



Reply to the Chief Executive Officer

Customs House
5 Constitution Avenue
Canberra ACT 2601

Quote:

The Secretary
Joint Committee of Public Accounts and Audit
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Mr Catchpole

Please find attached the Australian Customs Service's submission to the Joint Committee of Public Accounts and Audit's Review of Aviation Security in Australia.

While Customs does not currently have a direct role in aviation security under the *Air Navigation Act 1920*, its border security activities within the international airport environment are highly complementary to those of DoTaRS and airport operators in a number of operational areas. Recognition of this complementarity is important in developing a whole of international airport security environment. To this end, the *Border Security Legislation Amendment Act 2002* enhanced Customs powers and improved its risk assessment capabilities, both for passengers and persons having airside or restricted area access.

It is important that there continues to be a coordinated Commonwealth approach to security at international airports, be it aviation or border security. Customs role as a Commonwealth law enforcement agency within the international airport environment is important in achieving this security outcome.

Yours sincerely

Tim Chapman
National Manager
Passengers Branch

13 August 2003

**Joint Committee of Public Accounts and Audit
Review of Aviation Security In Australia
Australian Customs Service Submission**

Introduction

The Australian Customs Service (Customs) has primary responsibility for border security, including within the international airport environment. From an operational perspective, Customs risk assesses persons and goods entering and leaving Australia through the international airport environment. It also has an interest in the activities of persons with airside or restricted area access at international airports and who may pose a threat to the integrity of the border. Customs uses a risk management approach to the deployment of its resources so as to maximise its coverage of areas assessed as posing a higher risk.

Under the current Commonwealth arrangements, Customs does not have a defined role in aviation security. This said, Customs activities at international airports contribute significantly to achieving aviation security outcomes. The delivery of operational security outcomes in this context is different from the systems based, framework, monitoring and program evaluation focus of the Australian National Audit Officer Report number 26 of 2002-2003 *Aviation Security in Australia*.

Recent Legislative Changes

The *Border Security Legislation Amendment Act 2002* enhanced the capacity of Customs officers to more effectively monitor and enforce security requirements at the Australian border. This legislation provided Customs with access to information about people working in restricted areas or issued with Aviation Security Identification Cards at international airports. Customs uses this information, together with a broad range of information sources, including Commonwealth and State and Territory law enforcement intelligence data in its risk assessment activity.

The issue of integrity within the Australian international airport environment, particularly in relation to criminal activity, is a significant concern to border security, as well as being a vulnerability for aviation security. The exploitation of criminal intelligence for aviation security purposes was identified in the Australian National Audit Office report number 16 of 1998 on *Aviation Security in Australia*.

The *Border Security Legislation Amendment Act 2002* also enhanced Customs powers to patrol airports, to designate areas as Customs controlled, to more effectively deal with unauthorised persons within those areas and to access airline reservation systems data to assist in pre arrival and departure passenger screening. Within the cargo environment, the legislation also enhanced reporting requirements for in-transit cargo, which improves Customs ability to assess the risks posed by goods prior to their arrival in Australia.

The combined effect of these measures has been to enhance the security of airports by enabling Customs to better exploit criminal intelligence and to secure certain

restricted areas of international airports. The early identification of both individuals and goods who may pose a risk to aviation has also been improved.

The types of threats that Customs considers in its assessment processes range from drug trafficking, wildlife smuggling, firearms and weapons trafficking, revenue evasion and, importantly within the current security environment, terrorist activity.

Passengers

Within the passenger hall, Customs comes into direct contact with every air passenger arriving or departing Australia. Both arriving and departing passengers are important in the context of aviation security. Certain arriving passengers may pose an immediate threat to airport security or be a risk at a later date to an aircraft. Departing passengers may be an immediate threat to the aircraft they are about to board. In both cases, an intelligence based risk assessment of passengers directly contributes to aviation security.

Customs risk assesses passengers throughout the inwards and outwards clearance processes. At the point where the immigration function is performed, Customs officers assess the passenger's potential threat. If the person is assessed as posing a threat they are referred to a Customs enforcement officer for further assessment and baggage examination if necessary. Outside of the passenger terminal, Customs Air Border Security teams assess and respond to potential threats. These risk assessment methods have proved effective in detecting a range of illicit activity at the border.

Technology

Customs deploys a range of technology within the airport environment to assist in the identification of high risk cross border movements. The technology includes ionscan particle detection technology; static x-ray machines; mobile x-ray vans; and monitored closed circuit television coverage of inwards and outwards Customs controlled areas and airside baggage and tarmac areas. This technology is deployed so as to maximise border integrity in relation to passengers and persons employed within the airport environment with access to aircraft and to airside and restricted areas.

Customs has also recently deployed three new relocatable, under-airport x-rays for baggage examination in Melbourne, Sydney and Brisbane international airports. In light of the new security environment Customs has also provided explosive awareness training to its x-ray operators.

Customs has deployed three radiation pagers to be worn by officers to detect radiological threats within the air passenger environment, and seven to be worn by officers involved in examining air cargo.

Thus while Customs deploys a range of technology within the international airport environment for border security purposes, the synergies with aviation security are clearly evident, and serve to reinforce operational aviation security outcomes.

Summary

Under the current Commonwealth arrangements, Customs is not directly responsible for the delivery of aviation security outcomes. However, as has been outlined in this submission, Customs operational activity does contribute to aviation security outcomes at international airports. This is achieved through the deployment of both personnel and technology on a risk assessed basis, and in collaboration with other Commonwealth agencies and industry participants.