Chapter 12

Terrorist Attacks: A Safety Management System Training Tool for Airport and Airline Managers

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ABSTRACT

This chapter examines how airport and airline managers could review their incident and command plans to enhance security countermeasures for terrorist attacks through the use of a well-constructed plan-do-check-act (PDCA) tool, in the context of a Safety Management System (SMS), and incorporating a structured field survey into their emergency incident plan and command plan reviews. Thus, through the examination of actual emergency incident plan and command plan survey, airport managers are given the opportunity to work issues through the trials and tribulations of refining their incident and command plans on a recurring basis. It is suggested that a PDCA tool be implemented as a SMS model for the enhancement of these plans in the airline environment.

INTRODUCTION

According to Wells and Young, aviation illustrates the international and multinational aspect of transportation security problems. U.S. based airlines are becoming more and more involved and intertwined with foreign airlines and governments through expansion of international routes and code share arrangements. As a result, today’s airports and airlines are more involved than ever with US transportation security issues, such as illegal immigration, smuggling of drugs, hazardous waste, and terrorism.1

These concerns arise since there is no central authority in world politics, much less the power to enforce mandates, for international and national
security concerns. For example, in the case of Pan Am flight 103, a bomb was placed on the plane in Frankfurt through an intra-modal movement from a foreign airline originating in still another country by a terrorist group supported by yet another country’s intelligence service. As a result, this bombing involved the activities of five countries.²

The responsibility for airport and airline security is primarily a government function at the national level in foreign countries. As a result, the variance in security systems varies from country to country in terms of organization, orientation, policies, and procedures. The US Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has the authority to assess security at foreign airports in accordance with the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) Annex 17 standards. In those cases where the FAA finds that a foreign government does not maintain the appropriate security measures, the US Secretary of Transportation may suspend service to that country. The US Department of Transportation (DOT) also issues public warning for security levels at foreign airports when their standards fall below international standards. Finally, because the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) does not control screening activities in foreign countries, the TSA may, from time to time; order US based airlines operating in foreign countries to impose additional screening procedures.³

BACKGROUND

The Role of the Transportation Security Administration

The Transportation Security Administration (TSA) is required to prescribe rules to protect persons and property on aircraft against acts of criminal violence and aircraft piracy, and to prescribe rules for screening passengers and property for dangerous weapons, explosives, and destructive substances. To carry out the provisions of the Aviation Transportation and Security Act of 2001 (ATSA), the TSA has adopted former FAA rules requiring airport operators, air carriers, indirect air carriers, and foreign air carriers to carry out various duties for civil aviation security. Title 49, Code of Federal Regulations (CFR), incorporates the following Transportation Security Regulations (TSRs) that concern aviation security: Part 1542 applies to certain airport operators; Part 1544 governs certain air carriers; Part 1546 applies to the operation of foreign air carriers; and Part 1548 applies to indirect air carriers such as freight forwarders, who engage indirectly in air transportation of property within the United States and sometimes operate out of GA facilities.⁴

TSR Parts 1520, 1540, 1542 and 1548

Part 1520 forbids the disclosure of information that may compromise or be harmful to the safety and security of the traveling public. Additionally, the regulation sets forth the rules that allow the federal government to withhold information from public disclosure even when requested under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), in litigation, or in rulemaking. Airport operators and air carriers are required to restrict the availability of information contained in security programs to those with a need-to-know. This need-to-know is defined by the Airport Security Program. Under this Part, airport management must withhold sensitive security information (SSI) from unauthorized disclosure. If SSI is released to unauthorized persons, the TSA must be notified. This permits the TSA to evaluate the risk presented by the release of the information, and to take whatever actions may be needed to mitigate that risk.³

New Part 1540 outlines the rules that apply to all segments of civil aviation security and includes rules that govern individuals and other persons. This regulation applies both to individuals who work at the airport and to the passengers using airports. Part 1540 also outlines definitions and terms used in Parts 1542, 1548 and others. For example, the widely used term “escort” is given