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TSA Commits to Action on CrewPASS

T rue to a commitment made at a March 2 meeting, the TSA on March 6 officially informed ALPA and ARINC that the agency has extended the CrewPASS program to July 17, 2009, and “strongly supports your efforts to begin testing the biometric element of CrewPASS.” The agency also said that it is “committed to partnering with ALPA on the proposal to expand CrewPASS to other locations across the system,” in compliance with future standards. ALPA is cautiously optimistic that some light may now be visible at the end of the CrewPASS tunnel.

On March 2, ALPA strongly urged the TSA to take expedited action on CrewPASS before a potential March 17, 2009, end of the current demonstration program. The TSA had not formally endorsed adding a biometric capability to this program, as it informed ALPA that it would do last November. Joining ALPA in those recommendations was ARINC, the CrewPASS contractor.

ALPA and ARINC together called on the TSA to

- immediately issue the CrewPASS standards that ARINC needs to enhance the system with biometrics

and, ultimately, add flight attendants as participants;

- transition CrewPASS into a pre-operational exercise for an additional 4 months (to July 17, 2009), in compliance with the new CrewPASS standards, at one or more of the three current demonstration airports (i.e., Baltimore-Washington International Thurgood Marshall Airport [BWI], Pittsburgh International Airport [PIT], and Columbia [S.C.] Metropolitan Airport [CAE]); and
- establish and recognize CrewPASS, pending the successful conclusion of this pre-operational exercise, as a standing, permanent program under the oversight of the TSA and assist in its implementation throughout the United States. ▶▶▶



Surviving Terrorism

Anyone, anytime, anywhere” could be caught up in a terrorist attack, said Mike Fredericks, ALPA senior security specialist who set the tone for ALPA’s recent seminar on terrorism with his gripping firsthand account of being a target of a lethal attack. A career DEA anti-narcotics agent who had survived firefights in the Colombian jungles and worked undercover in several third-world countries, Fredericks was on a Greek cruise ship in the Aegean Sea on July 11, 1988, when terrorists started shooting one deck above—right next to his wife and 8-year-old son.

Capt. Tom Cook (Delta) and F/O Rob Dolsak (Delta) know



PHOTOS: JAN W. STEENBLIK

Capt. Bob Hesselbein (Delta), chairman of ALPA’s National Security Committee (NSC), opened the seminar.

how true “anyone, anytime, anywhere” is: They were on a layover in the hotel attacked in Mumbai last November.

Cook told the seminar attendees that he took the elevator to the lobby of the hotel and viewed “a war zone” when the door opened—dead bodies, a pool of blood in front of the elevator, broken glass, shot-up furniture, and the back of a terrorist clad in chinos, a T-shirt, and a backpack, looking away but holding an automatic weapon.

Cook stabbed the “close” button with his finger. As

the doors began to close, the terrorist turned and began shooting. Cook, standing to one side in the elevator car, escaped unscathed and returned to the relative safety of his hotel room, where he remained barricaded for the next 2 nights and the day between.

Dolsak and a few flight attendants escaped, with the help of a hotel employee, via a small service elevator that took them to the dimly lit basement kitchen. From there, they eventually emerged into what they were wrongfully told was a safe street. Dolsak and others endured a chaotic, terrifying night near the hotel before being picked up by a crew bus a couple of blocks away in the morning.

Their recommendations for pilots and flight attendants on overseas layovers dovetailed with those of seasoned

security professionals participating in the seminar—keep a “go bag,” or fanny pack, equipped and ready to grab at any moment. Stock the bag with important essentials: identification, cash, a functioning cell phone and spare battery, a small flashlight, bottled water, Band-Aids, aspirin, Neosporin, and other emergency gear.

Insider intel

Representatives of the U.S. National Counterterrorism Center (NCTC) attended and provided insight on global terrorist threats and abilities.

One gave an update on “Terror Threats to Civil Aviation.” He provided an interesting explanation of why airlines are still prime terrorist targets—for one thing, airlines, unlike most

other types of transportation, are a conduit to “The Great Satan.” He summarized, “We take the target to the terrorists.”

