



ASSEMBLY — 37TH SESSION

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Agenda Item 13: Security policy

AVIATION SECURITY POINT OF CONTACT NETWORK

(Presented by Singapore)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

At the twenty-first meeting of the Aviation Security (AVSEC) Panel, the members underscored the importance of the need for an effective AVSEC Point of Contact (PoC) Network for the sharing of threat and other information among Member States. The ICAO Comprehensive Aviation Security Strategy had listed encouraging the use of the PoC Network as one of the implementing actions, and the ICAO Asia and Pacific Regional Office in Bangkok conducted a PoC Network exercise in August 2010 in support of the network.

As part of the efforts by the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Transport Working Group (TPTWG) Aviation Security Sub Group towards enhancing AVSEC cooperation, Singapore conducted an APEC AVSEC PoC Network Exercise in August and September 2010. The purpose of this paper is to share with other ICAO Member States our learning points from our experience in the conduct of the PoC Network exercise.

Action: The Assembly is invited to encourage Member States to:

- a) note the lessons learnt from the APEC AVSEC PoC Network exercise led by Singapore; and
- b) encourage more ICAO Member States to sign up and use the PoC Network in the sharing of critical AVSEC information with each other.

<i>Strategic Objectives:</i>	This working paper relates to Strategic Objective B – <i>Security</i> , enhance global civil aviation security
<i>Financial implications:</i>	No financial implications
<i>References:</i>	No references

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 At the twenty-first meeting of the Aviation Security (AVSEC) Panel, the members underscored the importance of the need for an effective AVSEC Point of Contact (PoC) Network for the sharing of threat and other information among Member States. The ICAO Comprehensive Aviation Security Strategy had listed encouraging the use of the PoC Network as one of the implementing actions, and the ICAO Asia and Pacific Regional Office in Bangkok conducted a PoC Network exercise in August 2010 in support of the network.

1.2 As part of the efforts by the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Transport Working Group (TPTWG) AVSEC Sub Group towards enhancing AVSEC cooperation, Singapore conducted an APEC PoC Network exercise in August and September 2010. The purpose of this paper is to share with other ICAO Member States our learning points from our experience in the conduct of the PoC Network exercise.

2. POINT OF CONTACT (POC) NETWORK

2.1 Singapore planned the PoC Network exercise in three phases:

- a) Phase 1 – Verification Exercise. The purpose of the verification exercise was threefold:
 - 1) encouraging APEC member Economies who are not on the APEC AVSEC PoC Network to join in;
 - 2) to verify the contacts and links of points of contact of APEC member Economies who are on the network and to test these links to maintain and update them; and
 - 3) inform members as to what can be expected from the exercise and what should be done in terms of authentication, response and timing. These could be applied in non-exercise situations;

The PoC Network had only 12 members out of 21 APEC Economies. The challenge was to attract more APEC Economies to participate in the exercise. By explaining clearly the purpose and the benefits of such a network, the exercise hoped to encourage existing PoC Network members to better oil the PoC system. The exercise also tested the importance of the need for a secondary point of contact, in the event that the primary contact cannot be reached;

- b) Phase 2 – E-mail Exercise. The objectives of the phase 2 e-mail exercise were to:
 - 1) ensure the validity and the currency of the email addresses;
 - 2) ensure that the recipient is the point of contact meant to receive the information; and
 - 3) test the response time of the contact providing assurance that the information has been received;

In view of the strong likelihood that the information shared over the PoC Network could be considered to be sensitive, there is a need to ensure that this information will not land in the wrong hands. To assure the broadcasting State that the information shared would be treated with the necessary safeguards and used for legitimate purposes, there was a need to include an authentication process in the procedures. The process was thus broken into two steps, with an authentication question asked in the first e-mail, and the actual message sent out upon receipt of the correct reply; and

- c) Phase 3 – Telephone Exercise. The purpose of the telephone exercise was to:
 - 1) ensure the validity and the currency of the contact number;
 - 2) ensure that the recipient is the correct person meant to receive the information; and
 - 3) test understanding of the information received, in view of possible language differences;

As was the case in the e-mail exercise, an authentication process was included in the procedures with a pre-determined ‘password’ before the message was released. As some of the points of contact assigned in the network were hotline and emergency contact numbers, this meant that the password in some cases had to be disseminated to a group of persons staffing the hotline, of which not all might be au fait with the required procedures.

2.2 Learning points from the exercises were as follows:

- a) Verification Exercise:
 - 1) getting Economies on board the network was challenging, as some Economies had perceived it mistakenly as solely a person to which all correspondence should be channelled to, rather than a Point of Contact for the APEC Economy to receive and share urgent threat or operationally critical information on a 24/7 basis. A clear explanation on the intent and purpose of the Network would help in the selection of the right agency and person to receive such information;
 - 2) some of the participants at the APEC TPTWG AVSEC Sub Group level (i.e. at the ‘management’ level) had changed, and some of the contact details of the participants were invalid. This proved to be a challenge in some cases as it was unclear who in the particular Economy should be the party nominating the point of contact to the Network. Some of the email addresses of these participants were also incorrect, and hence details from some Economies could not be verified. As this same problem was also faced by existing PoC Network members, the verification of the contact details for some Network members could not be done. Some responses to the verification exercise were also received after e-mail and telephone exercises. This showed that Economies needed a period longer than the three weeks given for verification to allow their administrations to work their internal processes. As inputs are still being received at this point in time, the ideal period appears to be about two to three months;

- 3) the ICAO AVSEC PoC Exercise by the ICAO Asia and Pacific Regional Office in Bangkok was also held at the same time, and helped in increasing participation in the APEC PoC Network, as members who had signed up for one, decided to join both at the same time; and
 - 4) five Economies joined the PoC Network during the verification, bringing the total participating Economies to 17. However, three of the existing PoC members were unable to respond to the verification exercise owing to technical problems;
- b) E-mail Exercise:
- 1) some of the e-mail addresses that were given were for operational centres, and in certain cases did not allow for the receipt of large files, or were incorrect in spite of verification; and
 - 2) while the authentication process also turned out to be more complicated than was envisaged, some felt that it was still worthwhile just in case classified threat information might have to be disseminated and a simple e-mail might not be acceptable for the requirement for such information; and
- c) Telephone Exercise:
- 1) although there was some preparation made to cater to language differences, some of the telephone contacts of the PoC Network were directed to a foreign language answering service which could not be understood;
 - 2) in several cases the telephone number of the point of contact was that of an operational centre. The duty personnel who answered the call were not adequately informed of the authentication process, and had difficulties following the procedures. It would be useful, therefore, to consider how authentication may be done when an operational centre is assigned as the point of contact; and
 - 3) in cases where the point of contact was assigned as a specific person, time differences across the globe have to be considered, bearing in mind that some contact numbers might not be staffed. Also, the point of contact may not be able to answer the call if he/she is travelling, such as when on board a flight.

2.3 The exercise also showed the importance of senior management support for efforts by Economies and agencies to enhance and promote AVSEC cooperation with each other. Officers tasked with point of contact responsibilities would be able to respond and react more effectively with senior management support for discharging such sharing and dissemination of information through the PoC Network. Points of contact who are also trained and thus aware of the importance and usefulness of the PoC Network, and familiar with the procedures involved, will also be able to help the whole PoC system function effectively and efficiently. As such, AVSEC training and human factors continue to be a critical aspect of the success and sustainability of such AVSEC PoC Network arrangements.