUBMISSION TO THE SENATE REGIONAL AFFAIRS AND TRANSPORT REFERENCES COMMITTEE INQUIRY INTO AIRPORT AND AVIATION SECURITY

The Australian and International Pilots' Association (AIPA) is the largest Association of professional airline pilots in Australia. We represent nearly all Qantas pilots and a significant percentage of pilots flying for the Qantas subsidiaries (including Jetstar Airways Pty Ltd). AIPA represents over 2,100 professional airline transport category flight crew and we are a key member of the International Federation of Airline Pilot Associations (IFALPA) which represents over 100,000 pilots in 100 countries.

AIPA, through its Safety and Technical Sub-Committee, is committed to protecting and advancing aviation safety standards and operations. We are grateful for the opportunity to make a submission to the Senate Regional Affairs and Transport References Committee Inquiry into Airport and Aviation Security.

I would first like to convey the condolences of our Committee of Management and of our members to all who have been directly affected by the events in Martin Place and in Paris. Despite the terrible circumstances that precipitated the public responses in both Sydney and Paris, it would be extremely difficult not to take considerable heart from the public resolve to both honour the victims and to reject the *modus operandi* of the perpetrators.

Importantly, we all have to resist the temptation in the emotional aftermath to over-react to such events by unnecessarily constraining our own freedoms in ways not reflective of the risk or of the efficient application of limited resources.

The Terms of Reference

On 04 December 2014, the Senate moved that the following matters be referred to the Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport References Committee for inquiry and report by 26 April 2015:

- a. recent media reports on apparent breaches in airport and aviation security at Australian airports;

- b. consideration of the responses to those reports from the Government, regulators, airports and other key stakeholders, and the adequacy of those responses;
- c. whether there are further measures that ought to be taken to enhance airport security and the safety of the travelling public;
- d. the findings of, and responses to, reports undertaken into airport security issues since 2000; and
- e. any related matters.

Recent Media Reports on Apparent Breaches in Airport and Aviation Security at Australian Airports

AIPA maintains a watching brief on all aviation security-related matters through a Safety & Technical sub-committee. We also engage regularly with the Department of Infrastructure and Regional Development (DIRD) and the Office of Transport Security (OTS) in relation to aviation security matters. We have also benefited previously from advice provided to us by the Australian Federal Police (AFP) and the Australian Security Intelligence Organisation (ASIO).

Aviation security, like any infrastructure security, is a difficult issue to canvas in a public forum. Engendering fear in the public is arguably worse than engendering complacency, particularly as the emotional climate waxes and wanes with local and world events. Critically, infrastructure security is expensive both in terms of money and social impact. In financial terms alone, infrastructure security is a close parallel to aviation safety and the cost-benefit patterns follow similar parabolic paths. The social impact is a much more complex issue, but suffice it to say that it is well worth reflecting on what the aviation travel experience was like prior to “9/11”.

AIPA concentrates its efforts towards the extremes of the aviation security spectrum: we deal publicly with inappropriately targeted security measures that are largely uncorrelated with the risk but are in plain sight; and we deal privately with unmitigated security risks and ineffective processes that the public rarely sees. We also believe that any public examination of aviation security measures such as this present Inquiry needs to clearly distinguish which of the publicised shortcomings are specific to the Australian situation rather than symptomatic of the economics of aviation security measures worldwide.

Two recent stories in the *New York Times*^{1,2} about domestic gun smuggling into New York highlighted similar gaps in aviation security to that identified in the Channel 7 Today Tonight story³ from 24 July 2014 and its follow-up that most likely generated this particular Term of Reference (ToR). The essence of the *New York Times* stories is:

“CRITICS who have long complained that airport security measures are mostly “security theater” have given a recent aviation gun-smuggling drama poor reviews.

The authorities say that on Dec. 10, while 1.7 million other passengers were being routinely screened for weapons at security checkpoints in airports around the country, a man carrying a backpack containing 16 firearms with ammunition flew aboard a Delta Air Lines passenger jet to Kennedy International Airport in New York from Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport. The suspect was arrested in New York that day after a months long investigation into gun smuggling to New York from Atlanta.