The good news: “We really have whacked a whole lot of the bad guys—especially in 2006 and 2007. Last year, 17 of the top bad guys were taken out.”

The bad news: Radical extremists are (1) recruiting “clean skins” (i.e., recruits from target countries without criminal histories who may travel without arousing suspicion), and (2) exploring developing weapons from new technology.

An NCTC clinical psychiatrist offered detailed insights into the process of “radicalization.” Another NCTC representative, a clinical psychologist and intelligence analyst, described the process by which the sole surviving terrorist involved in the Mumbai attacks was trained and “radicalized.” She noted that “contact with a [terrorist] group is the pivotal event in radicalization” of a person, but that the terrorist in question did not fit the classic model of a dispossessed person seeking martyrdom and a heroic outcome.

Representatives from a U.S. government agency who attended the seminar but requested to remain anonymous said that “One of the key lessons we’ve learned from the Mumbai tactics is the importance of properly assessing the security capabilities of a country’s governmental and private-sector security.”


They added, “Some people wonder if they should switch their hotel business to a smaller, lower-profile, locally owned hotel. But you need to balance those characteristics against the likelihood of assault, robbery, and other crimes, and whether the hotel has adequate protection against fire.”

They noted that international travelers should consider the response time of a country’s law enforcement agencies. “In an ‘active shooter’ situation, rapid response is probably the single most important factor in whether your people survive.”

The government representatives offered such practical tips

Lessons from Mumbai

On March 10, ALPA’s National Security Committee (NSC) held a by-invitation-only seminar attended by more than 60 ALPA security representatives, airline corporate security managers, and representatives of several U.S. government agencies.

Title of the seminar: “Terrorism and Situational Awareness.” Subtext: “Lessons learned from Mumbai,” the city in India where 10 terrorists launched a series of attacks on several buildings, including major hotels, last November 26 and held off police and military rescuers for a day and a half. 



Left to right: Mike Fredericks, ALPA senior security specialist; Alan Orlob, vice-president-corporate security, Marriott; Capt. Tom Cook (Delta) and F/O Rob Dolsak (Delta), A330 pilots who narrowly escaped death during terrorist attacks at their layover hotel in Mumbai, India, last November.

as, “After you enter your hotel room, check the fire escape to ensure it’s locked to keep out the unwanted, but not blocked to prohibit escape.”

Hotelier’s view

Alan Orlob, vice-president-corporate security for Marriott, talked about the realities of protecting hotels in high-risk environments. Hotels are terrorist targets, he said, because they are “icons of tourism,” too often have minimal security, host high-profile guests, are oriented toward hospitality (“We’re not in the business of saying, ‘Stay out,’ we’re in the business of saying, ‘come in.’”), and are difficult to protect.

Orlob described the extraordinary measures that Marriott, which has hotels in more than 70 countries, has taken to improve the security of its hotels in high-risk regions. Those deterring measures—especially physical barriers to unauthorized vehicles—helped to reduce the casualties in last September’s suicide truck bombing of the Marriott in Islamabad to

56 fatalities and 265 injuries. Some 1,500 people were in the hotel at the time; the toll could have been much higher.

Orlob emphasized that hotel managements should have security analyzed by professionals, promote security awareness among employees, have a surveillance detection team, share floor plans with law enforcement agencies, install exterior CCTV cameras to detect suspicious surveillance, convert elevators to control by room key cards, install blast film on windows, install loud, audible panic alarms to alert employees and guests immediately in emergencies, and erect barriers and checkpoints at a safe distance from the hotel.

Corporate security

Regarding airlines’ corporate security efforts, Randy Harrison, managing director for corporate security for Delta, noted that Delta has expanded aggressively into third-world markets since exiting bankruptcy. The airline’s appraisal of security in a destination city includes many factors, including assessing fraudulent activities, corruption, vehicle hijackings, evaluating organized crime and gang activity, and the likelihood of having to deal with stowaways. In countries with limited resources, crime rates tend to be higher and the severity of violence can be greater.

