

# cabin *safety*

update

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Safety Training Focus - Gulf Air

Motion Technology

Personal Safety

Handling the Hijack



# Aerial Piracy: in the skies somewhere near you now...

News pictures of hijacked aircraft, standing impotently on airfields around the globe, are images that have made an unwelcome return to our television screens. Whilst the threat has been ever-present, recent incidents indicate that the motives behind the acts are no longer merely asylum seeking attempts, but rather a return of international terrorism. **Philip Baum** looks at the current trends and highlights areas in which crews can be better trained to respond.

"It's not something we pay much attention to. We don't have a problem with hijackings." I quote from one delegate to a recent industry conference. I asked him how frequently his carrier had ditched at sea, and whether the fact that it had never done so negated the need to train his crews in ditching procedures!

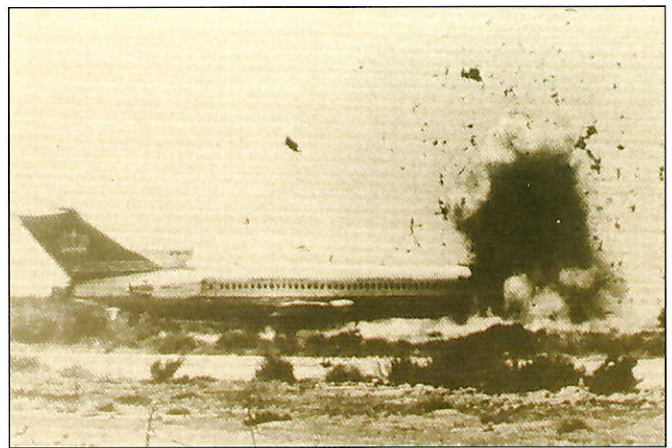
Another individual was concerned at the psychological impact on crew members if they were asked to experience a hijack exercise. Meanwhile they have no qualms (nor should they) in training them for crash landings, something I find to be a far more scary prospect.

The bottom line is that many airlines simply do not wish, often because they are not mandated to, treat the subject of aerial piracy in crew training with the respect it deserves. They simply employ, what I call, the "shove in a video" syndrome.

Recent events however should have sent out a message loud and clear that hijacks still plague our industry. Furthermore, the recently employed excuse of putting all hijacks down to asylum seekers, now carries little weight. There have been a significant number since the dying days of the 20th Century where terrorism has been the cause.

## RECENT INCIDENTS

On 24th December 1999, Indian Airlines flight IC 814 was seized shortly after its departure from Kathmandu,



This picture of an aircraft being blown up in an act of aerial piracy shows what lengths terrorists will go to.

Nepal. The incident ended on Millennium Eve in Qandahar, Afghanistan. Yet, one passenger had been killed and three others stabbed by the Kashmiri militant hijackers.

Afghanistan was to feature in the next major incident. This time, on February 6th 2000, an Ariana Afghan flight operating on a domestic route was hijacked to London. Although this turned out to be a mass attempt at asylum seeking, it took over four days for negotiators to secure the release of all on board. It later emerged that the hijackers had been heavily armed.



On 25th May 2000, a Philippine Airlines flight was hijacked by a psychologically disturbed individual who eventually parachuted to his death from the aircraft using a home made chute. On 10th July 2000 a Syrian man attempted to hijack a Royal Jordanian flight. And, on the 27th July 2000 a man commandeered a National Airlines flight at New York's Kennedy airport, having run through a security checkpoint, brandishing his gun, and straight onto the aircraft. He later demanded to be flown to Antarctica!



An Azerbaijani opposition party official tried to hijack a flight to Ankara, Turkey on 8th August 2000. His demand was the postponement of the elections.

Eight heavily armed men commandeered a VASP B-737 in Brazil on 16th August. The aircraft, carrying 66 tourists, was then flown to a hidden forest runway where the men escaped with \$2.76 million from the cargo hold.

