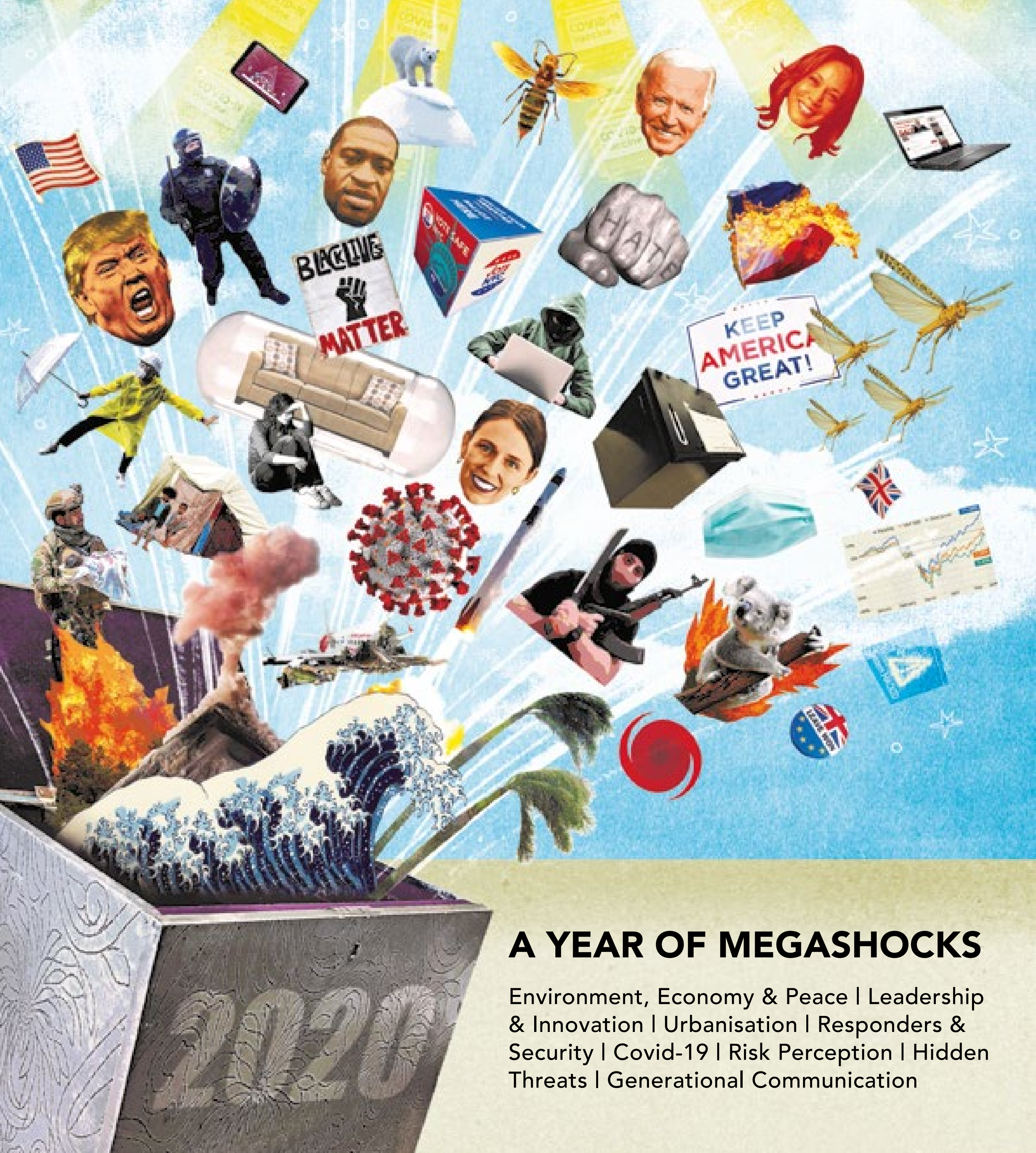
# CRISIS RESPONSE

VOL:15 | ISSUE:4 | DECEMBER 2020

WWW.CRISIS-RESPONSE.COM

JOURNAL

Protection Prevention Preparedness Response Resilience Recovery



## A YEAR OF MEGASHOCKS

Environment, Economy & Peace | Leadership & Innovation | Urbanisation | Responders & Security | Covid-19 | Risk Perception | Hidden Threats | Generational Communication

**Editor in Chief**
Emily Hough
emily@crisis-response.com

**Editorial Assistant**
Claire Sanders
claire@crisis-response.com

**Projects Development Manager**
Derya Kemmis
derya@crisis-response.com

**Design & Production**
Chris Pettican
chris@layoutdesigner.co.uk

**News and Blog research**
Lina Kolesnikova
lina@crisis-response.com

**Web Support**
Neil Moultrie

**Subscriptions**
Crisis Response Journal is published quarterly; it is available by subscription in hard copy or digital.
subs@crisis-response.com

