



WORKING PAPER

HIGH-LEVEL CONFERENCE ON AVIATION SECURITY (HLCAS)

Montréal, 12 to 14 September 2012

**Agenda Item 7: The role of the Machine Readable Travel Document (MRTD) Programme,
Advance Passenger Information (API) and Passenger Name Record (PNR)**

PASSENGER NAME RECORD (PNR) DATA AND ITS ROLE IN AVIATION SECURITY

(Presented by the Secretariat)

SUMMARY

A Passenger Name Record (PNR) is the generic name given to records created by aircraft operators or their agents for each booking made by a prospective passenger. States have begun requiring airlines to provide PNR data because the information is deemed important for the threat assessment value that can be derived from the analysis of the data, particularly in relation to the fight against terrorism. Technical data transmission standards, similar to those for Advance Passenger Information (API), were lacking until recently. However, in early 2012, the World Customs Organization (WCO), International Air Transport Association (IATA) and ICAO jointly endorsed an IATA-developed PNRGOV data transmission standard message.

A lack of uniformity in PNR systems can adversely affect the viability of the air transport industry and reduce the effectiveness of utilizing such data for the purposes for which it is required. It is essential, therefore, that States worldwide standardize their data requirements and their formats for the electronic transmission of PNR data.

Action: The High-level Conference on Aviation Security is invited to endorse the conclusions and recommendations in paragraph 4.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 In the present climate of intensified security controls, it is recognized that modern facilitation tools such as Advance Passenger Information (API) systems enhance the overall security of international civil aviation (HLCAS-1/WP/2, refers). In recent years, States have deemed it necessary to go beyond the API requirements and require additional data relating to passengers, i.e. Passenger Name Record (PNR) data. The information contained in a PNR is more detailed and goes far beyond that which is contained in an API message.

1.2 A PNR is built up from data that is supplied concerning all the flight segments of a journey. PNR data is collected by operators for commercial and operational purposes in providing air transportation services.

1.3 PNR files are stored in an airline's reservation system. Relevant PNR elements are transmitted to other aircraft operators involved in providing transport, as part of the ticketed itinerary. Different entities within the air transport industry – from travel agents and computer reservation system

companies to aircraft operators and handling agents at airports – have access to information from individual PNRs for a specific flight that is relevant to the services that each entity will provide in supporting a passenger's journey. PNR files may also contain information about frequent flyer programmes and individual passenger requirements (e.g. special assistance, seating and dietary needs). Sometime prior to a scheduled departure, typically between 24 and 30 hours, certain data elements from each PNR are downloaded to the aircraft operator's (or ground handling company's) departure control system (DCS) for purposes of supporting check in. DCS data is hence only typically viewable to the entity operating that system (i.e. the airline itself, or the ground handling company that is providing check-in service based on data the airline has sent). Consequently, not all data in PNRs (or in an operator's DCS) are available to all parties involved in delivering the travel arrangements.

1.4 PNR information is used by border control and security agencies to identify unusual travel patterns. Specific PNR data elements may highlight such aspects as an unusual itinerary, a date of booking close to the date of departure, modes of payment, and so on. Anomalies and unusual patterns are identified based on pre-determined criteria, leading border control authorities to subsequent actions such as physical controls.

2. GUIDELINES ON PNR DATA (DOC 9944)

2.1 In 2005, as a result of a recommendation of the 12th meeting of the Facilitation Division (Cairo, 2004), the Council adopted Recommended Practice 3.48 for incorporation into Annex 9 — *Facilitation*. Subsequently, ICAO published Circular 309, which contained guidelines to establish uniform measures for PNR data transfer and the subsequent handling of such data by States concerned. In 2010, revised guidelines were published as *Guidelines on Passenger Name Record Data* (Doc 9944).

2.2 In summary, the guidelines establish uniform measures for PNR data transfer and the subsequent handling of that data by States. They also seek to assist States in designing data requirements and procedures, and cover the issue of PNR data transfer from an operator's system to a State, and the management of this data, including arrangements for storage and protection.

2.3 As an airline is obliged to comply with the data-transfer laws of both the State from which it is departing and that of the State of destination, Doc 9944 also addresses the issue of conflict-of-laws resolutions between States.

2.4 The guidelines recommend that States limit their requirements to the transfer of those PNR elements which are necessary and relevant. Specific data elements that may be available from an operator's system(s) are set out in Appendix 1 to Doc 9944. These *may* include any API collected (biographical and/or flight details of a passenger) *plus* additional data (e.g. payment methods, billing information, contact details, frequent flyer information, travel agent information, etc.).

2.5 Importantly, Doc 9944 specifies what kind of data should *not* be collected by aircraft operators or required by States (any information that an aircraft operator does not need to facilitate a passenger's travel, e.g. racial or ethnic origin, political opinions, religious or political beliefs, trade-union membership status, marital status or sexual orientation).

