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24 October 2005

By Facsimile: 02 6277 2220

Mr Glenn Worthington
Inquiry Secretary
Joint Committee of Public Accounts and Audit
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Mr Worthington,

INQUIRY: REVIEW OF AVIATION SECURITY IN AUSTRALIA

Arising from questioning at recent public hearings conducted by the Joint Committee of Public Accounts and Audit, Qantas has noted the Committee's interest in the security measures imposed on international transit aircraft. I would like to take this opportunity to provide the Committee with a brief overview of the security measures which are applied to inbound international transit aircraft whilst in transit at an Australian airport.

The Committee proposed two hypothetical scenarios, under which an explosive device might be introduced to an arriving international aircraft if the security standards in the country of origin are not as robust as those in Australia.

Under the first scenario, an explosive device is introduced in checked baggage, arriving from a country where the Checked Baggage System may not be as effective as within Australia. In the second scenario, an explosive device is introduced as carry-on luggage in a foreign country where the passenger screening standards may not be as effective as in Australia, and is left on board when the passenger disembarks at an Australian transit port but fails to reboard.

Inbound International Transit Passengers

Should a passenger disembark or a passenger board an aircraft during transit in Australia, all inbound international passengers and items in their possession will be required to leave the aircraft with their carry-on luggage. The aircraft is then required to be inspected to ensure that all carry-on possessions have been removed, and that no weapons or prohibited items have been left onboard. Aviation Transport Security Regulation 4.13 (5) is quite specific concerning the areas of the aircraft to be inspected.



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All passengers and their carry-on luggage will then be re-screened prior to re-boarding the aircraft. The only exception to this requirement is passengers with a disability which would make disembarking and reboarding difficult: these passengers may be screened while remaining in their seat.

In addition, if it cannot be demonstrated that such passengers and their carry-on possessions were screened and cleared prior to boarding at the point of origin, all must disembark and be re-screened whilst transiting in Australia, regardless of whether any passengers disembark or board the aircraft.

It should be noted, however, that the above does not apply where an aircraft is in transit due to an operational diversion. Operational diversions may occur due to such factors as weather, fuel and crew requirements. Such diversions are completely beyond the control of passengers.

Inbound international Transit Baggage

An item of inbound international checked baggage will be offloaded and re-screened when transiting at an Australian airport unless it can be demonstrated that the item was subject to screening procedures at its last port of departure and the baggage has not been kept continuously secure since screening. Furthermore, the Aviation Transport Security Regulations 2005 provide the Secretary of the Department of Transport and Regional Services (DOTARS) with the power to specify, by way of written instrument, countries from which baggage must be offloaded and re-screened while in transit in Australia, regardless of any previous screening. Such a notice may be issued in circumstances where the Secretary of DOTARS is not satisfied with the adequacy of screening and/or subsequent security measures applied at a foreign airport.

Fail to board passengers

Passenger reconciliation at Australia's international transit airports is conducted using a variety of electronic methods (including gate readers) and manual methods (such as head-counts against the passenger manifest). Passenger reconciliation is designed to ensure that no baggage or carry-on luggage remains onboard if a passenger has disembarked. If a passenger fails to board a Qantas flight (including failure to board while transiting at an Australian airport), Qantas policy states that every item of checked baggage attached to that passenger must be offloaded prior to departure. Furthermore, in addition to the aircraft search conducted on inbound international transit services, Qantas policy requires that in the event of a fail to board passenger, an additional inspection of the seat allocated to that passenger and any storage areas in its vicinity must be conducted prior to departure.

I hope this summary has made it clear that sufficient measures are in place to protect transiting aircraft against the type of scenarios presented by the Committee.

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I thank you for providing Qantas with the opportunity to participate in this important review, and am happy to provide further detail on the above when Qantas gives evidence before the Committee.

Yours sincerely,

Per: G. De La Gardie

Geoffrey D Askew
Head of Group Security

(Signed on behalf of Mr Geoffrey Askew in his absence)