Lessons learned from Mumbai, Harrison said, are that individual crewmembers must plan for different types of events and scenarios, individuals must have an easy way to contact and communicate—cell phones are great tools, but must be used sparingly, and all parties should be prepared for communications to be cut off, knowing the loca-



Left to right: Randy Harrison, managing director for corporate security, Delta; Rich Davis, managing director of corporate security, United; Capt. Todd O’Brien (Piedmont), vice-chairman, ALPA NSC; Capt. Craig Hall (Air Canada Jazz), NSC director, Canada (back to camera); Michael Peters, manager of crewmember security, Continental.



tion of all crewmembers is critical, human contact is critical for long-duration events, but one must be careful that the other parties practice good security, hotel staff can be a great resource, and crewmembers must be prepared to operate in a cash society, understanding that credit cards may not be trusted during a crisis.

Harrison added that people in duress tend to remember one phone number—their home number—so family members need to know or have access to emergency numbers.

Michael Peters, manager of crewmember security for Continental, said one lesson from the Mumbai attacks was that “not all information is accurate—figuring out what’s accurate

is the key to making the right decisions.”

Regarding practical tips for airline crews, Peters said, “We recommend grabbing a book of matches from the hotel when you check in—they usually have the address and telephone numbers on them. I also recommend that crewmembers buy 79-cent rubber door stops and carry them on trips to use in their layover room.” A simple door barrier can make a huge difference.

Capt. Todd O’Brien (Piedmont), ALPA NSC vice-chairman, asked, “What’s your greatest fear for crews as you send them off to these high-risk areas?”

Peters responded, “Complacency mixed with a false sense of security.”

Delta’s Harrison said, “Complacency mixed with a lack of situational awareness.”

Rich Davis, managing director of corporate security for United, said, “When people get hurt [on overseas layovers], it’s usually when they’ve ventured out alone—day or night.”

Wrapping up the seminar, Capt. Bob Hesselbein (Delta), chairman of the Association’s NSC, said that he has directed the Committee to prepare an updated list of practical tips for layover security to be distributed to the union’s members in the near future.—*Jan W. Steenblik, Technical Editor*

Aviation Safety Programs Hot Topics at ALPA Meeting

ALPA safety representatives continue to beat the same drum: implementing Aviation Safety Action Programs (ASAP)—or better yet, a complete transition to Safety Management Systems (SMS)—are critical to maintaining safer skies. These recurring themes were hot topics at the ALPA Operations Committee (OPSCOM) meeting held February 11–12 in Orlando, Fla. The OPSCOM consists of central air safety chairmen (CASCs) from each of the Association’s 35 pilot groups.

“Non-punitive, safety-reporting tools like ASAP, as part of a larger ‘just culture’ created by a properly implemented SMS, are vital to ensuring that our skies remain safe,” said ALPA OPSCOM chairman, Capt. Victor Cabot (American Eagle), during the meeting.

ASAP

F/O “Brit” Etzold (Delta), director of ALPA’s Safety Information Analysis Program, continued the ASAP discussion, highlighting the value of implementing an industry best practices universal training program. Etzold presented the core concepts of an ALPA-developed ASAP Event Review Committee (ERC) training program, which has been in development for 2 years. “The industry has seen numerous ASAPs fail over the last couple of years, and the lack of solid and consistent ERC member training has contributed significantly to those failures,” commented Etzold. After deliberation, the OPSCOM passed a resolution supporting the training program, and Cabot will present it to ALPA’s Air Safety Steering and Oversight Committee

(SOC) for implementation at its upcoming meeting.

“We reinvent the wheel every time we negotiate a new ASAP agreement,” said Cabot. “This training protocol will help to establish consistency among ASAP programs for ALPA pilots. It should eliminate some of the obstacles we’ve encountered with previous versions and also consolidate costs.”

