

Rob Axworthy Speech at ACAC, February 2006

1. Excellencies, Ladies, Gentlemen, I am honoured to have been invited to speak to you today and I am very glad to have this opportunity to say something about what the UK considers to be the key principles of an effective aviation security regime, and about how we believe the international community can come together in the face of the terrorist threat to international civil aviation.

2. Firstly I should say a few words about my own role in the Middle East Region. Representing the UK Dept for Transport, I am based in Dubai as the Regional Aviation Security Liaison Officer, and have been working for nearly three years now on building mutual partnerships with host state governments in the development of measures to counter the various threats from terrorism. The sharing of our experiences is a valuable method of learning from one another

on how best to protect our aviation industries from attack.

3. The UK's aviation security regime has developed over time and in the light of experience, some of that experience very painful. Our arrangements took much of their present shape following the tragic loss of Pan Am 103 over Lockerbie, Scotland, in December 1988, and the deaths in that attack of 270 people. This provided the trigger for a wide-ranging review of UK policy and measures, and led to a number of key developments. And, like those of many other States, our arrangements have been further developed in light of the terrorist attacks in the USA on 11 September 2001.

4. The attacks of 11 September had characteristics not before seen. Their implications have not been ignored, and they have led to some important enhancements in

global aviation security. The attacks were on an unprecedented scale: nearly 3,000 people killed in the air and on the ground, and four aircraft destroyed. The use of aircraft as weapons. The new sophistication of the planning. And the lack of any warning, or of any interest in negotiation.

5. The use of aircraft as weapons on 11 September underlined the absolute importance of robust security across the **whole** of international civil aviation. The air services on which international trade and travel depend so critically comprise above all a network. Many international borders, not least in this part of the world of course, are only minutes away in flying time. This means that a vulnerability in one State's aviation security arrangements may be exploited by terrorists wishing to make an attack upon another State. I know that all of us here this week recognise the heavy responsibility this

places on all States to achieve the highest standards of aviation security.

6. The UK for its part seeks to achieve those standards, whilst at the same time having measures which are proportionate to the threat, which are sustainable and practical, and which reflect a good understanding of the operational realities of the aviation industry. Imposing measures which were not informed by those considerations, and that sort of understanding, would risk harming the industry. If we as regulators make travel and the air transport of goods too difficult and too inconvenient, we will have done the terrorists' job for them. We must aim at robust **and** sustainable security. Not an easy balance to find, but nonetheless crucial.

7. In the UK pursue that goal through a close engagement with industry, including on the key questions of threat, vulnerability, and risk

management, and also by mandating, wherever possible, the *objectives* of the measures we need to see in place, rather than the fine detail of their precise design. The industry itself, we believe, is often best placed to consider how the measures can most sensibly be accommodated to its operating parameters. I should emphasise that this does not imply any readiness on the part of the government as regulator to accept any sort of watering down or compromise of the standards of security needing to be met. Rather it reflects a recognition that security objectives can sometimes be met in a number of alternative ways, and that it makes good sense to work with industry to identify those which represent the best “fit” with the efficient operation of airport and airline services.

8. So much for the key principles underpinning the UK approach domestically. We have always sought, in addition, to play a positive role

internationally. It was the UK which brought to ICAO the lessons we saw in the Lockerbie attack of 1988, including the need for high standards of hold baggage screening, and for robust passenger/hold bag reconciliation procedures. Those remain measures of the first importance today.

9. The UK was also to the fore in arguing for a baseline of harmonised security across the European Union, in the aftermath of 11 September. We were closely involved in the development of the regulation at the EU level, and as that regulation now comes under review, in light of experience of its application, we are again very much part of that debate and discussion.

10. We engage actively at the international level because we recognise, as I was saying a moment ago, that because the threat is a global one, so must the solution be. It will be found in

the steps we take together, whether in multilateral fora such as ICAO, ACAC, ECAC, APEC, the EU or G8, or in our bilateral dealings together as partner States.

11. The UK was closely involved in the development of Amendment 11 of ICAO Annex 17, which we are pleased to see on track for adoption in the middle of this year. Amendment 11 represents, we consider, a very useful clarification of many of the Annex's Standards and Recommended Practices, and in some key areas a sensible strengthening of the measures, in the face of the threat as it is now understood. We look forward to working in ICAO to further develop the Security Manual, so that it can continue to provide the necessary support to ICAO States as they implement their responsibilities under the Annex.

12. The UK has also worked in past months with ECAC, helping to give greater strategic

direction to its aviation security programmes, and to focus its work on those areas where security audits have shown room for improvement in the effective implementation of measures. And we have led work within the G8 on aviation security, helping to devise best practice in areas where this seems most likely to be helpful.

13. Finally, but certainly not least amongst these international activities, the UK seeks to work at a bilateral level with partner States around the world, sharing what we have learned and learning in our turn from others. I would emphasise the learning from others. None of us here would pretend to have all the answers. The 11 September attacks can be seen as having posed new questions about the defence of the flight deck, and also about the role which might be played by air marshals in the overall aviation security regime. The November 2002 MANPADS attack in Mombassa, Kenya brought

squarely in front of us a new and very **REAL** form of potential attack, and required us to think about how it is best countered. A UK team of specialists in mitigating the threat to aviation from such weapons have made advisory visits to many countries in this region. This work continues in partnership with you and now includes the ability to provide specialist **training** for airport security forces. The UK advice and training builds on current UK operational procedures to counter the threat from stand-off attack. The bombing of two civil airliners in one day in Russia in August 2004 underlined the importance of explosives screening.

14. The conference this week is allowing us to share our perspectives on all of these challenges, and on others too. The UK will continue to play its part, to share what it has learned, and to learn in our turn from the experience of others. The enterprise we are embarked upon could hardly be more important,

and I congratulate [the organisers] on their initiative in bringing us all together this week to focus upon it.

15. Real progress has been made over recent years in making civil aviation more secure, including through the work of many here and the organisations they represent. But the threat does not stand still, and neither can we.

16. Thank you very much.

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