

Dr. Abdulla Al Hashimi is the Divisional Senior Vice President for Emirates Group Security who has strived to create a pro-active, risk-based security regime to protect one of the world's most prestigious carriers and to serve as an example of industry best practice.

Philip Baum asks Dr Al Hashimi for his thoughts on the threats of today, the challenges of tomorrow and for his views on the steps which can, and are, being taken to ensure a safe and secure aviation industry.



AN INTERVIEW WITH... DR. ABDULLA AL HASHIMI



PB: What do you think the primary threats to civil aviation are today - from a global perspective?

AAH: In recent years, there have been a number of incidents allegedly attributed to cyberattacks which demonstrates the vulnerabilities in the civil aviation system. Also, the insider threat has been and always will be a concern.

PB: And, as a carrier, based in the Middle East, to what extent does the political instability of the region impact upon your own security programme?

AAH: A tailored approach to security is required. If there is a commercial demand to fly to a particular city, then, as a minimum, we must be satisfied that we are able to operate our aircraft into and out of the airport, or perform a layover, safely.

In certain cases when it becomes too risky, we do cease our operations at the location. For example, in Yemen and Libya. As far as our hub and network is concerned, we work closely with the authorities and our staff across our network so we can make informed risk-based decisions. We ensure that we have the highest standards of layered security systems



and measures; and of course well-trained and qualified staff.

PB: Which areas do you feel the global aviation security community has failed to effectively address?

AAH: Traditional aspects of cargo security and the new threat of cybercrime are issues the industry could do more to tackle. However, of more pertinent concern is the industry's ability to work with government intelligence agencies on threats of military action and turmoil that could affect civil aviation and landing airlines as accidental victims

and collateral damage. While there have already been talks on this topic, a more concrete approach should be taken.

PB: What has Emirates done to specifically address these concerns?

AAH: Emirates has taken steps to conduct its own screening regime for air cargo in areas of high concern. For this reason, Emirates was the first airline which was able to secure the AAC3 certification. As far as cybercrime is concerned, Emirates is not working alone. It has been collaborating extensively with the airport community and also Interpol.

PB: People often argue against the use of 'behavioural analysis' or 'passenger profiling' as there is a concern that decisions will be based on racial or ethnic stereotypes. As a carrier based in the United Arab Emirates, to what extent do you feel there is a role for behavioural analysis in the screening process and how do you respond to the critics?

AAH: Behavioural analysis is one of the variables that any security force in the world would use and Emirates is no exception (and we use it mostly in the area of illegal travel detection). It may not be the overriding variable, but it is used to identify potential suspects whom we should be applying more focus on. To us, 'profiling' is the use of any available data of the person and match it with the behaviour of the person at the various touchpoints.

PB: The threat of internally concealed narcotics, or indeed explosives, is a challenge to the security services. What is your opinion regarding the deployment of body scanners for passenger screening? And, of the various technologies on offer, which do you favour?

AAH: The body scanner is a good aid to screening. Although developments of the equipment have gone quite far, many cultures are still not receptive to it. For instance, the image projection has changed from an explicit outline shape of a human body to almost a simple reflection of a figure, yet, conservative cultures are still suspicious of this.

PB: There are some significant new challenges to airline security - drones, cyber-attacks, and incidents of cockpit laser illumination. How has Emirates responded to these?

AAH: We work very closely with the appropriate authorities and also the law enforcement agencies. In security, we cannot work alone if we want to be effective. No man is an island. Every man is part of the continent.

PB: As a Security Director who has travelled globally, are there examples of what you might term 'best practice' in addressing specific challenges which you would like to see rolled out internationally? And, if so, what are they and where are they used?



AAH: We need to embark on the platform of Security Education and not to be satisfied with training alone as “security is everybody’s business”. Emirates runs the University Diploma in Aviation Security Management with our partner, Edith Cowan University. Fortunately, we are able to attract non-security personnel in this programme, which augurs well in the concept of layered security approach.

PB: Why do you think the number of unruly passenger incidents seems to be on the increase?

AAH: The vast majority of our customers enjoy the Emirates product during their journey and behave well. As for the few who ruin the experience for others - we need to remember that commercial air travel has opened up to the masses. Emirates has raised the bar in terms of service, state-of-the-art aircraft, inflight entertainment systems, aircraft lounges and so on. Thus, our customers have high expectations. On ultra-long-haul flights there are 500 or more people from all over the world sharing the aircraft cabin space for 14 hours or more. People are busier and they’re occupied with work or family-related stress, even during their trips.

PB: In terms of incident prevention, what is Emirates doing to limit the number of unruly passenger incidents taking place on board its aircraft?