Capt. John Parsons (Delta), the CASC for his pilot group,



PHOTOS: CAPT. ROBY KAY (UNITED)

Capt. Linda Orlady (United), foreground, ALPA’s Executive Air Safety Vice-Chair and director of the union’s Safety Management Systems (SMS) Project, listens intently to a presentation.

discussed changes to the memorandum of understanding that led to the reinstatement of the Delta pilots' ASAP. Parsons told the group that the Event Review Committee, which will evaluate Delta ASAP reports, needs to be trained but that he expects ASAP to resume at his airline during the coming month.

Capt. Hank Yaap (Alaska), ALPA's ASAP/FOQA project team leader, conducted an open-session discussion with CASCs about ASAP; Flight Operations Quality Assurance (FOQA), which analyzes safety and operational data generated by aircraft; and the Aviation Safety Information Analysis and Sharing System (ASIAS), which promotes an open exchange of deidentified safety information among stakeholders to continuously improve aviation safety. All three programs require cooperation and an agreement from the union, the airline, and the regulator before they can be implemented.

SMS in the U.S.

Capt. Linda Orlandy (United), ALPA's Executive Air Safety Vice-Chair and director of the union's Safety Management Systems (SMS) Project, gave a comprehensive report on SMS in the United States. SMS is a pervasive approach to creating an organizational safety culture, for which the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO), the aviation branch of the United Nations, has developed standards for all member states, including Canada and the U.S.

"We continue to wait for FAA regulatory guidance," said Orlandy, "but currently, there are no authorized provisions for approval or acceptance of SMS."

Orlandy noted that the FAA is in discussions with other countries about implementing SMS, and the acting FAA administrator has chartered an aviation rulemaking committee on which she serves as a co-chair. "However, the U.S. still has a long way to go to comply with ICAO requirements, and the initial deadline for the program's transition has passed."

ICAO set a deadline of Jan. 1, 2009, for airline industry regulators, including Transport Canada and the FAA, to determine how they would structure and implement SMS. Airlines, airports, ATC, and other industry organizations will eventually be required to comply with nation-specific SMS provisions. While Canada is taking steps to become ICAO-compliant, the U.S. still needs to establish a nationwide program and the accompanying implementation dates for industry users.

Meeting attendees also discussed ALPA's efforts to improve the status of captain's authority and one level of safety among cargo airlines.

Kay comments

ALPA's Executive Air Safety Chairman, Capt. Rory Kay (United), briefed meeting attendees on other Association



Central air safety chairmen (CASCs) from most of the Association's 35 pilot groups attended the Operations Committee (OPSCOM) meeting held February 11-12 in Orlando, Fla.

safety priorities, particularly those covered in the strategic plan developed by ALPA's Board of Directors last fall. He discussed the FAA reauthorization bill and the proposed infrastructure improvements of NextGen; the Association's work on fatigue and flight-time/duty-time issues; and deficiencies in the current ALPA airport liaison representative program. He also talked about ALPA's position on unmanned aircraft systems and the Association's participation in the ongoing investigation surrounding the tragic accident involving Colgan Flight 3407 near Buffalo.

"I take the OPSCOM group very seriously," said Kay. "As the CASCs for each of the Association's pilot groups, I see them as my customers."

Kay also updated participants about the progress of various projects throughout the 2-day meeting.

During the meeting, the entire assembled group gave Yaap, who was soon to retire, a standing ovation for his many years of service to ALPA at the national, local, and master executive council levels. "Hank is one of the stalwart 'go to' people for all of us, and has provided so many of us with wise and considered counsel in all matters pertaining to ASAP and FOQA," stated Kay.

Safety networking

One of the most valuable components of the OPSCOM meeting is the open session that allows CASCs to talk about safety-related activities for their individual pilot groups. This portion of the agenda enables pilot representatives to share deidentified safety experiences and discuss projects and recurring problems.

The OPSCOM meets twice a year to address pressing concerns and allows ALPA safety representatives to network. Meetings provide attendees with a broad glimpse of the day-to-day operation of the Association's air safety structure. The OPSCOM will reconvene for its next meeting at ALPA's 55th Annual Air Safety Forum this August in Washington, D.C.

—John Perkinson, Staff Writer