Published by Crisis Management Limited,
Sondes Place Farm, Westcott Road, Dorking
RH4 3EB, UK
© Crisis Management Limited 2020.
Articles published may not be reproduced in any form without prior written permission.
Printed in England by The Manson Group, UK
ISSN 1745-8633

www.crisis-response.com
join the *CRJ* LinkedIn group
follow us on twitter @editorialcrj

# contents

*Cover story: A year of cascading, complex crises*
Cover image: Miles Cole

**Leadership vision p14**

Ann Kiernan

**Too many fresh eyes? p18**

Lovelyn Medina | 123rf

**Kaleidoscopic learning p20**

Sergey Nivens | 123rf | Chris Pettican

**Handling the next waves? p74**

Maxim Usik | Ikon Images

# comment

This edition's front cover depicts some of the events that have occurred in 2020, which has most certainly been one of the most challenging and tumultuous years any of us will have experienced. We may be overworking the Pandora's box (or jar) analogy, but these last 12 months truly exemplify the myth of 'great and unexpected troubles'. Of course, many of these had been foreseen, or were heralded by clear precursors and signs.

But unheeded warnings notwithstanding, these events have certainly combined to strain individual, professional, community, business, national and international resilience as never before.

Twelve months ago, *CRJ*'s front cover warned leaders that: "All eyes are on you." In today's landscape of repeated shockwaves, cascading crises and, "instant systemic contamination that piles up challenges on multiple fronts," leadership across all disciplines – political, business, governance and institutional – is being scrutinised as never before. Sadly, reactions and responses to the pandemic have been, to put it politely, erratic in many areas.

Worryingly, we know that more shocks are on the way – wishful thinking will not magically sweep away the harsh onslaught of climate-related events. The "toxic polarisation, anti-scientific mindsets and retreats into alternative realities" mentioned on p14 are symptoms, not the cause of today's lack of coherence and solidarity in the face of global threats.

Yet, as with Pandora's box, there are glimmers of hope. Human innovation, creativity, business and science have combined to develop vaccines and deliver other life-saving products and services in record time. Stories of self-sacrifice, dedication and love abound. People are still caring for others.

All of us in society, but particularly our leaders and those responsible for the safety and security of communities, must not let the next wave of crises come to pass in a wilful paroxysm of inattentional blindness.

And here's hoping that 'deceptive expectation', which is the alternative interpretation of 'hope' in the Pandora myth, does not hold true.

Fanatik Studio | Alamy

# The human factor: 'Hidden' threats

**Andy Blackwell** explores the hidden threats to civil aviation and provides guidance on the actions that organisations can take to protect themselves and safeguard their people, assets and reputation

Despite the significantly reduced demand for air services owing to the effects of Covid-19 on the aviation sector, terrorists and other hostile threat actors retain an unhealthy interest in civil aviation. The pandemic's impact could inadvertently provide favourable conditions for such groups, particularly in relation to insider recruitment and the acquisition of sensitive material to facilitate terrorism or organised crime. All this amid a pressured commercial environment, with large parts of the industry fighting for survival, where thousands of staff have been made redundant, many others furloughed and significant numbers taking pay cuts.

This melting pot of risk requires careful management. Key stakeholders need the foresight and agility to look beyond, but not exclude, the more obvious conventional threats. They must be mindful of potential hidden threats, in particular the people risk, where leadership and organisational behaviour may inadvertently be affecting mental wellbeing and creating a ticking time bomb of disgruntlement. Those seeking to do harm rarely suffer from failures of imagination, and it's important that we don't either. While the case studies here relate to aviation, they are not exclusive to that sector: hidden threats pose a risk to all organisations.

People can be an organisation's greatest asset, but also its weakest link, and there are several cases involving hostile insiders. One involved former British Airways Software Engineer Rajib Karim, convicted in March 2011 of terrorist offences linked to a plot to attack US-bound aircraft. Karim had been in regular contact with Anwar al-Awlaki, a radical cleric with al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula. Al-Awlaki was also reported to have links to the attempted bombing of an aircraft over Detroit and an attempt to explode ink printer bombs on two freight aircraft. Karim shared details of his BA contacts in encrypted emails and reportedly told Al-Awlaki that he knew of a sympathetic security guard and baggage handler at Heathrow Airport. He was sentenced to 30 years' imprisonment.

