



September 12, 2017

Remarks as delivered at the ICAO Global Aviation Security Symposium by Administrator David P. Pekoske, Montreal, Canada

Good Morning Secretary General Liu, Director General Hololei, Director General Angela Gittens, President and CEO Rainville, fellow colleagues and participants.

I am truly honored to be here with you today. I can't think of a more fitting place for my first international trip than the inaugural Global Aviation Security Symposium. I have been TSA Administrator for a little more than a month, so this is a wonderful opportunity to establish relationships that are so critical to our collective success.

I genuinely appreciate the invitation to join you here today to express my unwavering commitment to global aviation security, and highlight the critical importance of working together to ensure the security of the traveling public and the free flow of commerce.

So to our hosts, I'd like to thank you for allowing me to share my thoughts on the current risk picture of civil aviation and to outline the immediate actions we must take to address these challenges.

Current Threat Environment

The threat to civil aviation, including cargo, is persistent. It is dynamic. And it is complex.

It continues to evolve at a rate that challenges our efforts to effectively secure the global aviation system with our current pace and approach to threat mitigation.

At the same time, the world's reliance on the aviation network to facilitate the movement of people and goods continues its steady growth.

As the global economy continues to be more and more reliant on aviation, keeping that system secure becomes more and more important.

Having just marked the 16th anniversary of September 11, 2001 yesterday, we don't need much imagination to see how high the stakes really are.

It is not enough for us to evolve faster; we must act faster. The recent terrorist plot in Australia is a sobering reminder of what we have all known for some time: the threat to aviation – both passenger and cargo – is as real as ever, and tactical and strategic actions are urgently needed for us to effectively close the vulnerabilities in the system.

Call to Action

I come here today with a call to action. We cannot longer afford to inch our way forward on security and hope to get lucky.

We must not address tomorrow's threats with yesterday's security approach. Threats to aviation will continue to evolve rapidly, so must adapt and innovate faster.

The consequences of failure – from complacency, from not working together, and from a lack of ingenuity – are unacceptable.

ICAO: We Are ICAO

We are only as strong as our weakest link, and it is up to us collectively to determine the strength of the global aviation network. No country should be left behind.

The threat today does not recognize borders because terrorists know just how interdependent our transportation systems are. To harm one of us is to harm us all.

So when the United Nations issued a call for international action through Security Council Resolution 2309, we, the global aviation community, expedited, through ICAO, the development of the Global Aviation Security Plan.

This plan is a very good strategic step forward. Its five priorities are my priorities as TSA Administrator. As the hub for the global aviation community, ICAO serves as our compass. But ICAO does not operate in a vacuum; we are ICAO and we have a responsibility to ourselves and to each other to take action now.

We must ensure that security remains at the top of the global aviation agenda by dedicating our best and brightest to the challenge, and getting to work today on developing cutting-edge, visionary security solutions.

To effectively address current threats and anticipate future ones, we must move beyond the comfort of conventional proposals for meeting standards.

Rather, our focus should be on optimizing and implementing effective measures. We must embrace innovation and work together – through ICAO and with each other – to effectively raise the baseline of international aviation security.

By addressing vulnerabilities before they are exploited, we can reduce the need for unilateral requirements for additional security measures.

For this to become a reality, we must acknowledge and demonstrate that security is a priority for us all. Safety and security are two sides of the same coin.

Further, it is not enough to simply attend meetings. We must follow participation with action. So I encourage you, as you participate in this Symposium, to start thinking about how you can ensure that security remains a priority – both collectively for ICAO and individually as a member state or stakeholder.

How will you incorporate this shared security priority within your government or local airport operations?

How will you develop and promote new security initiatives amongst your regional partners?

How will you integrate your local actions into the global network?

What TSA is Doing

At TSA, we are rapidly pursuing innovative solutions through people, processes and technology.

We are improving training, leveraging human factors research to improve security screening effectiveness, and optimizing our approach to security staffing.

We have created and deployed new passenger communication tools and created a Design Guide with best practices and insights for airport stakeholders considering future infrastructure projects.

We also continue to pursue enhancements to our screening capabilities – exploring the integration of Computed Tomography (CT) into our checkpoints, and leveraging Biometrics Authentication Technology (BAT) for low-risk populations.

Conclusion

In conclusion, we cannot afford to work in isolation and we look to our partners across the global aviation community to collaborate, innovate, and implement new security practices in the face of the evolving threat.

This Symposium offers all of us an unparalleled opportunity to share these best practices with each other and to incorporate these ideas within our network.

Learning from each other is one of the most effective ways we can foster innovation and improvements that will yield tangible security improvements for the global aviation network. I am committed to collaboration, to healthy and frank dialogue, and to working jointly with you all to raise the baseline of international aviation security.

As I mentioned at the outset, we must all act faster than ever before. And so that is my charge and challenge to us all – to every stakeholder here – to move beyond incremental steps and make greater strides to innovate and deploy significant improvements to aviation security.

We seek your partnership in this effort and TSA stands ready to assist in any way we can. While all States maintain their sovereign rights to pursue unilateral requirements when warranted, collective action is the preferred and most sustainable path forward.

The themes of this Symposium are the right ones: building a strong security culture, implementing effective countermeasures, and establishing quality control and oversight processes. The time to act is now, so let us do so together.

We cannot afford to lose focus or drag our heels on security. The consequences of complacency are too great.

Thank you – I look forward to continuing this dialogue.

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