

JOINT COMMITTEE OF PUBLIC ACCOUNTS AND AUDIT REVIEW OF AVIATION SECURITY IN AUSTRALIA

Overview

Following the Cornall Review into Australia's counter terrorism capabilities as a result of the 11 September 2001 events in the United States, the Australian Protective Service (APS) became an operating division of the Australian Federal Police (AFP) on 1 July 2002. The underpinning rationale for integration was to enhance the capabilities of the two agencies to contribute to delivering a seamless approach to counter terrorism and protective security in Australia.

The APS provides specialist security services at Parliament House, the offices and residences of the Prime Minister and Governor General, sensitive defence establishments, foreign embassies and the Australian Nuclear Science and Technology Organisation (ANSTO). Additionally, and of particular interest to the Committee, is the APS role in providing counter terrorist first response (CTFR) at security designated airports in Australia and the provision of the Air Security Officer (ASO) Program.¹

Legislative authority for the activities of the APS is through the *Australian Protective Service Act 1987*, with specific direction in relation to its aviation security role found in the *Air Navigation Act 1920* and the *Air Navigation Regulations 1947*. Effectively, at security designated airports, only State Police services or the APS have the legislative coverage to provide a CTFR role.

On 26 June 2003, the *Australian Protective Service Amendment Bill 2003* was introduced into the Senate. This Bill equips APS officers to take proactive measures where suspicious circumstances arise in, or near, a place the officers are protecting. It enhances the ability of protective service officers (PSO) to protect the safety of the public at the critical places where the Commonwealth has a security responsibility. The Bill improves and supports the capacities of PSOs to deliver a quality security response that is commensurate with the variety of suspicious circumstances that arise at the critical infrastructure, installations and diplomatic premises where they function.

Substantial enhancements to Australian aviation security have been successfully implemented since 11 September 2001. These include the introduction of the ASO program and upgraded CTFR capabilities.

Counter Terrorist First Response

The Federal Government has decided to recast the role of the APS at airports where they currently have a presence from general deterrence patrolling and the provision of first response to security related incidents, to one that is preventative, pro-active and intelligence focussed. A consultative approach with the aviation industry has commenced with a view to developing a new model of CTFR.

¹ Security designated airports are: Canberra, Sydney, Melbourne, Hobart, Brisbane, Coolangatta, Cairns, Darwin, Alice Springs, Perth and Adelaide.

The general approach to be taken in developing this new model is to adopt a nationally consistent model which in addition to the APS 'first response' role, it will become more proactive in relation to where, when and under what circumstances it is delivered. Naturally, the need to build a nationally consistent CTFR capability will recognise specific operational needs of the various airports where this role will be performed.

Air Security Officer (ASO) Program

The ASO program is a new capability introduced by the Government in response to the attacks of 11 September 2001 in the United States. ASOs provide an additional layer of security and complement existing security measures. The reinforcement of cockpit doors is an international requirement, which will add another layer of security for Australian aviation assets. The principal role of ASOs is to protect the flight deck from unlawful interference thereby safeguarding against hijacking attempts. ASOs are currently operating on domestic flights within Australia and intend to commence international operations in the near future.

The following comments are offered by the AFP in relation to the Committee's review of aviation security in Australia:

AFP Relationship with the Department of Transport and Regional Services (DoTARS)

In April 2003, a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the Department of Transport and Regional Services (DOTARS) and the AFP was signed. The MOU provides operational clarity with respect to the roles and responsibilities of both agencies in aviation security.

Whereas the role of DOTARS is to provide the framework for preventative aviation security measures, the role of the AFP and APS is to focus on the provision of certain security related services, incident response and incident management. DOTARS and AFP/APS share the objective of strengthening the links between the preventative security, incident management and incident response elements of the overall aviation security system. In relation to incident management, the AFP/APS role is to work in concert with relevant Commonwealth, State/Territory agencies as necessary for resolution of any incident.

The AFP/APS provides technical advice to DOTARS on security incidents and related aspects of the compliance performance of aviation operators in implementing their preventative security measures. In this capacity AFP/APS may be requested by DOTARS to provide reports on the technical and operational performance of specified aviation and airport operators in meeting the standards set by DOTARS. These reports focus on the AFP/APS areas of special expertise, that is incident management and incident response.

AFP Relationship with airport operators and the airlines in relation to aviation security

The AFP/APS contributes to linkages between, on the one hand, preventative security measures implemented by private sector airport and airline operators and, on the other, the incident response and management roles played by police and other State and Commonwealth agencies. This specifically includes establishing speedy and robust incident response and management arrangements with State/Territory police agencies.

The AFP/APS also contributes to strategies through which Commonwealth security requirements are applied at airports through membership of Airport Security Committees. This provides a mechanism for input on protective security service provisions, for the provision of specialist advice on technical and operational aspects of aviation security and improving the linkages between the preventative and incident response aspects of aviation security.

The APS contributes to the implementation of Standard Security Measures (SSMs) and Additional Security Measures (ASMs) for the enhancement of aviation security in Australia. This occurs in consultation with and in support of DOTARS' regulatory responsibility. These standards are consistent with international practice and form the basis for managing aviation security in Australia.

SSMs applied by the APS include a visible deterrent through the use of armed, uniformed officers and marked vehicles performing terminal and airside patrols, alarm response to passenger screening points, and checking of the possession and validity of Aviation Security Identification Cards (ASIC) of personnel working in security sensitive areas of airports.

ASMs were implemented by the APS following the 11 September 2001 terrorist attacks in the USA. These include expansion of the APS CTFR role from eight to eleven airports, and twenty-four hour a day presence at all airports where the APS is present¹. This expansion included an additional 156 APS CTFR personnel, plus an additional twelve Explosives Detection Canine (EDC) handlers, each with a canine. This upgrade also included enhanced skills and fitness standards (Advanced First Response) for all APS CTFR personnel not already at that level, upgraded firearms, and bomb appraisal and other specialist equipment. The ASMs also included increased patrols of certain areas of airports including international terminals and aprons, international freight areas, aircraft parking areas and in the vicinity of screened passenger aircraft.

Privacy issues

The AFP/APS in the conduct of its business, receives and disseminates information and intelligence relevant to aviation security interests at major airports throughout Australia. The AFP/APS are bound by the provisions of the *Privacy Act 1988*. Through internal review mechanisms and external review such as the Courts, auditors and the Commonwealth Ombudsman, the AFP/APS is held accountable for its use and handling of information it receives in the course of its business.

Technology

The AFP/APS supports the enhancement of security measures and additional capacities to contribute to aviation security through the technology. The AFP/APS has found through many of its other functions across the law enforcement spectrum that continuing development in the application of technology is an effective supplement to human intervention. The APS currently uses technology in its operational deployments, including the use of movement sensors, alarms, remote camera applications, x-ray facilities and specialist bomb appraisal technology.

The AFP/APS also supports the examination, and use where appropriate, of emerging technology. The APS is currently trialling biometric iris technology for secure access control and identity verification in applications such as the issue and control of issue of firearms to operational officers.

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Performing the duties of Commissioner
Australian Federal Police