The risks posed by disgruntled employees and those with undeclared mental health issues should not be underestimated

It is not only terrorist attack planners who recognise the benefit of using insiders. Organised crime groups have long targeted staff who have privileged access and specialist knowledge to facilitate the movement of drugs, firearms and other goods through border controls. No sector, including government agencies, the armed forces and law enforcement, is immune from this type of criminal penetration. We often talk about the need for information supremacy to help counter-terrorist and other criminal activities, but this is not just something we are striving for; threat actors are also seeking every opportunity to enhance their intelligence gathering. From their perspective, there is no better way than to exploit an insider, or someone who has recently left their role but still has current knowledge or access, particularly if they are disgruntled. The so-called Islamic State has shown an interest in recruiting those with mental health issues, a fact acknowledged in January 2016 by London's Metropolitan Police Service.

The US Department of Homeland Security's *Homeland Threat Assessment* in October 2020 refers to stressors introduced or exacerbated by the pandemic, specifically mentioning mental health issues caused or worsened by social isolation, or job losses that can precede radicalisation and could drive extremists to violence. While the threat assessment is not specific to aviation, in April 2020 the European Cockpit Association highlighted that the Covid-19 crisis exposes all flight crews, their relatives, and passengers to particularly high psychological stressors – an important consideration for organisations reviewing their risk picture.

When we look at what motivates someone to become an insider, financial gain and greed feature significantly, but other factors include: A political cause; espionage; fear (ie blackmail); and disgruntlement, driving a desire for revenge.

The actions the aviation sector has taken to protect its business and financial interests have significantly reduced its workforce size. This has created upset and anxiety for people who have not only lost their livelihoods, but also what many regard as their way of life.

A recent report by the UK's Transport Select Committee accused one airline of a: "Calculated attempt to take advantage of the pandemic by cutting thousands of jobs and downgrading terms and conditions." Further insights into disgruntlement among former employees in all sectors can be seen in the postings on the recruitment site Glassdoor. By its nature, the site will attract biased comments, but it does provide useful insights into how companies are treating their people and how employees – or ex-employees – are feeling. Such sites may also help organisations identify hidden threats.

The combination of financial hardship and disgruntlement, together with the feeling of personal failure some employees and ex-employees will be experiencing, is a potential hidden threat, and both terrorists and organised crime groups will be keen to exploit this vulnerability.

There are several organisational and leadership behaviours likely to create staff disgruntlement and increase the risk of insider activities. These include: Lack of integrity; poor communication; inadequate security culture; lack of transparency; bullying; poor management commitment; and lack of awareness of mental health issues.

One example of the significant damage a disgruntled insider can reap on the sector is highlighted in the case of a US Federal Aviation Authority (FAA) contract employee, Brian Howard who, in September 2014, deliberately started a fire that destroyed critical FAA telecommunications infrastructure equipment at the Chicago Centre in Aurora, IL. The equipment provided critical voice and data communications that supported air traffic operations at FAA facilities throughout the US. Chicago Centre was unable to control air traffic for more than two weeks, thousands of flights were delayed and cancelled at Chicago O'Hare and Midway airports, and aviation stakeholders and airlines were said to have lost over $350 million dollars. The criminal complaint mentioned that Howard was disgruntled because he had been told he was being transferred to Hawaii. Howard blamed his actions on a fog of depression. The US Office of Inspector General's audit report highlighted that the contingency plans and security protocols were insufficient at the FAA's Chicago air traffic control facilities, which hampered recovery.

Howard was sentenced to 12.5 years' imprisonment and ordered to pay US$4.5 million in restitution to the FAA. This case shows how a disgruntled employee with mental health issues can create significant risk exposure to an organisation, as the threat often remains hidden until the disruptive act takes place.

In addition to the financial impacts such hidden threats can cause, the disruptive events often lead to significant reputational damage and legal proceedings. One such case occurred in March 2012, when Clayton Osbon, a JetBlue Captain, disrupted a US domestic flight by leaving the cockpit and yelling about Jesus and al-Qaeda. Medical professionals advised that Osbon had suffered a brief psychotic disorder at the time of the flight, said to have been brought on by lack of sleep. Several passengers subsequently filed a lawsuit against JetBlue for US$14.9 million, claiming that the airline failed to ensure Osbon was fit to fly, and had thereby endangered lives.

The topic of mental health in the aviation sector came to prominence again in 2015 following the Germanwings crash that killed all 144 passengers and six crew. A joint investigation by the French Civil Aviation Safety Investigation Authority, supported by the FBI, revealed that shortly after the aircraft had reached its cruising altitude and while the captain was outside the cockpit, co-pilot Andreas Lubitz locked the reinforced flight deck door and initiated a controlled descent until the aircraft crashed into a mountain. Lubitz had previously been treated for mental health disorders and was declared unfit to work by his own doctor. He failed to disclose this to his employer and reported for duty. Relatives of passengers who died in the crash brought a lawsuit against Lufthansa, the owners of Germanwings, and a Lufthansa training school in the US where Lubitz was trained, accusing them of failing to supervise his medical condition adequately.