A Colombian domestic flight was hijacked to an area of the country controlled by the FARC (Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia) on 8th September, and a few days later, on 14th September, a Qatar Airways A-300 was hijacked to Saudi Arabia by an Iraqi man.

A faction of the separatist Isatabu Freedom Movement in the Solomon Islands seized a light aircraft and demanded a ransom of \$200,000 on 16th September. An Iranian flight was then hijacked on the 24th, and on 27th September sky marshals on board a Xinhua Airlines flight in China's Mongolian region had to overpower two hijackers; one was killed.

To round off a bad month, another Royal Jordanian flight was hijacked by another Iraqi on 28th September.

Two Saudi Arabians hijacked a Saudia flight to Baghdad, Iraq on 14th October, where they claimed and received asylum. And, on 11th November, a Vnukovo Airlines Tu-154 was seized shortly after its departure from Dagestan. It was flown to Ovda, an Israeli airforce base near Eilat. The hijacker apparently complained of "yellow people trying to take over the white race".

On 13th November 23 members of four different Iranian families attempted to hijack an Ariatour flight from Iran to the United States.

This year, at the time of writing, there have already been five hijacks.

Perhaps the most important aspect of crew security training is that of attuning new recruits to the threat. In other words, previous hijacks (and other security-related incidents) should be examined, and current trends should be highlighted. Indeed, this subject should be addressed in annual recurrent training too.

In January, a Yemenia domestic flight was hijacked by a supporter of Saddam Hussein, a Gulf Air crew had to overpower an Iraqi who attempted to seize the flight they were operating from Bangkok, and a SATENA flight was commandeered in Colombia.

In February a light aircraft was seized in Pretoria, and, in perhaps the most significant of all the incidents since Indian Airlines IC 814, on 15th March another Vnukovo Airlines aircraft was hijacked. This time it was flying from Istanbul to Moscow when Chechen rebels forced a diversion to Medina in Saudi Arabia. Saudi commandos eventually stormed the aircraft, yet three people died. One of the three hijackers, a Turkish passenger and a flight attendant, Yulia Fomina.

Quite a list I know. And these incidents are not the only hijacks that occurred in that period. Yet, it is a list that demonstrates that hijacking is a global phenomena, and that the perpetrators' causes are numerous.

## THE RESPONSE

Highlighting the problem is simple. Responding to it is an altogether different story.

It would be easy to argue that the responsibility lies firmly with the airport security screeners. In many respects, it does. Yet, the reality is that no security system is foolproof and





The industry needs to discuss with crew the different types of hijackers and the potential threat that each might pose to the aircraft: the political terrorist, the asylum seeker, the psychologically disturbed individual and the criminal. Here, students under-take weapons recognition training.

incidents will still occur. If we accept this as fact, then it is also the airlines' responsibility to ensure that its crews are trained, as they are with other emergency procedures, to respond accordingly.

I hope that we have scotched the myth of "it's not a problem that affects us", but in case there was any doubt, I suggest you visit the Australian island-state of Tasmania. More specifically, Port Arthur.

The former penal colony is now an historic site that draws visitors from around the globe. It is a tranquil place nowadays. On a summer's day the water is still, the skies blue, the lawns verdant and the ruins stand as silent witnesses to the site's more gruesome history. Standing on the water's edge, it is hard to imagine a place more disconnected with the world of 21st Century terrorism.

On April 28th 1996 Martin Bryant visited Port Arthur. Bryant, although not a terrorist, was to prove that the worst nightmares can occur in the most unlikely of locations. On that fateful day, in the worst massacre by a lone gunman in modern history, he killed 35 people with a shotgun.

Before the shootings, some might have found it hard to argue the case for a Security Manager at all at Port Arthur. In hindsight, it just goes to prove that nowhere is immune.

Now that we've accepted the need to respond, the next question one has to answer is how to make training relevant.

## TRAINING REQUIREMENTS

Perhaps the most important aspect of crew security training is that of attuning new recruits to the threat. In other words, previous hijacks (and other security-related incidents) should be examined, and current trends should be highlighted. Indeed, this subject should be addressed in annual recurrent training too.

