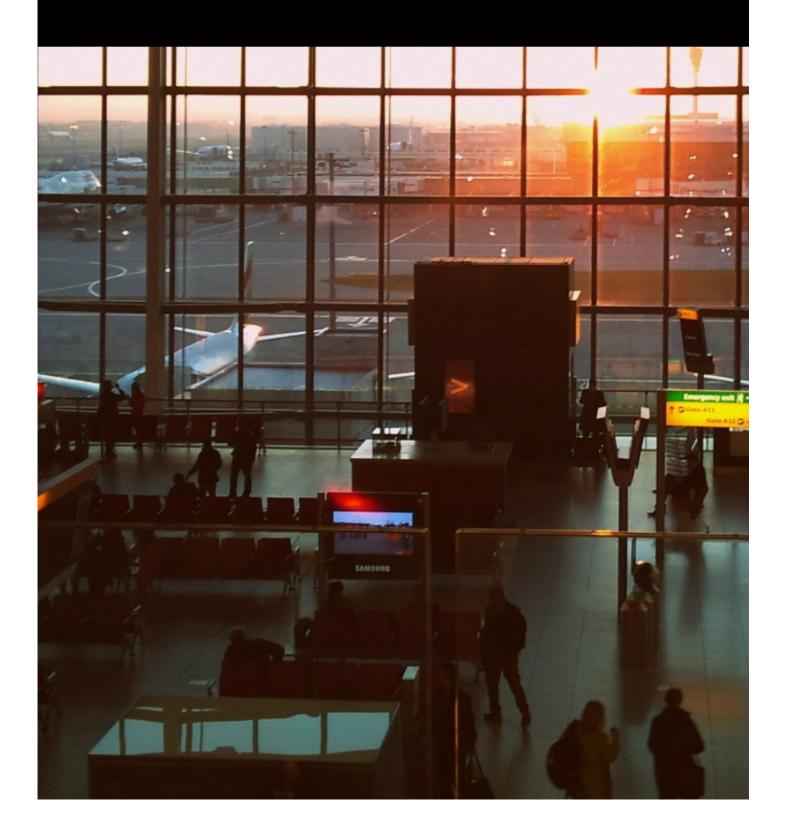# BEING NOSEY KEEPS AVIATION SECURE!

The security officer's role in detecting criminal and terrorist threats.

by Andy Blackwell

THREAT LANDSCAPE

Analysis of global reporting shows that terrorists retain their unhealthy interest in attacking civil aviation and regard the sector as the crown jewels of targets. Such attacks have the potential to cause mass fatalities, destroy aircraft and damage infrastructure. The resultant economic impacts are invariably severe. The 9-11 attacks, for example, resulted in approximately $40 billion in insurance losses and the share prices of airlines and aircraft manufacturers plummeted. There was also a reduction in demand for air travel due to a climate of fear amongst the travelling public. The latest plot against aviation was in December 2017 and involved a plan to detonate an IED concealed in a meat grinder and placed inside a suitcase destined for a passenger flight from Sydney to Abu Dhabi. The plot, orchestrated by a senior member of Daesh based overseas, was aborted before the suspects reached security. The Israeli Intelligence Services are said to have provided information leading to the arrest of the Daesh militants who were working towards the execution of the attack.

PARTNERSHIP APPROACH TO COUNTERING TERRORISM

It's important to recognise that we all have a role to play in countering terrorism and other serious criminal activities. The Police, Security Service (MI5) and other established members of the intelligence community, do a formidable job, but their ongoing success depends on our support and that of the public. Last year, 22% of the information received from the public by Counter Terrorism Policing UK, assisted live investigations and helped foil terrorist plots.

THE ROLE OF THE FRONT-LINE SECURITY OFFICER IN AVIATION

Front line security personnel play a significant and often understated role in helping to maintain the integrity of aviation security. They are the eyes and ears on the ground, and involved in guarding, access control, patrolling and screening. They are often the first person a passenger meets when passing through the airport. This provides them with an opportunity to spot unusual activity, such as hostile reconnaissance, which puts terrorists and criminals at risk of detection. Whilst there's no such thing as a typical terrorist, front-line security personnel are uniquely placed to get a good understanding of what is 'normal' behaviour within the environment, so behaviour falling outside the norm can be identified and investigated further.

