

**“The Importance of International Cooperation in Aviation Security”**

**Keynote Address for  
Ambassador Cresencio Arcos, Assistant Secretary, International Affairs  
Department of Homeland Security  
Arab Civil Aviation Commission (ACAC) Aviation Security Conference  
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**Thank you, Your Excellency, for your kind introduction. It is a great pleasure to be among so many esteemed leaders, and I am honored that you have asked me to address you today. This morning I am here to articulate the importance of international cooperation to aviation security. Before I do that, let me say that your presence today is argument alone for heightened cooperation between nations.**

**Gatherings like this remind each of us that our work to make our skies safe and secure is a shared project: no nation can achieve this end on their own. My colleague from the Department of Homeland Security, Assistant Secretary for the Transportation and Security Administration Kip Hawley, recently echoed this sentiment in his words of support for this conference:**

**“we are bound together by our responsibility to protect passengers, freight and the aviation network in a constantly changing threat environment,” he said. “By working together to share information, technology and best practices, we can support each other and enhance the global transportation security network that is critical to the security of every nation.”**

**The assembly of leaders such as yourselves in fora such as these will, more than anything else, ensure the successful implementation of a viable aviation security working group for the Arab states. Given the written authorities, essential principles, and examples of international cooperation that exist, there is every reason to believe that the benefits derived from such a working group would far outweigh the costs of forming it.**

**Since 9/11 our efforts have been primarily focused on prevention, deterrence and devising stronger standards and practices internationally through the active support of the International Civil Aviation Organization and individual nation-states. After the terrorist acts committed in the United States, ICAO urgently convened the twelfth meeting of the Aviation Security Panel in November 2001 in order to consider specific proposals for inclusion in Amendment 10 to Annex 17.**

**At that time we urged, among other things, the requirement to screen 100% of hold baggage, which became effective on 1 January of this year. Now, as a result of diligent work undertaken by the AVSEC Panel, Amendment 11 will supersede Amendment 10 and should be applicable by July 2006. Amendment 11 strengthens several areas, including: national quality control, screening of unaccompanied bags, aircraft security checks, access control, air cargo security, transfer and transit passenger baggage screening, and specific recommended practices related to general aviation.**

**Amendment 11 ushers in a new era of strengthened and enhanced measures—measures that should be evaluated by States to ensure their own programs are of comparable quality. These strengthened measures will also be evaluated independently through the ICAO Universal Security Audit Programme.**

**The international standards contained in Annex 17 are agreed upon by 189 countries and theoretically provide a network that protects the global aviation system. However, when countries are unable or unwilling to effectively apply these standards, areas of weakness result that potentially compromise the entire protective net. These areas of weakness, if not addressed, can be the point of entry for terrorists who seek to destroy some other part of the aviation system.**

**Effective and efficient civil aviation security is based on a system of shared responsibilities, a system that calls on governments to work closely with airports, air carriers, and each other. Aviation security is also rooted in premises of cooperation and national self-awareness. First, each country must be responsible for its own aviation security, and in pursuing this responsibility, each country must acknowledge that the security of a country's aviation system is, indeed, a *national security issue*. Keeping airports, air carriers, baggage and passengers safe from potential acts of terrorism—in your skies or any other sky—is an essential part of the work to prevent acts of international terror. Each country that participates in an aviation security working group must therefore have the political will to secure the necessary level of enforcement.**

**Secondly, all States are geographically located within a group of States that comprise a region. The challenge of security needs to be addressed with our neighbors by actively participating in aviation security initiatives at the regional level. It is through such regional work that areas of weakness are best addressed, where States can offer mutual assistance, share best practices and devise collective approaches to ensure that security levels are broadly and effectively raised.**

**Regional and expert-level coordination in aviation security is more than 15 years old and began with the work of groups such as the European Civil Aviation Conference. As you'll hear in more detail from Raymond Benjamin, who is the Executive Secretary for ECAC, more than 40 European countries participate in the annual meetings of the ECAC Security Working Group meeting (now referred to as the Security Forum). It was through ECAC that the United States was able to establish close collaboration with European States. To this day—and through many a difficult time—the relationships we established with ECAC through its operational and technical task forces has brought enormous benefits to us both. It is through a similar collaborative arrangement that we would like to work with the Arab states.**

**Our work with ECAC produced even larger dividends when the European Union declared competency in aviation security. The EU adopted into its legislative framework the policies that ECAC's operational task force developed over a number of years with our participation. We have recently renewed our commitment to contribute fully to the work of ECAC's task forces. We attended a meeting of ECAC's new Security Forum, as an observer, in Paris last week. At that meeting, we announced that we are considering a new risk-management approach to our security audits. We hope this will lessen the burden on States that are audited by a number of entities.**

