

Call for common sense

The Christmas Day drama that saw a Nigerian passenger arrested in Detroit for allegedly attempting to blow up a Delta/Northwest Airlines flight from Amsterdam as the aircraft prepared to land in the U.S. city has sparked a new round of debate and protests from airlines about the knee-jerk reaction of authorities to introduce new security measures.

writes **TOM BALLANTYNE**

Association of Asia Pacific Airlines (AAPA) director general, Andrew Herdman, said it would be a tragedy if public confidence in air travel "was to be undermined by ill-judged reactionary measures being taken by those entrusted with maintaining public safety".

He spoke after the U.S. and several other countries increased security at airports following the Detroit incident. The U.S. went as far as to introduce pat down searches of every passenger. However, by January 3 the U.S. Transportation Security Administration (TSA) said it would replace the original emergency requirement for 100% pat-down screening of all U.S.-bound passengers with threat-based and random screening.

Herdman said the sudden introduction by national governments of uncoordinated new security requirements, without prior consultation, makes practical implementation difficult. "The fact that such requirements are unpublished, and even in some cases unwritten, inevitably leads to inconsistency of application," he said.

"Far from reassuring passengers, the likely result is further confusion and unnecessary inconvenience. We urge governments to cooperate closely with industry and strive

for global harmonization of aviation security measures, working in conjunction with the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO)."

Herdman said the AAPA understands the need to maintain the highest levels of security in air transportation. All airlines are committed to working closely with government security agencies and other stakeholders to ensure that air travel remains safe and convenient.

"Despite recent events, public confidence in the safety of air travel remains high. Good security is all about comprehensive threat assessment and balanced risk management, not the elimination of every conceivable risk," he said.

He added that unfortunately "it is human nature that each new security incident prompts a desire to introduce yet more security measures. There is always political pressure to react, but this often smacks of

Good security is all about comprehensive threat assessment and balanced risk management, not the elimination of every conceivable risk

Andrew Herdman
Director General
AAPA

the need to be seen to be doing something rather than thinking through the appropriate action to take.

"The region's airlines believed that treating each of the six million passengers who fly every day as potential terrorists and subjecting them to virtual strip searches and pat-downs already borders on the absurd, particularly when compared to our approach to public security in other aspects of our daily lives. Doing so comes at a cost, already measured in tens of billions of dollars annually."

The International Air Transport Association (IATA) said it understood the need for government-mandated emergency security measures as a result of the attempted downing of the U.S. flight on December 25.

Giovanni Bisignani, IATA's director general, welcomed the U.S. decision to move away from

100% pat-downs. "The TSA announcement is in line with requests made by IATA in a letter to Janet Napolitano, Secretary of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) on December 29. It is critical that DHS partner with the industry to identify the most effective and efficient ways to address this challenge going forward," he said.

"Clearly, the air transport system cannot support 100% pat-down searches over the long term. However, a smaller percentage of intensive pat-downs accompanied by trace detection technology may reduce delays and achieve near-term security requirements as we focus on longer-term technology solutions to address the ongoing threat."

Bisignani added that long-term, sustainable aviation security must be globally harmonized, risk-based and have efficient processes for passengers. "One lesson already learned from this incident is the importance of combining screening procedures with intelligence," he said.

"Following the new TSA announcement, IATA calls on DHS and TSA to work with their international counterparts to look at a next generation checkpoint. This should give screeners access to effective intelligence to deliver proportional screening measures based on intelligence driven risk assessments." ■