2.6 The adoption of the "push" method of data transfer is recommended, through a "single window" (portal). The guidelines set out principles for the frequency and timing of PNR data transfer, the filtering of such data and their storage and onward transfer.

2.7 Central to the guidelines are principles on PNR data protection and the security and integrity of the data. They also provide guidance on passenger redress and issues relating to airline costs, sanctions and penalties.

3. PNR DATA TRANSMISSION: GLOBAL STANDARDIZATION

3.1 Just as the PAXLST message is the standardized message for API (HLCAS/1-WP/2 refers), the PNRGOV message is the standardized message for the transmission of PNR data. The message is intended to facilitate the exchange of data relevant to government requirements on PNR data and airline reservation systems.

3.2 The PNRGOV document was developed by an International Air Transport Association (IATA)/Air Transport Association (ATA) Passenger and Airport Data Interchange Standards (PADIS) Reservations Sub-Group composed of experts from the airline industry and interested States. PNRGOV is based on the IATA PADIS Message Standard Directory and its associated code sets, in accordance with ISO 9735 syntax rules and UN/EDIFACT (the United Nations rules for Electronic Data Interchange for Administration, Commerce and Transport) interactive message design rules. However, this industry standard has been jointly endorsed by ICAO, the WCO and IATA, just as they have jointly endorsed the PAXLST message. Additionally, it is intended that the PNRGOV message will eventually be incorporated into Doc 9944, thereby providing States a uniform international standard for PNR data requirements.

3.3 International standardization of such data exchange programmes has also been reiterated in ICAO Assembly Resolutions. Extracts from the 37th Session of the Assembly (2010) and a copy of Annex 9 Recommended Practice 3.48 on PNR data are provided in the Appendix to this paper.

3.4 Similar to that of API systems, the success of PNR data exchange depends on a common approach by all concerned (airlines and State agencies) to the question of data standards. In effect, this means that State agencies worldwide must standardize their data requirements for PNR data, and must also adopt a standard format for the electronic transmission of such data in accordance with PNRGOV. In addition, if one or more agencies within the same State require PNR data, a “single portal/window” for the receipt of such data would enable States and air transport operators to make effective use of their resources while furthering inter-agency coordination.

4. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 The High-level Conference on Aviation Security is invited to conclude that:

- a) a lack of uniformity in PNR systems can reduce the effectiveness of utilizing such data for the purposes for which it is required;
- b) it is essential that States standardize their data requirements and adopt a standard format for the electronic transmission of passenger data; and
- c) in order to secure greater efficiencies in PNR data transfer and to safeguard the economic viability of international civil aviation, both Member States and ICAO should promote and enhance the global uniformity of PNR systems.

4.2 The High-level Conference on Aviation Security is invited to recommend that:

- a) Member States align currently existing data exchange systems with the international data transmission standards adopted by relevant United Nations agencies, while ensuring the protection of passengers' privacy and civil liberties;
- b) PNR systems, based on the PNRGOV message format, require only those data elements collected and stored in the reservation system of the airline to meet the business and operational needs of that airline;
- c) Member States not require air transport operators to modify any existing systems in order to consolidate data flows, unless such operators choose to do so on an ad hoc basis, where practicable from business and operational viewpoints; and
- d) ICAO incorporate new Standards and Recommended Practices into Annex 9 — *Facilitation* with the objective of enhancing global uniformity on PNR data exchange and safeguarding the economic sustainability of international air transport.

APPENDIX

EXTRACT from Annex 9 — Facilitation (13th Edition, 2011)

3.48 Recommended Practice.— *Contracting States requiring Passenger Name Record (PNR) access should conform their data requirements and their handling of such data to guidelines developed by ICAO.*

DECISIONS OF THE 37TH ICAO ASSEMBLY (28 SEPTEMBER – 8 OCTOBER 2010)

A37-17: Consolidated statement on the continuing ICAO policies related to the safeguarding of international civil aviation against acts of unlawful interference

In the *Declaration on Aviation Security*, the Assembly recognized the need to strengthen aviation security worldwide and urged Member States to take action to enhance international cooperation to counter threats to civil aviation by, *inter alia*, promoting “the increased use of cooperation mechanisms among Member States and with the civil aviation industry . . . for early detection and dissemination of information on security threats to civil aviation, including through the collection and transmission of . . . passenger name record (PNR) data, as an aid to security, whilst ensuring the protection of passengers’ privacy and civil liberties.”

A37-20: Consolidated statement of continuing ICAO policies in the air transport field

In Appendix D, Facilitation, at Section III, *National and international action and cooperation on facilitation matters*, the Assembly noted that cooperation amongst Contracting States and with the various national and international parties interested in facilitation matters “has become vital in the light of the proliferation of non-uniform passenger data exchange systems that adversely affect the viability of the air transport industry.” Therefore, the Assembly urged Contracting States, in their use of electronic data interchange systems “to ensure that their passenger data requirements conform to international standards adopted by relevant United Nations agencies for this purpose.”

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