“What we have in this case is an egregious breach of security down in that airport” in Atlanta, the Brooklyn district attorney, Kenneth P. Thompson, said at a news conference last week to announce extensive charges. At the center of the case is a former Delta Air Lines worker charged with smuggling 153 firearms, including an AK-47 assault weapon, on 17 Delta flights between Atlanta and New York from May 8 to Dec. 10.

¹ Sharkey, J 2014, “Gun Smuggling on Plane Reveals Security Oversight”, *New York Times*, 29 December

² Sharkey, J 2015, “Where Security Fails: Airport Worker Access”, *New York Times*, 05 January

³ Seymour, B 2014, “Airport security warning”, *Channel 7 News*, 24 July

After passing through the regular airport security checkpoints, the suspect received the guns from an accomplice, a Delta baggage handler who had easy access to secure areas of the airport and was able to carry firearms into the terminal, Mr. Thompson said.

"My jaw dropped on this one," said Anthony C. Roman, a security consultant. "It strips away the security facade that's been in place since 2002 and painfully exposes the major deficiencies that many security professionals have been trying to bring to the forefront since 9/11," he said. He and others have been concerned that workers with access to secure airport areas are not as closely screened as passengers are at the checkpoints.

While not specifically dealing with criminal activity, the Channel 7 News report also highlighted some aspects of access to airport facilities outside the passenger terminals, including runways and taxiways. Similar issues were canvassed in another Channel 7 News report⁴ on 10 November 2014.

The 10 November 2014 report also included items in regard to breaches of security in the passenger terminal area. The media have been reporting such issues for some time⁵ both here and overseas⁶. While we are concerned about these specific breaches, we note that they are almost exclusively reports of breaches that have subsequently been detected and recorded by the responsible government agencies. In this regard, AIPA is more concerned about the immeasurable statistics of breaches that go completely undetected.

AIPA recognises that there are deficiencies in aviation security in almost all parts of the world, not only in Australia, and that there will continue to be breaches even in the most advanced systems due to either human error or criminal ingenuity. Importantly, that recognition in no way suggests that we find the situation acceptable, but rather that some of the reported deficiencies here in Australia are indeed symptomatic of a much broader systemic problem.

Consideration of the Responses to those Reports from the Government, Regulators, Airports and other Key Stakeholders, and the Adequacy of those Responses

In the interests of reading efficiency, we will comment on these two ToRs together rather than repeat the arguments.

Whether there are Further Measures that ought to be taken to Enhance Airport Security and the Safety of the Travelling Public

AIPA broadly considers the security of airport infrastructure in relation to four geographical groupings: the land buffers, the support areas, the operational surfaces and the terminal areas. Each has a security risk associated with it as well as a consequential safety risk.

The Land Buffers

In an ideal world, the land buffers exist to prevent the encroachment of urban sprawl into the protected land and airspace associated with the operational surfaces of runways, taxiways, holdings bays, etc. In that same ideal world, those buffers allow sufficient separation between the boundary fences and the operational surfaces that anyone attempting to drive a truck through the fence or otherwise penetrate the barrier has a long way to go to become a hazard within the operational surfaces.

AIPA notes that the unfortunate modern trend to utilise the land buffers for commercial development appears to dispense with the security benefits of large open spaces clear of buildings and other obstructions.

Notwithstanding, AIPA believes that some of the media commentary on preventing penetration of the boundaries of the total airport land is more about garnering air time for the commentators than it is for any semblance of useful advice. We do not purport to have any particular expertise in this particular subject, but we believe that, from a practical perspective, securing complete airport perimeters is a particularly difficult undertaking.

⁴ Seymour, B 2014, "Serious security breaches at Australian airports", *Channel 7 News*, 10 November

⁵ see for example Sandy, A 2010 "Guns, knives pass flight checkpoints", *the Courier Mail*, 03 August

⁶ See for example Hunt, T 2014 "Airport passenger security breaches", *The Press*, press.co.nz, 22 October

The cost differential between providing a barrier to persons and animals designed to prevent accidental entry and providing a barrier that will prevent all practical forms of deliberate entry and the creation of firing platforms is most likely to be huge. The latter option would most likely require a similar barrier and surveillance layout and construction to that found at high security prisons.