Being Nosey Keeps Aviation Secure!...*continued*
The security officer's role in detecting criminal and terrorist threats.

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Time to get nosey

I can vividly recall my class instructor at the Police Training Centre in Wales, giving his cadre of fresh-faced raw recruits the benefit of his wisdom. "Be nosey, stick it in" he would say as he tapped the side of his rather prominent nose. He would certainly encourage us to be nosey whilst out on foot patrol, questioning anything and anyone out of the ordinary. Putting the sergeant's advice into action felt a little awkward at first, but soon became second nature and regularly produced good results. The same technique can be used by our front-line security staff, if something doesn't look or feel right, then be nosey, ask questions and always, always, always trust your instincts.

Looking back over my time in the industry, some of the best detections of people engaged in crime often resulted from security personnel and airline staff who became suspicious because something just didn't feel right. If experience is anything to go by then gut feelings should never be ignored. Invariably, when staff reported their concerns, they had difficulty articulating their suspicions, but instinctively felt that something wasn't quite right, some of them even apologising for taking up our time. Follow-up enquiries by in-house security departments, police or Border Force frequently confirmed their concerns though and revealed that something was amiss. Not all of the 'hits' were related to criminal activities; a number were linked to people suffering with mental health issues. There have been some notable examples across the sector where such individuals have compromised security. Incidents arising from mental health issues are however far less predictable though than many terrorist threats, making them harder to predict and protect against.

Security personnel engaged in the screening of passengers and goods have access to sophisticated detection equipment, to help them identify prohibited and restricted articles. Technology continues to evolve but it's important that we don't forget human factors and behavioural analysis solutions too. It's not just about finding the bomb but doing whatever we can reasonably do to find the terrorists with the bomb, and the support networks behind them.

Insiders – the enemy within

On the topic of people, 'insiders' have unfortunately featured in a number of aviation attack plots. In February 2011 a former British Airways worker, Rajib Karim, was convicted of four counts of preparing acts of terrorism after conspiring to blow-up an aircraft. In February 2016 the Islamist terror group al Shabaab claimed responsibility for a bomb attack which damaged Dallo flight 159 which was in-flight in Mogadishu, Somalia. One fatality was reported, and this was believed to be an individual implicated in the attack. Reporting suggests that the improvised explosive device was concealed in a laptop carried onto the plane by a passenger in a wheelchair. CCTV recording from the airport showed

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two men, believed to be airport workers giving a laptop to the wheelchair passenger. Investigators believed the bomber had some type of connection to airline or airport personnel. A Somali Military Court subsequently found two men guilty of planning the plot and being members of al-Shabaab. They were sentenced to life imprisonment. One of the two men was a former security official at the airport and the other, who financed the attack, had eluded arrest was tried in his absence. Eight other airport workers were convicted of aiding the plot although were not convicted of being members of al-Shabaab. They were given prison sentences ranging from six months to four years. Those convicted worked in a range of jobs at the airport, including security screening staff, a police officer, immigration officers and a porter.

These cases highlight the very real risk posed by 'insiders', the enemy within and an area where continued focus is necessary. Front-line security officers should be aware of any behaviour or changes in behaviour in their colleagues that might give cause for concern. Such concerns should be immediately reported to your management or direct to Action Counters Terrorism via 0800 789 321. In an emergency you should always dial 999.

3 SIMPLE STEPS TO SECURITY

We know that the sector remains in the sights of attack planners but there are some simple steps front-line security personnel can take to enhance crime and counter terrorism vigilance and help make aviation a hostile environment for terrorists and other criminals. In summary these are:

- **Remain vigilant and be nosey!**
- **Trust your instincts and act on them.**
- **Immediately report activities or behaviours of concern (externals and co-workers).**

Aviation remains the safest form of transport and by working together, we can keep it that way.

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