

**For Information
on 2 March 2010**

**Legislative Council
Panel on Security**

**Aviation Security Measures Implemented at
Hong Kong International Airport**

Purpose

This paper seeks to brief Members on the aviation security measures currently implemented at Hong Kong International Airport (HKIA) in the light of recent events.

Background

2. On 25 December 2009, a male with alleged links to a terrorist group, attempted to detonate an explosive device on board a flight from Amsterdam to Detroit shortly before landing. The perpetrator reportedly hid the device inside his clothing. Subsequent to this event, it was reported in the media that British intelligence had picked up the communication of a terrorist group regarding the potential use of surgically implanted explosives inside human body to carry out attacks on airplanes.

Aviation Security at HKIA

Comprehensive security system

3. To protect the security of air transport, the Airport Authority implements and maintains the HKIA Airport Security Programme. Under this Programme, a comprehensive and structured security system has been put in place at HKIA to guard against all types of security threats, including

bombing attacks. The main components of this security system include, among other things –

- (a) Physical security measures (e.g. security fencing, physical barriers and intrusion detection systems) to prevent unauthorised access into the Airport Restricted Area (ARA);
- (b) Control of access into the ARA by authorised persons (e.g. airport staff, passengers and operating crew) only. This is achieved by means of verification checks carried out at dedicated access control points;
- (c) Control of access into the ARA by authorised vehicles only. This is achieved by means of the ARA Airside Vehicle Licensing regime;
- (d) Screening of all persons, including passengers, and their articles and all vehicles entering the Enhanced Security Restricted Area (ESRA) with the aid of x-ray imaging, explosives detection and metal detection to detect the presence of restricted articles (e.g. firearms, explosives, flammable substances, etc); and
- (e) 100% screening of hold baggage (i.e. checked-in baggage) for restricted articles with the aid of advanced screening technology (e.g. multi-view x-ray scanners and computed tomography x-ray scanners).

4. The security system at HKIA is underpinned by preventive risk-based security measures. In other words, we constantly review the level of threat to civil aviation in Hong Kong taking into account, amongst other things, intelligence information gathered. When there is information to suggest that a credible threat exists, the security measures at HKIA will be stepped up accordingly to counter the increased threat.

5. The critical elements of the security system at HKIA are kept fully in line with the relevant standards and recommended security practices of the International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO).

Enhanced security measures

6. After the incident on 25 December 2009, the US Department of Homeland Security has issued security directives to airlines operating flights to the United States on the enhance security measures that should be taken. All passengers travelling to the United States are now subject to a thorough and personal pat-down search at HKIA. Their carry-on baggage is also subject to additional physical inspection immediately prior to boarding for items that may constitute potential threats to aircraft safety. These measures are effective in detecting bombing devices, including those used in the attempted attack on 25 December 2009.

7. In light of heightened security threats globally, as part of the “risk-based” security initiative, security officers at HKIA have also stepped up the use of behaviour pattern recognition (BPR) at passenger access control points and security check points to identify persons who may pose a potential threat to security. Identified passengers would be required to undergo higher level of examination and searches.

8. We will continue to maintain close liaison with ICAO and our overseas counterparts and implement appropriate security measures at HKIA that are commensurate with the threat assessment and in line with international practices to ensure the safety of passengers.

Use Body Scanners

9. Body scanners¹ are being deployed at selected airports in the United States, United Kingdom and the Netherlands. We understand that body scanners that employ penetrating x-ray technology may be capable of

¹ These body scanners adopt two types of technology, namely millimetre wave or digital radiographic (x-ray) scanning. Millimetre wave body scanners derive images with the use of extremely high frequency radio transmissions while digital radiographic (x-ray) body scanners derive images with the use of x-ray.

detecting surgically implanted devices inside human body. However, due to concerns of their encroachment on privacy and possible health hazards, the use of x-ray scanners has attracted considerable debate and has yet to be agreed for adoption internationally. The Airport Authority will closely monitor development overseas and conduct a review of what additional security screening technologies could be adopted for operational use at HKIA. At the same time, our experts' view on surgically implanted explosive devices is that the imminence or effectiveness of attacks using such devices have yet to be proven based on currently available information.

Advice Sought

10. Members are invited to note the content of this paper.

Security Bureau
Civil Aviation Department
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