In our estimation, secure prisons generally occupy significantly less space than most major airports. Various planning documents indicate that the highly concentrated Sydney Airport occupies some 900 hectares, Perth Airport occupies 2105 hectares and Melbourne Airport occupies 2457 hectares and each of those examples involves particularly convoluted boundaries. Suffice it to say, the total distance of the total airport land area boundary is staggering when translated into the dollar cost of high security barriers,

The Support Areas

For the purposes of this discussion, we consider the support areas to be those areas such as catering, airport corporate and airport technical areas that do not require constant "airside" access to the operational surfaces land area. However, as they do require regular airside access, they need their own security environment to justify efficient security processing at the airside boundary. Without utilising something akin to a "security-bonded" vehicle approach, the normal activities of a major airport would grind to a halt if a full vehicle inspection was required at each entry. Of course, the alternative is to have all the support areas airside, but at the cost of enlarging the airside security perimeter.

The Operational Surfaces

The operational surfaces contain the runway/taxiway complex and the apron areas. The physical security of the operational surfaces is a similar cost/benefit conundrum to that of securing the total airport land area boundary, albeit for a generally smaller space. AIPA estimates that operational surfaces/runway complexes typically occupy around 800 hectares and a boundary length of around 15 kilometres would not seem unreasonable. Even so, the cost of penetration-proof barriers would seem likely to far exceed to benefit of preventing the physical risk of one or a small group of individuals creating a safety problem on the operational surfaces.

In our limited understanding of the risks, there is no need to penetrate the operational surfaces boundary to launch an offensive attack unless something like a small anti-tank device such as the ubiquitous RPG was to be used or some form of personal explosive device. In either case, the damage is likely to be limited and within the capability of airside fire-fighting vehicles.

The security task can be somewhat simplified if we separate the operational surfaces into the two elements: the runway/taxiway complex and the apron areas. AIPA offers the view that the physical security of the runway/taxiway complex, while important, can only act as an outer barrier to assist in securing the apron areas. While we have mentioned the immediate physical threat in the preceding paragraph, accessing the apron areas allows a greater range of potential security threats through access to parked aircraft, handling equipment and the interface with the terminal areas.

AIPA has long been, and remains, very concerned about the effectiveness of our physical security of the apron areas.

It could be argued that the need for obvious security activity in the immediate aftermath of "9/11" meant that the focus was going to be on screening passengers in the terminal space to make a public display of activity to calm a terrified populace. For many years, examining checked baggage or cargo received little or no funding and is only now getting some appropriate attention. AIPA members continue to observe little or at best desultory security checking of staff with airside access who do not enter via the terminal secure area in stark contrast to the over-emphasis on checking flight crew within the terminal secure area.

The two New York Times articles demonstrate the weakness in not providing the same level of screening to everyone who can reasonably access the holds and/or cabin of large aircraft engaged in air transport operations. Until such time as Australia completes the establishment of uniform screening, we must presume that a serious threat to the safety of aircraft exists and that our security dollars are not being allocated on the basis of properly determined risks.

The Terminal Areas

As mentioned previously, AIPA accepts there will continue to be breaches even in the most advanced systems due to either human error or criminal ingenuity. There are also technological limitations to the equipment used in primary screening and continuing debate about the cost-effectiveness of secondary systems such as the “suspicious signs” and “controlled cognitive engagement” behavioural assessments⁷ that are undertaken post primary screening. Importantly, a close examination of the list of security breaches⁸ released by DIRD under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 indicates an almost complete lack of intent and an arguably low level of risk associated with the breaches. While we indicated that the very existence of the list raises the possibility that undetected breaches must be logically presumed to occur, the very absence of incidents of any kind suggest that aberrant behaviour targeted at the passengers and aircraft was not a feature of any breaches that occurred.

In making these observations, AIPA is not indicating any lack of support for security screening *per se*. We are strongly supportive of risk-based screening and also of advanced technology solutions that are designed to detect those who act to avoid detection and the things they seek to bring into the secure areas or onto the aircraft.

However, we wish to be crystal clear that repetitive screening of flight crew and the repetitive mini-power-plays by screeners serves absolutely no useful security or safety purpose. It is an entirely remote risk that a flight crew member carrying a pair of nail clippers, a Leatherman or even a pair of knitting needles is going to unlawfully interfere with the aircraft using those things in preference to the full range of control options available in the cockpit. The original decision (confirmed by OTS) to force flight crew through normal screening was solely for the purposes of public display and nothing else. It is noteworthy that this Australian stance is considerably stricter than that applied to flight crew in the US, despite the US previously having a significantly greater aviation security risk.