AAH: In recent months we’ve put a number of effective measures in place to reduce the number of potential incidents on board. One of the most

significant is the ‘Fit to Fly’ training programme for our ground-based staff. In essence, we have provided them the tools they need to identify someone who may not be fit for travel, and most importantly we’ve empowered our supervisors to take decisions to offload someone when necessary. Up until now, Phase 1 of this programme has been rolled out to approximately 500 Dubai-based staff and it is to be extended to others. The programme has been very well received so far and in fact we’ve already seen a positive effect on the reduction of incidents and delays.

PB: What do you feel the role of the airline industry is in limiting or preventing the movement of foreign fighters across international borders?

AAH: It is not an issue to be imposed onto the airlines, but we certainly have a role to play. It is imperative that continuous effort is made to heighten the level of co-ordination and harmonisation of screening systems and processes that have been in place.

PB: There has been considerable focus on the use of SeMS within the airline industry. To what extent do you think this is purely bureaucracy?

AAH: Security Management Systems (SeMS) is based on safety management systems, so it will be familiar to those in the aviation sector. The idea is that:

- security risks should be managed at the right level, overseen by company boards;
- activities should be measured to

provide management information on security performance;

- there should be people in the organisation who are accountable for maintaining rigorous security standards, using the management information; and
- there should be a culture that promotes high security standards throughout the company.

SeMS achieves this by providing an organised, systematic approach to managing security that embeds security management into the day-to-day activities of the organisation.

In addition, SeMS is a necessary pre-cursor for extending the airline’s and the airport’s Performance Based Regulation programmes (PBR) to the security arena. Assurance of security performance through SeMS is essential if we are to build an evidence base supporting the changes to regulations, including those cast at the EU level, needed to permit PBR.

PB: The industry is often accused of being reactive rather than proactive. If you consider, as an example, the threat of chemical/biological weapons, what steps do you think the industry could reasonably take to be regarded as more proactive...without bringing the industry to a standstill?

AAH: Heighten the level of communication and intelligence-sharing. It has to be a focussed approach. I shall try to answer this question using a holistic approach rather than focusing on a particular threat like chemical/biological weapons.

The concept of Proactive Interdiction requires taking a Systems Approach to aviation security. In other words, view each element of the system as an interrelated and interdependent part of the larger whole. In today’s global world, this philosophy translates into an array of interconnected elements (airlines, airports, CAAs and municipal agencies), working together throughout the globe on a daily basis.

The process begins with taking a ‘snapshot’ of the security status of an organisation as it exists today. This, in fact, is the purpose of the AVSEC (Security) Audit. For airports, the audit should, as a minimum, follow the requirements as set forth in ICAO Annex 17, and Amendments 10-11, Annex 18 and Documents 8973 Security Manual, as well as Doc 9137 Part 7 Emergency

Planning. For airlines, use of the IOSA Audit Checklist 6: Ground Handling and Checklist 8: Security proves the most effective in evaluating current security procedures. A review of US 49 CFR Part 1544 and the individual airline's own Quality Assurance Programme, a comprehensive security operational baseline can easily be established. With the appropriate data gathered, the next step towards developing a truly proactive security programme is conducting the organisational audit data analysis. During this phase, as a minimum, information collected from the various audit instruments (checklists) is examined with respect to:

- i. compliance with ICAO, IATA and National AVSEC Standards;
- ii. policy and procedures at the organisational level are examined in detail for their ability to address both present and 'most likely' future threats;
- iii. organisational procedures are compared to individual station requirements (station contingency plans should reflect the provisions found in the local airport security and emergency plans);

- iv. the individual contingency plan's ability to translate input from outside sources to activities to be undertaken during times of enhanced security levels;
- v. integration with the various Air Operator Security Plans and the security plan of each individual airport within the 'systems network';
- vi. establishment of provisions for the integration of information developed from open channels of communication, information and intelligence from local government and global industry sources;
- vii. personnel training needs, knowledge requirements and technical skills.

Whether airport or airline, administrators should not overlook the importance of feedback from both line and staff personnel in offices, on the AOA or on the Flight Deck, in developing new and innovative policies and procedures. What may appear effective on paper, at times is either impractical or impossible in the 'real world' working environment. An excellent case in point is the issue of 100% cargo screening at airports worldwide.

For most organisations, translating the results of the Needs Analysis into an action plan will require a degree of revision of existing operational policies and procedures. For air operators, security manuals, flight manuals, Quality Assurance Programmes and individual station contingency plans, all must reflect revised procedures specifically designed to address both existing and projected threats to the specific aviation operation at hand.

Once in place, the new alerting, reporting and responding procedures must be thoroughly tested, and, utilising the feedback this testing provides, revised before a final effective set of procedures can be developed.

PB: If you had to identify one Emirates programme or initiative of which you are especially proud, which would it be and why?

AAH: We pride ourselves in knowledge-sharing through our security educational programs and our upcoming AVSEC Symposium in Dubai (4 – 6 Oct) where we gather aviation and security professionals all over the globe to discuss and examine some of the key issues the airline industry is facing. ■



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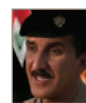
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