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SUDAN AIRWAYS HIJACKING



The security lessons
for African airports

Hijack prevention: The way ahead

There are security lessons to be learned from the hijacking of a Sudan Airways A310 in August, 1996. In this article, PHILIP BAUM, Managing Director of Green Light Limited, a London-based aviation security training company specialising in hijack prevention, recommends 10 steps to improve airport security.

DESPITE THE possibility that the TWA Boeing 747 disaster in July was a result of terrorism, aircraft bombings are, thankfully, few in number. The main threat to aviation in the 1990s remains

Airways Airbus A310 flight en-route from Khartoum to Amman on August 26th this year.

This incident, which ended peacefully at London's Stansted Airport following an

dilemma facing the aviation security industry.

The technology currently being developed is designed to unmask bombers and sophisticated hijackers that are members of the international terror



The hijacking of a Sudan Airways Airbus A310 ended peacefully - but could the incident have been avoided with improved airport security?

New explosive detection systems are extremely expensive and relatively slow.

that of serial piracy, predominantly carried out by asylum seekers, as demonstrated in the hijacking of a Sudan

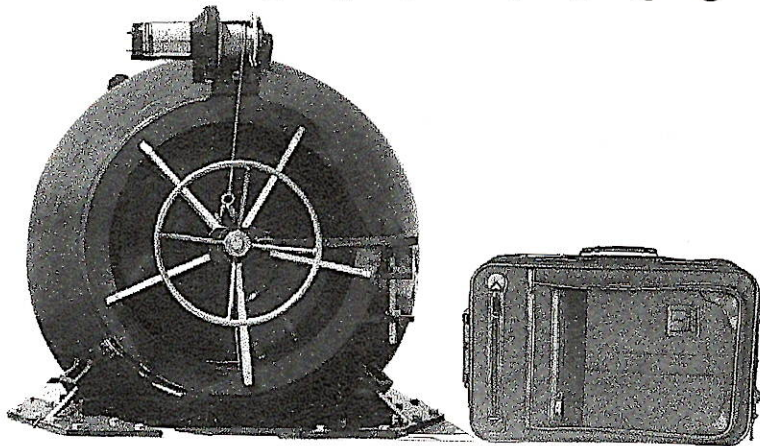
exemplary demonstration of quality negotiation by the Essex police and the Sudan Airways crew, is indicative of the

organisations, rather than focusing on desperate individuals wishing to carve out a new life for themselves wherever the grass seems greener.

Reliance on x-ray screening has been excessive. Explosives can pass through undetected by even the most experienced

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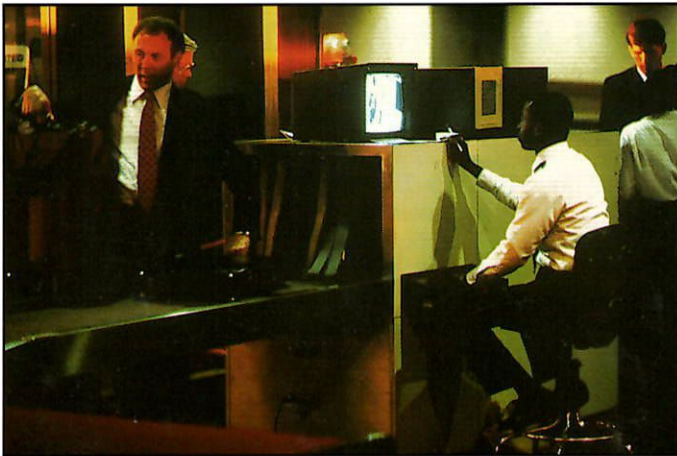
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Has the reliance on x-ray screening been excessive? A greater security awareness among airport staff would help, say industry experts.

of operators and the new explosive detection systems are extremely expensive and relatively slow.

Hijackers, as in the case of the Sudan Airways incident and the Iberia hijacking a month earlier, often only claim to have explosives so, with the best will in the world, reliance solely open technology is somewhat myopic.

The commandeering of an Air France aircraft in Algeria in December, 1994, was proof, if it ever were needed, that airside access also needs to be closely monitored, a key issue on the African continent.

