

ASSEMBLY – 35TH SESSION

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Agenda Item 14: Aviation security

SECURITY HUMAN FACTORS

(Presented by the International Transport Workers' Federation, ITF)

SUMMARY

This Working Paper argues that human resources constitute an essential component in the delivery of secure and safe air transportation. The paper puts forward the view that governments and industry need to move to an integrated view of the relationship between technological solutions to security challenges and the staffing context in which such technologies are applied. This amounts to an extension of the human factors models, which have proved valuable in the accident-prevention field, into the domain of security improvement and risk management.

The ITF proposes a new approach aimed at enhancing security delivery through the systematic application of all resources including the commitment and skills of the personnel that work in the industry.

The 35th Session of the ICAO General Assembly will hear proposals for the improvement of aviation security and the restoration of passenger confidence in air transportation following the horrific events of 11 September 2001 in the United States.

Many of the suggestions being implemented domestically or being proposed for action under the framework of ICAO are reliant on the application or development of preventive technologies or systems, all of which need to be given the highest consideration. However, the ITF wants to indicate it is imperative that the conditions in which such technologies are operated or applied are also given due weight if such solutions are to be effective.

The ITF believes that the air transport industry and security screening service providers have failed to deliver the human resources required to ensure security in civil aviation. While technology has significantly enhanced the ability of these services to detect weapons, explosives or dangerous devices, a widespread – though not universal – failure to invest in the competence of the individuals required to operate these systems and technologies has amounted to a systematic shortcoming. This must be addressed by ICAO at a global level if confidence in air transport is to be regained and retained.

¹ English, French and Spanish versions provided by ITF.

It is regrettably the case that the working conditions, working environment, skills and confidence of security-sensitive and safety-critical personnel have in very many instances undermined their ability to deliver the required performance to ensure the effectiveness of technologies or security systems. The result is that we have direct day-to-day experience of many circumstances where the human capacity to deliver security in aviation is simply not there.

Regulatory inspections of screening services have revealed significant variations of standards, not only between countries or between airports, but also even within different concourses/terminals in the same airport. The ICAO secretariat itself, on the occasion of the 33rd General Assembly, noted in WP/39 paragraph 2.1.4 that compliance with the existing Annex 17 provisions is “less than satisfactory”.

In particular, there is a widespread absence of minimum standards of professional competence, which leaves the sector less regulated, in many jurisdictions, than security staff employed at public entertainment venues.

What is required is a systematic approach to the chain of communication and command in which attention is paid to the ability of each person in the security chain to deliver what is required of them.

The aviation industry already has an excellent example of the integration of human performance with advanced technologies in the development of a human factors approach to accident-prevention. Such an approach now needs to be urgently applied in the security domain.

Elements of this strategy should include:

- Accreditation and licensing of key security-sensitive and security-critical personnel specifically including cabin crew and screening personnel, as is the case with maintenance staff, cockpit crew and in some jurisdictions flight dispatchers. Licensing has proved an effective means of ensuring the quality of human resources in accident prevention and must now be applied to security incident prevention.
- Limitations of factors that undermine human performance in security-sensitive and security-critical functions, such as fatigue, inappropriate work volume or poor environments for performance.
- Enhancement of communication skills to maintain an unbroken security chain of command, modelled on the advances made in crew resource management in the accident-prevention field.
- Provisions of whistle-blower protection and improved inspection regimes to provide a quality assurance function relating to human factors in this field.
- The extension of the AVSEC Mechanism to provide technical assistance on the improvement of security human resources.
- Measures to ensure that security expertise, once gained, is retained within the industry.

Most crucially, the personnel at the delivery end of secure air transport need to be part of the decision-making process as governments and industry move forward to identify and address new risks and security requirements.

It cannot be right that the individuals who will be required to apply new procedures or operate new security technologies are not part of the debate. Regrettably this is proving to be the case in far too many States and enterprises.

The effective delivery of aviation security depends on security-sensitive personnel having a consistent awareness of the security element of their job functions. This cannot be achieved if such personnel and their trade unions are not actively involved in the development of these job functions. Governments and industry also risk losing the perspective and good advice of those who are actually expected to deliver the key security requirements of the system.

We all have a stake in securing a strong future for civil aviation. Aviation trade unions, through the ITF, are ready to make a concerted contribution to addressing the sustained security and safety challenges that confront us.

THE ASSEMBLY IS INVITED TO:

- a) note the Working Paper;
- b) consider means by which security human factors might be enhanced;
- c) express a commitment to social dialogue and ITF participation in any security initiatives arising from this 33rd Session.

— END —