Apart from a complete lack of leadership to undo that decision, no one has actually costed the efficiency deficit that attends every decision that adds time and distance to preflight preparation and there is little responsibility taken by any decision-makers within the system for the additional stress placed on flight crew when screening incidents occur unnecessarily – both of which AIPA considers as potential sources of human error incidents.

One other concern that we have is in regard to the creation of a choke point in passenger movement at the screening points. While we have no doubt that the risk planners in OTS, the AFP and in ASIO will have carefully considered the changes in people density throughout terminal areas, it seems to us in AIPA that many check-in areas and security screening queues regularly create largely stagnant masses of people who are held close to the open front side of terminals with little freedom of movement. This is particularly the case in older terminals where the designs were formulated for vastly different movement patterns and occupation densities.

The Cost of Security Responses

Whether we like it or not, security is expensive. We think it is instructive to look at the US experience in dealing with what until recently was a much higher threat. The Transportation Security Administration (TSA) in the US is an entirely post-“9/11” organisation that represents a cost model for their security response that covers some 450 airports. The 2014 budget for the TSA was \$7.39 billion and the organisation employed over 55,600 people⁹ (about \$16.42 million and 123 people per airport per year) while facing similar security deficiencies as we have already identified here. In December 2011, *Vanity Fair* reported that the U.S. has spent more than \$1.1 trillion on homeland security since “9/11”¹⁰.

⁷ Dando, C.J., 2014, “Airport security measures aren’t good enough – here’s a fix”, *The Conversation*, 22 November

⁸ DIRD, 2014, *Freedom of Information Disclosure Log*, accessed at: <http://www.infrastructure.gov.au/department/ips/log.aspx> on 14 January 2015

⁹ Wikipedia 2015, *Transport Security Administration*, accessed at: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Transportation_Security_Administration on 14 January 2015

¹⁰ Mann, C.C. 2011, “Does Airport Security Really Make us Safer – Smoke Screening”, *Vanity Fair*, 20 December

However, AIPA is pleased to recognise that both the Secretary¹¹ and the Executive Director OTS¹² have recently made speeches about the need to shift to risk-based security and we hope that this may be indicative of a more appropriate allocation of the limited funds to vulnerable areas. Certainly one of the challenges will be how to fund what appears to be an inevitable increase in manpower and the balance between unarmed civil security personnel versus security services intelligence personnel and armed AFP responders.

the Findings of, and Responses to, Reports undertaken into Airport Security Issues since 2000

AIPA is not in a position to add meaningfully to this examination.

Conclusion

AIPA has a clear vested interest in adequate aviation security. We have maintained a constant position on the need for risk-based security and have been critical of the 'one size fits all' model used in Australia.

AIPA believes that the media coverage was legitimately based, although a little overblown in certain areas.

AIPA believes that any response must be balanced with a realistic approach of what is achievable at reasonable cost without excessive social impact.

AIPA believes that we need to urgently redress the inadequacy of screening applied to people who gain airside access other than through the terminal secure area and that we need to adequately secure the apron areas against unlawful entry.

AIPA believes that the repetitive screening of flight crew serves absolutely no useful security or safety purpose and should stop as a matter of urgency.

AIPA believes that consideration must be given to procedural changes that improve the flow rate of passengers through the security screening choke points.

Recommendations

AIPA recommends that the Committee emphasises the need to urgently redress the inadequacy of screening applied to people who gain airside access other than through the terminal secure area and the need to adequately secure the apron areas against unlawful entry.

AIPA recommends that the Committee agree that the repetitive screening of flight crew serves no useful security or safety purpose and that the requirement should be removed as a matter of urgency.

AIPA recommends that the Committee emphasises that consideration must be given to procedural changes that improve the flow rate of passengers through the security screening choke points.



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¹¹ Creedy, S 2014, "Infrastructure chief Mike Mrdak warns of airport security overhaul to cope with tourist growth", the Australian, 25 November

¹² Freed, J 2014, "Australian airport security rethink for 'low-risk' passengers", the Sydney Morning Herald, 25 November