Whilst we need to utilise traditional screening techniques, above all else we need to create a deterrent and to install personnel with a sense of security awareness. In the investigations

following many a hijacking in the past, airline personnel have been able to point to a number of factors that might have indicated a possibility of an attack yet they failed to act upon their instincts.

It must be appreciated that security is everybody's business, from the check-in agent to the flight attendant and the cargo handler to the boardroom executive. Security is based upon communication, training and the appreciation of how and when to use available technology to its best advantage. Security is a form of customer service.

There has been much criticism of the levels of security afforded at many African airports. Resistance to change, concern as to the economic burden of increased security and inadequate

training, evaluation and auditing programmes are the major barriers to overcome. But they can be overcome.

Whilst there is no such thing as 100% security, the following 10 steps, based on appreciation of the current threat and methods of attack, would considerably improve the quality of security afforded at many airports and, in these days of financial constraints, at limited expense:

Procedures:

- Implementation of passenger profiling on high-risk flights;
- Review frequency of random searches of hand-baggage;
- Carrying out of aircraft searches prior to departure; and
- Screening of all personnel with airside access.

Training:

- Fraudulent document detection training for check-in agents;
- Hijack management training for flight crew;
- Review length and quality of existing training programmes and frequency of recurrent training; and
- Behavioural analysis training for security personnel and, airline check-in, cargo facility and ticket office personnel.

Auditing & Drilling:

- Drilling of all security personnel on a regular basis with defined disciplinary procedures;
- Frequent, unannounced external audits to appraise management of the level of security afforded and to identify corrective measures to be taken. ●

ACI Africa Regional Assembly meets in Cairo, Egypt

SENIOR OFFICIALS from African Airports and Civil Aviation Authorities are meeting in Cairo, Egypt, in September, for the annual Airports Council International (ACI) Africa Regional Assembly.

The event is being hosted by the Cairo Airports Authority which is headed by Abdel Aziz Badr. The current President of the ACI Africa Region is Abdelaziz Braham, Deputy Director General of the Office des Ports Aeriens de Tunisie (OPAT), Tunisia.

The theme, this year, is 'African Airports - Tomorrow's Challenges'. Some of the specific issues to be examined by industry experts from Africa and abroad include Airports and Tourism; Synergies in Traffic Generation; Preparing for the Operational Challenge Ahead; Training; and Airport Security.

The ACI comprises over 430 international airports and airport authorities, running some 1,200 airports, in more than 140 countries. Its primary purpose is to foster co-operation among the world's airports and to enhance safety and efficiency.

African airports showed the biggest increase in passenger traffic during the first quarter of this year (up by 11.6%),

according to the ACI. But it points out that slow economic growth and political turmoil in some parts of the continent are hindering growth. "The economic upturn of Africa depends on international trade and tourism which in turn requires secure and reliable air transport," says the ACI.

At the end of the ACI's fifth African Regional Annual Assembly held in Johannesburg, South Africa, in October, 1995, the assembly urged African Governments and national aviation authorities to let airports participate in bilateral air service negotiations and in negotiations with national airlines when new air services or frequencies are being considered. The assembly elected Abdelaziz Braham, Deputy Director of the Tunisian Airports



Authority (OPAT) as its Chairman for 1996-98.

During the assembly, Japie Smit, South Africa's Commissioner for Civil Aviation, noted that the African air transport industry accounts for about 3% of the total world market with the bulk of the traffic coming from Europe and overwhelmingly carried by European airlines.

Nevertheless, he added, Africa has some 65 airports designated to link intercontinental city pairs, more than three times the number in the United States.

Common factors

He said that there are some understandable reasons for this, but questioned the viability of African airlines operating at low yields and minimum frequencies to and from these airports to carry small numbers of passengers.

"One tends to feel that available resources can be much better applied in many instances by not establishing white elephants for the future," said Smit. He said the obvious answer to this dilemma is to drastically reduce the number of Africa's intercontinental gateways to a few designated strategic airport hubs through consensus decision by States within a region. Such a decision could be based on economic activity coupled with demand and geographical distribution, he suggested. ●