Once the threat is appreciated, we then need to ensure that crew members understand how they can play their role in the security web that shields our air carriers. It is important that they view themselves as part of the shield for, in the case of a hijack, the perpetrators are likely to be more detectable the closer they are to carrying out their attack. Whilst they may evade detection at the check-in, as they board the aircraft they may well be at their most nervous. With this in mind, we need to discuss with crew the different types of hijackers and the potential threat that each might pose to the aircraft: the political terrorist, the asylum seeker, the psychologically disturbed individual and the criminal.

I, personally, am very much in favour of running exercises for cabin crew. The exercises, however, must be linked to the classroom theory. There is little value in demonstrating "Ramboesque" tactics simply to give participants a shock and a bit of fun. The key to a successful exercise lies in linking the experience to the class discussion e.g. debating the mood changes of the hijackers, analysing the performance of the cabin crew at different stages, and assessing weapons recognition capability.

The theory of hijack management for cabin crew should include a discussion on the development of a 'typical' hijack, through the three stages: Intimidation, Custodial and Resolution. Having defined the stages, crew need to examine what behavioural characteristics might be present at each stage from the perspective of the hijacker, the passengers and crew members. Under this topic, one can also expound on the three syndromes: Stockholm, London and John Wayne.



Whilst I am very wary at giving crew members a checklist of dos and don'ts, there are certain tactical approaches that can be discussed. How much the crews themselves will be able to implement is going to depend on the type of hijacker they have to deal with. Rules about abandoning the aircraft if given the opportunity, or refusing to serve the hijacker alcohol are impractical, whereas empowering them with knowledge as to tactics that may aid in bringing the situation to a quick and safe resolution is a far better approach.

Explaining what the authorities outside a hijacked aircraft, taking into consideration geopolitical differences, will be doing whilst the aircraft is airborne and when it is at the airport is also of considerable importance, especially as it provides crew members with an understanding as to the causes for delays.

Weapons and explosives recognition is also of considerable importance in crew training, as the ability to accurately describe them may assist the authorities in the handling of a hijack, and determine whether armed assault is either a possibility or advisable. The methodology of securing a suspect package in the designated least risk bomb location for each aircraft type should be covered under this topic.

Finally, a look at the different ways in which people respond to stress based on previous kidnap incidents, may enable the crew to help themselves, their colleagues and their passengers. And, an appreciation of stress reduction methods might benefit some people in an extended hijack situation.

## CONCLUSION

Whilst some carriers are continually looking for ways in which they can enhance their crew security training programmes, most still have yet to get to first base.

The reasons are many: the lack of legislation, poor communication between crew training and security departments, fear of frightening crew members, the frustration that (unlike many other problems that the airline industry faces) there is no miracle cure, and the belief that our crews behaviour in a hijack will be determined by the hijacker rather than classroom training.

These are all very negative reasons. Perhaps it's about time we looked at the positive reasons for training, starting with the reality of the world we live in. Terrorists and asylum seekers will continue to use aviation as means to achieve their goals. It is a global problem, and no carrier can claim immunity. Maybe we owe a duty of care to our crews and, instead of finding excuses why not to do something, perhaps it is time to be a little more proactive. Let's not start making assumptions...after all if you ASSUME, it makes an ASS out of U and ME!

Philip Baum is the Editor of Aviation Security International, the bi-monthly journal of airport and airline security. He is also Managing Director of Green Light Limited.

**Indian Airlines flight IC 814 was hijacked on Christmas Eve 1999.**

As the new millennium approached the world was reminded that terrorist hijacks do still occur, and that their perpetrators are prepared to go to any extent to achieve their goals.

In this industry video, designed to supplement airline's ab initio and recurrent training, the crew of IC 814 reveal what happened inside the cockpit and in the cabin during the week-long ordeal. They discuss their feelings, recall the hijackers actions and provide an insight into the mindset of terrorists, passengers and crew who find themselves embroiled in the nightmare scenario.

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