**Recognizing the important work accomplished through our relationship with ECAC and with the help of some of the key European players, we proposed the formation of an aviation experts group under the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation. That was in the late 90s. Since then, security practices have been discussed and developed through the hard work of APEC Economies. Not only are we strengthening security in the region we share; we ensure that each country's economy gets the assistance needed to sustain effective security.**

**For instance, APEC endorsed an initiative last year to reduce the threat from man-portable air defense systems, or MANPADS – which are essentially shoulder fired rocket-launchers. Under the terms of the initiative, each APEC member committed to undertake a MANPADS Vulnerability Assessment at an international airport by the end of 2006. To assist in this process, the US has agreed to provide a three-day seminar for APEC countries in Vietnam this spring to share the basic principles for conducting MANPADS vulnerability assessments. This is the type of work we look forward to sharing with you once an effective and viable working group for the Arab states is established.**

**In Latin America, we do similar work with the Latin American Civil Aviation Commission and its sister organization, the Caribbean/South America Regional Planning and Implementation Group. These groups have worked together to ensure States comply with ICAO security standards and are prepared for ICAO Audits.**



**In North America, we have worked with Mexico and Canada to cooperate in a number of areas including aviation security. In March 2005, President Bush, Prime Minister Martin, and President Fox introduced the new Security and Prosperity Partnership of North America. The partnership focuses on enhancing the security of North America and a sizable amount of its work is in aviation security. This work seeks to establish equivalent approaches to aviation security for all of North America in the area of passenger, baggage, and air cargo screening. We will also address similarities and critical differences in watch list programs; implement a Subject Matter Exchange program; and develop compatible strategies for MANPADS.**

**The type of work we have done with Canada and Mexico, Latin America, Asia Pacific, and Europe, is exactly the sort of cooperative effort we want to engage in with the Arab Civil Aviation Commission's Member States. This important meeting could not be more relevant to us and our desire to work closely with you.**

**As you can clearly see by the accomplishments of these regional working groups, the recent trend in aviation security is one of cooperation, collaboration, partnerships and information-sharing. Developing and implementing collective best practices through mutual recognition and acknowledgement of work accomplished individually by States is our ultimate end. In our experience, the process is not always easy, but the results are always worth the effort.**

**As some of you may know, TSA has recently undergone a major reorganization that we hope will have a positive impact on our cooperation with ACAC and other international partners. TSA's primary aim is to reduce negative repercussions on the aviation community while strengthening the aviation security network worldwide.**

**At TSA, Assistant Secretary Hawley has made it clear that he expects his managers at every level to have daily interaction with our partners and stakeholders – in the US and internationally – so that we can work together to find solutions that strengthen our collective security. He has built improved information-sharing into his new management structure. The importance of international cooperation is built into TSA’s management structure as well. Transportation Security Administration employees conduct bilateral, multilateral and regional discussions through their presence at conferences, such as this one, and through the over 20 representatives posted at Embassies and offices around the world. To this end, one of Assistant Secretary Hawley’s goals for the international office at TSA is to increase one-on-one contact with host governments in vital areas such as the Middle East and the Gulf region. Since its reorganization, TSA has been designed to promote close cooperation with international partners so that we may share best practices, identify common vulnerabilities, and together find practical solutions. The US today, as always, stands ready to work closely with ACAC and its member states bilaterally and in security forums such as these.**

**ACAC has accomplished much over the years in the field of aviation safety. All of you have contributed to increased security and safety in our skies through the work of your civil aviation authorities, training centers, and through participation in ICAO and ACAC. Now, through your leadership, and the hard work we will undertake today, tomorrow and over the next year, this region can add its valuable experience and insight to the world's body of knowledge on aviation security measures and practices through a working-level group of experts. We know first hand the progress our front-line managers and experts can make when they roll up their sleeves and tackle a problem.**

**Ralph Nader, an Arab-American activist and politician once said, "the function of leadership is to produce more leaders, not more followers." With the formation of a working group of experts, you will have created a body of new leaders who -- with your guidance and trust -- will form the backbone of international efforts to harmonize and strengthen aviation security practices.**

**On behalf of Assistant Secretary Hawley, his staff, and the Department of Homeland Security, let me assure you of our commitment to ensuring that the ongoing dialogue between us on these important issues is substantive, frequent and collaborative, so that the bedrock of our relationship is deepened and strengthened.**

**Thank you-- or shall I say “Shukran”-- to our generous hosts: to His Highness General Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan (ZAY-ed al NAH-yahn), the Government of the United Arab Emirates, Director General Al-Ghaith (Al-GAITH) and the staff of GCAA, to the co-hosts ICAO and ACAC, and to all of you who have contributed to making this conference a reality.**