The Germanwings accident highlights the catastrophic outcome that can result from a pilot flying when medically unfit, and civil aviation authorities worked to ensure that the recommendations and required actions relating to the accident were delivered wherever possible. The UK's Civil Aviation Authority strengthened education and training in aviation medicine, including mental health assessment of aircrew, increased pilots' awareness and education about the risks associated with drugs and medicine, and facilitated the creation of Pilot Support Programmes by holders of Air Operator Certificates.

Left unchecked, the conditions that create hidden threats are likely to manifest themselves into a disruptive event through an insider, disgruntled employee, or person suffering from a mental health issue. The magnitude of these events can be significant; they can place other staff and members of the public at risk, damage assets, disrupt operations, expose the organisation to civil and criminal litigation, and cause significant financial and reputational loss. There are some simple steps organisations can take to reduce their personnel security risks and improve employee satisfaction and productivity. The following list is not conclusive but is intended as a starting point.

- **Leadership behaviour:** Act with integrity; be open and transparent; ensure timely and honest communication; demonstrate a high level of engagement with employees – walk the talk; and listen effectively.
- **Risk management:** Maintain an unrelenting focus on threat and risk; ensure the diversity of the organisation's risk review group; embrace external sites such as Glassdoor to gain useful insights and identify potential hidden threats; recognise the risks posed by disgruntled employees (including former employees) and those with undeclared mental health issues; and consider organisation and leadership behaviour that may create hidden threats.
- **Employee satisfaction:** Acknowledge and celebrate staff contributions, a 'thank you' goes a long way; invest in education and training; help employees understand how their work matters, how it fits into the organisation's strategic objectives and goals; promote internal talent; check that grievance procedures are robust and fair; and make exit interviews a useful experience for employers and employees.
- **Personnel security:** Appoint a single lead; consider establishing an integrated insider threat management programme; make it easy for employees to report their concerns; implement an external whistleblowing hotline as employees tend not to trust internal ones; and establish a review group of specialists from HR, legal, security, and medical services to deal with confidential and sensitive disclosures linked to employee mental health concerns.
- **Corporate wellbeing:** implement a corporate wellbeing programme; train and deploy mental health first aiders; and empower people to care for themselves and their colleagues.

## Beware toxic cultures

In conclusion, conventional threats to civil aviation are well known, understood and mitigated, but the hidden ones, which may be influenced by a toxic culture, poor leadership behaviour or a lack of mental health awareness, are not always at front of mind. Unjust business behaviour today could trigger tomorrow's insider threat actors, motivating disgruntled people to cross the line and facilitate unlawful activities on behalf of terrorists or organised crime groups, or to reap revenge. The risks are likely to be intensified by the pandemic and its impact on workforces, people's finances and their mental health. While most staff will pick themselves up and move on, even when they feel they have been badly treated, there will be others desperate to take a more extreme and direct approach.

In times of uncertainty it is easy for organisations to be distracted and lose sight of their actual risk picture, and hidden threats can become ticking time bombs if not identified and managed. In terms of safeguarding, it is not just about taking the temperature of people to see whether they have the virus, but checking that the organisation's 'temperature' has not become dangerous too.

A toxic culture is dangerous. It is best to act with integrity, treat people fairly and with respect. All of this comes at no cost. Strive to make people the organisation's greatest asset, rather than its weakest link.

### Author

ANDY BLACKWELL *is the former Head of Security and Resilience at Virgin Atlantic and is now an independent security and resilience consultant. He is a Member of CRJ's Advisory Panel*

# CRISIS RESPONSE

JOURNAL | WEBSITE | EVENTS | SOCIAL MEDIA | NETWORKING | BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

## MULTIPLY

**the force of your business**

**Open doors** to the people you really want to meet. **Influence your market** and **build your brand awareness**, across the global crisis and emergency response fields.

### Key Network Partnership:

We call them Key Network Partnerships. Because you're not just becoming a partner of ours - but leveraging access to our entire global network. It's about connecting you with the right decision-makers. We open doors and introduce you to the right people, with the power to transform the next phase of your business development. And it's about intelligently marketing your business, to your target audience, across our global platforms. Extending your reach, increasing your exposure and driving your brand awareness.

**Call CRJ today** about becoming a Key Network Partner on **+44 (0)203 488 2654**

PROTECTION | PREVENTION | PREPAREDNESS | RESPONSE | RESILIENCE | RECOVERY

www.crisis-response.com

# CRISIS RESPONSE

JOURNAL

PROTECTION | PREVENTION | PREPAREDNESS | RESPONSE | RESILIENCE | RECOVERY

## SUBSCRIBE NOW

visit **www.crisis-response.com** for rates and special offers

Authoritative global coverage of all aspects of security, risk, crisis management, humanitarian response, business continuity planning, resilience, management, leadership, technology and emerging trends

**PRINT | ONLINE | DIGITAL**