

Submission No:54.....

Submission by the:

Transport Workers Union, NSW Branch

To the:

Joint Committee Of Public Accounts And Audit

Aviation Security Further Inquiry

Thursday, 21 July 2005

Premier Room

Sydney Airport Mercure Hotel

20 Levey St

Wolli Creek

Whilst we do not consider ourselves to be security experts, the concerns about failings in aviation security that we have raised over the last four years seem to be obvious issues for any lay person. We have invited companies and government departments to offer briefings to our members on occasions, but the invitations have not been taken up. We have conducted our own security summit with representatives from the Australian Defence Studies Centre to provide advice to our members about security issues.

Our airports are an integral part of our front-line in terms of border security. The Transport Workers Union takes the matter of the security and protection of airport workers and the public most seriously. We have raised concerns and will continue to do so, in the interests of the security and well-being of people working in the airline industry and for the safety of the general public.

As has been previously communicated over the last four years to all parties concerned, thousands of Transport Workers Union members working in the Aviation industry have serious concerns with problems in Aviation Security arrangements, including:

- The abuse of ASIC system by contractors and other service providers
- The lack of basic security awareness training for all airport workers
- The lack of regular security information briefings
- The lack of a single Aviation security co-ordinating body
- The failure to screen 100% of international and domestic luggage and freight.
- The failure of existing security co-ordination systems
- The lack of security at regional airports
- The failure to have tri-partite involvement (Government, Industry and Unions) in security arrangements

- The failure to have systematic security management systems for Government and aviation companies.

As of today, the concerns outlined above have still not been adequately addressed.

Inadequate security training

It should go without saying that all people that work in the Aviation Industry would receive adequate security training, but unfortunately, this is not the case.

Not all people at the airport are trained in how to deal with suspect packages, evacuation procedures and security procedures. Not all people have even been trained in the HOT principle – is it Hidden, is it Obvious and is it Typical of objects moving through the area.

Need for a single Federal co-ordinating body

With the various Federal and State Government agencies and private operators having security responsibility, there is a pressing need for a single co-ordinating body. A single central place of security co-ordination would ensure that there are consistent and uniform security management systems in the aviation industry. The current ad-hoc security meetings between government agencies and private company operators is like the left hand trying to tell the right hand what it's doing without having a brain in between.

Aviation Security is a National responsibility, not a local one. A co-ordinating body should not be isolated to any specific airport, but should be the co-ordinating body for the whole of Australia; international, domestic and regional airports.

There has been no valid argument put forward to explain why it's good enough for countries like the United States of America, Canada and Great Britain to have a single co-ordinating body for aviation security but not for Australia.

Lack of Regional airport security

The reality of Australian Regional airport security is that it basically doesn't exist. There seems to be no point having a different security level and regime for international airports in Australia if they are accessible from Australian domestic and regional airports with little or no security systems in place. It is a security flaw that quite literally a plane could be flown through.

Security breakdown

Some examples of serious security breaches and security process breakdowns that have occurred at Kingsford-Smith Airport.

- January 2002
Three illegal immigrants found wandering around a plane on the international tarmac. They were confronted by TWU catering staff before any security were even aware of the security breach.
- Christmas 2002
Bomb device discovered on the domestic ramp. Only TWU member response forced security response and evacuation of planes. The company failed for two weeks to have any training or debriefs provided. TWU members forced company into the initial HOT training program (is it Hidden, is it Obvious, and is it Typical of objects moving through the area).
- 19 & 20 March 2003
Unidentified Chemical vials left unattended in public area for 14 hours. There was an argument between Qantas Security and Emergency services about cutting public access to surrounding bays. Emergency services wanted them shut down until the substances were properly removed and identified, but were opposed by the company security.
- December 2003
Freight at Australian Air Express tested positive to explosives. A forklift operator was instructed to move the package to a safer place by the

company prior to the bomb squad appearing. Upon arriving, the bomb squad was outraged upon knowing that the package had been touched prior to their arrival.

- July 2004

Single male got to the point of boarding a Qantas flight to USA, had no passport and no ticket.

- July 2004

Flight 840 United Airlines "BOB" message found in the plane. Passengers were evacuated from the plane and emergency services were present. Prior to any security personnel entering the plane, baggage handlers were first sent into to clear the plane.

- July 12 2005

A member of the public gains access to tarmac by walking through an unarmed security door at the International terminal and sat on a piece of machinery on the tarmac until being located.

- July 14 2005

Individual gains access to International tarmac through perimeter fence, wearing a backpack. Is able to proceed some 300 metres to be within a few metres of airplanes before being challenged by a TWU ramp worker.

Security only apprehend the individual after the TWU ramp worker alerts them to the security breach.

The fact that only in the last week, there were two major security breaches at the Sydney Kingsford-Smith Airport is evidence of the continual fundamental failings in Aviation Security in Australia. These are matters that require immediate attention and dedicated commitment to resolve effectively.

Members of the Transport Workers Union in the Airlines are more than prepared to be actively and constructively involved with the Federal Government and private

industry to ensure that the most safe and secure Aviation Industry exists for the safety and benefit of the public and all airline workers.

Failings in the ASIC system

The Federal Government has recently announced that ASIC background checks will be changed. Any changes to background checks for ASICs will not have any real positive effect on security as long as the loopholes in the system are allowed to continue.

Whilst there has been additional security staffing at Mascot over the last month, it has occurred by means of contracted staff. The Federal Government's own Auditor General's Report into Aviation Security in 2003 stated that the use of contracting diminishes the security chain of command.

Contracted labour is also being used on the airside in baggage and freight handling by companies like Vigin and Patricks. Aerocare is a company that supplies baggage handling services and has up to 20% of its work-force on any given day with visitor or day passes. Like other contractors and service providers at the airport, they can be working on the airport on a day or visitor's pass. There are no background checks performed with these passes.

Hundreds of day and visitor passes are handed out each week including to security guards and people working inside planes and next to airline refuellers.

These arrangements are neither appropriate nor adequate to ensure the security and safety of all Australians working at the airport and for the travelling public. All people performing regular work or contracts on or at an Australian airport must have full security background checks for the ASIC system to be effective. Outside this, there must be 100% enforcement of ASIC compliance systems for anyone being covered under a day or visitor pass.

Lack of consultation and security information briefings

Members of the Transport Workers Union are often left exposed at the receiving end of security breaches and security systems breakdowns, and have on numerous occasions been the ones that have alerted security or forced a response to a situation. As a critical stakeholder in the Aviation Industry, members of the Transport Workers Union should be listened to in order to improve aviation security. As such, the Transport Workers Union should be involved directly in the existing Federal Government and local airport security meetings when they are held.

In the light of terrorist attacks that have occurred over the last four years in USA, Indonesia, Spain and now most recently London, Australia continues to find itself in an entirely inadequate situation. Accordingly, we request that the issues we have raised are acted upon as a matter of National importance and urgency.