Security in Transport: Protecting and Respecting Transport Users

SESSION SUMMARY

Wednesday, 25 May 2011

Security is of paramount importance but it often makes travelling more arduous and increases the cost of transport. Many parts of the transport system present potential opportunities for terrorists to inflict high costs on society at very low financial cost to themselves. Al Quaeda in the Arabian Peninsula claims that its disruption of airfreight services in 2010 (the ink cartridge bomb) cost just $4 200. The US Transport Security Authority estimates the cost to carriers of screening all cargo on passenger planes, including delays, to be nearly $1 billion a year. In this context the session examined how different approaches to security can make the most effective use of scarce resources and protect vulnerable parts of the transport system in the face of ever-changing terrorist targets.

Chair

- Zoltan Kazatsay, Deputy Director General, Directorate-General for Mobility and Transport, European Commission

Panellists

- Nico Beilharz, Deputy Head of Security, Deutsche Lufthansa AG, Germany
- Geoff Dunmore, Network Security Manager, London Underground, UK
- John Hanlon, Secretary General, European Low Fares Airline Association
- Marta Lestau Saenz, Director for Civil Aviation Security and User Protection, Safety and Security State Agency, Spain
- Martin Matthews, Chief Executive, Ministry of Transport, New Zealand
- Jean-Marc Suchier, Senior Vice President, Special Affairs, Technology and Strategy, SAFRAN Morpho, France

Active management of public spaces for security

The London Underground carries 2.9 million passengers a day and Brazil's Curitiba bus rapid transit system carries 2.3 million passengers a day, ten times Heathrow airport's busiest day. Physically screening such volumes of traffic is simply not possible. In a busy railway station 2000 people enter the system a minute. The focus in public transport must therefore be on measures that deter all criminal elements by creating a controlled environment. This involves multiple layers security based on observation and interaction with

passengers. Geoff Dunmore underlined that "*security in public transport systems is built on demonstrating that the public space is actively managed*".

Active security management includes "*unpredictable interventions*", as Marta Lestau Saenz put it, that are critical to staying ahead of ever-changing threats. Airports will also need to make increasing use of this approach. Although airports are much better suited to screening than rail, metro and bus systems, smarter processing of passengers is the way forward. As John Hanlon pointed out "*passengers want protection, but not by wasteful and ineffective systems.*" Much more effective use needs to be made of the data routinely collected on passengers because, as Nico Beilharz commented, "*we have tended to look too much at objects and not enough at people*". Dynamic control is the key, adjusting the level of screening according to prevailing alert levels and in response to the observed behaviour of individuals and irregularities in identity data. Selective screening procedures will free up resources for more effective checks where they are needed and reduce delays for the 99.9% of passengers that present no risk.

Proportionality based on risk assessment

Security is of paramount importance. But reform of screening procedures to improve effectiveness, rather than simply adding new procedures to past practices in a process of accretion, is not easy in an environment where any change can be politically sensitive. Martin Matthews explained that "*transparency over costs and benefits is the essential key to reform*" with an example from New Zealand. In response to an attempted highjacking of an aircraft by a mentally unstable female passenger it was proposed to extend full passenger screening to all of its regional airports. A thorough regulatory impact assessment of the proposal enabled politicians to take the difficult decision not to go ahead with a measure that would have crippled remote areas economically and socially and been ineffective against the kind of hijacking that initiated the proposal.

Zoltan Kazatsay summed up the approach to take to security as "*proportionality based on risk assessment*". Jean-Marc Suchier underlined the need to adapt to changing risks noting that "*the Maginot Line was absolutely useless – people felt secure but it didn't work – we have to first to define risks and define what we want to achieve*". John Hanlon echoed this saying "*security processes should make greater use of intelligence information and be driven more by intelligence than technology*".

Future technology

Faster, user-friendly processing will be needed to handle growing flows of people using airports in the future. New technology promises integrated walk-through devices to check boarding passes, identity, baggage and people, without the need to remove clothing. The new technology will not be perfect, no technology is, but it will achieve today's level of performance with much faster processing. "*The systems will respect privacy by design*" as Jean-Marc Suchier put it, avoiding current issues with body scanners. Already today scanners could be designed to display a synthetic image rather than a direct body image to locate suspicious items for checking with a secondary pat down or more thorough search. This can be made the norm. The future promises automatic recognition systems for potentially dangerous objects and substances to back up manual inspection of scanner images and enhance the effectiveness of scanning in detecting suspect items.

Who should pay for the costs of security?

In the past, air passengers bore the main risk of hijackings but passengers are much less relevant to today's terrorism and the plane or transport system itself is used as a weapon or means to create large scale disruption. The target today is populations on the ground and the State – either where the attack takes place or the flag State of the carrier. The protection conferred by security measures thus benefits all citizens, not just passengers. This is relevant in determining how security should be paid for, through increases in ticket prices or through government grants. John Hanlon suggested that "*one of the reasons security measures are more onerous in aviation than in other modes is that aviation is not dependent on public subsidies*" and mechanisms in place mean that costs imposed on operators will be passed through to passengers, without budgetary responsibility on the part of governments, which are the true targets. Splitting costs for aviation security between operators and the State may be beneficial by focusing attention on cost effectiveness and proportionality of measures mandated.

International cooperation is essential

The panellists concurred that the US and Europe have to agree common systems for security in international transport. Each has equally effective and only slightly different approaches but complying with two sets of systems escalates costs. Coordination with other countries is also made more difficult, undermining global security. Responses to new threats have historically been developed in parallel and incompatibilities have been common. As Nico

Beilharz underlined, in responding to future threats "*joint development of security measures must be the goal*".