



Agenda Item 4: Aviation Security (AVSEC) Matters

**CARRIAGE OF DUTY FREE LIQUIDS, GELS, AND AEROSOLS IN CABIN BAGGAGE –
WORKING TOWARD A GLOBAL RESPONSE TO IMMEDIATE THREATS**

(Presented by United States)

SUMMARY

Threats to aviation continue to evolve as terrorists seek to defeat existing countermeasures and create new methods of targeting aircraft, passengers, and other aviation facilities. The response to new and evolving threats, particularly those posed by explosives in liquid, aerosol and gel form, requires international collaboration and the pursuit of harmonization of security measures to effectively counter these threats against the aviation network. We look forward to working together in the future with our international partners in the Americas to develop countermeasures against new and emerging threats.

1 Background

1.1 Civil aviation continues to be a target of terrorists due to its visibility, high profile nature, and association with national symbolism. Threats to aviation have evolved over the course of several decades and are now generally considered well-planned and sophisticated. The most recent major threat against global civil aviation surfaced in August 2006 with the plot to use liquid explosives to destroy United States-bound aircraft flying from the United Kingdom. While the threat was specific to U.S. and UK flights, it is a prime example of the ever-evolving threat against civil aviation and serves as a reminder that the aviation network remains vulnerable.

1.2 The Caribbean and Latin American regions could become areas of increasing focus for international terrorists who are searching worldwide for opportunities for safe havens, facilitation of operations, recruitment, and financial gains from smuggling and drug trafficking. Economic realities may serve as an incentive; for example, according to recently published statistics, the United States is the top source of travelers to the Caribbean overall, accounting for about 70 percent of arrivals into Jamaica.

2 Discussion

2.1 **Harmonization** Investigative information gleaned from the August 2006 threat illustrates that the August 2006 plot was directed at a number of UK–US flights; however, the threat to any one aircraft represents a threat to the entire aviation system and its industry. The joining of forces in a harmonized and synchronized manner allowed the international community to prevent a disaster that could have critically impacted the entire aviation and tourism industry.

2.2 The international community reacted decisively and swiftly to protect the traveling public. Literally overnight, security organizations on both sides of the Atlantic implemented new protocols to focus on and protect against this imminent threat. In the United States, a number of actions were taken to counter the threat – including enhanced requirements for screening of passengers and their accessible property for liquids, aerosols and gels – to combat the threat and instill confidence in the security of commercial aviation. The support of our partners in governments, airports, airlines and vendors, as well as the cooperation of the traveling public, was invaluable in achieving this effort. Our counterparts in the Americas and across the Pacific were equally responsive to the need for increased measures.

2.3 This collaboration is a very positive development in international airline security. The increased clarity and consistency of security measures helps remove confusion for passengers traveling internationally while concurrently making the detection of threat items easier at the checkpoint for all security officers.

2.5 To put the current situation in perspective, figures show that of the 30 busiest international airports (by passenger volume for 2006) in the world, 29 are located in countries which currently enforce limitations on liquids, aerosols and gels in passengers' accessible property. Based on the 2006 figures, this translates to 96.4% of travelers going through one of the 30 busiest airports being subjected to enhanced security measures for LAGs. Furthermore, these enhanced measures are to a great degree harmonized. The similar, if not identical, protocols being applied at many locations to many travelers results in greater consistency and minimizes confusion for the aviation industry and the traveling public. This represents a historic and unprecedented accomplishment. This type of success must be our blueprint going forward.

2.4 **International Cooperation** International cooperation and outreach are crucial components of any aviation security regime. Aviation is a global network, and we must continue to seek consensus as we work toward the goal of improved security across the network. Current projects and working groups in ICAO, the European Commission, the Group of 8, and the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation, among others, demonstrate the international approach to countering the threat from liquids explosives.

2.5 Building on the world's lessons learned from the implementation of new procedures to counter the threat of liquid explosives, an ICAO study group under the Secretariat recently concluded work on interim measures for security control of liquids, gels, and aerosols. The group also made significant progress on the acceptance of a Security Tamper-Evident Bag, which is intended to allow unimpeded transit of duty free items. Although these measures are temporary while we seek to find more effective means of detecting liquid explosives, the response to the threat and collaboration of States not only reduced the threat, but contributed to the building of a harmonized response.

2.6 **Technology** Moving forward, we hope to find a common solution related to duty free liquid purchases. We are seeking input from other countries as well as industry on available options. Using a risk-based approach, the U.S. will continue to focus on the explosives threat using security that is not predictable to terrorists.

2.7 We are also working diligently to research, develop, and test technology-based solutions for the screening of explosives in liquid form. While certain technologies continue to show promise for the effective detection of such explosives, the probability of detection must be balanced with the efficiency, i.e., the ability to process passengers and their accessible property in a timely manner.

2.8 Experts from various fields within the government, including the FBI and U.S. national laboratories have analyzed current information and have conducted extensive explosives testing to get a better understanding of this specific threat. These changes are intended to strengthen security while balancing human needs.

2.9 We are exploring new technologies: specifically, explosive detection systems that differentiate liquid explosives from common, benign liquids. This technology is capable of analyzing substances within a bottle by aiming sensors at the bottle opening and analyzing the intake of certain vapors.

2.10 The U.S. is currently piloting a commercially-available handheld explosive detection system and is working with the manufacturer and the national science labs to modify the technology to scan bottled liquids. We are testing bottled liquid scanners in the airport environment now.

2.11 The challenges of screening bottles for concealed explosives or flammable liquids have been explored for more than a decade, but previous technology was not operationally viable due to commonalities in materials and high alarm rates. The challenge has been two-fold: the range of physical properties of liquid explosives and potential flammable liquids, and the broad range of benign, common liquids with which people travel.

2.12 We must also remain vigilant in recognizing that no singular technology should be viewed as a “silver bullet”. In other words, technology should be applied as a tool and as one layer in a security regimen, and not as a substitute for all other countermeasures. The U.S. is enhancing security measures throughout the airport environment – more random screening of employees, additional canine patrols, stronger air cargo security measures, more rigorous identity verification, deploying more trained security officers in bomb appraisal, and screening by observation techniques.

2.13 **Duty Free.** When it comes to duty free liquid purchases, the United States continues to strive for harmonization. We understand the important economic impact this has on carriers and vendors both in the U.S. and globally. Two statistics help illustrate the impact the global measures to counter the threat from liquid explosives have had on the duty free industry. At Dubai International Airport, duty free vendors are losing approximately US\$ 20,000 per day. At Miami International Airport, the TSA collected some 9,500 pounds (4300 kilograms) of flammable liquids in January of 2007.

2.14 In the meantime, the United States has taken initial steps to minimize the inconvenience to vendors and air carriers. In certain airports, we have worked to eliminate the need for gate delivery of duty free purchases. This was accomplished by a combination of verification of the security procedures performed at the screening checkpoint; additional measures performed at the boarding gate; and consistent use of the Security Tamper-Evident Bags.

2.15 While this adjustment still requires that passengers transiting through the United States will need to place their liquid items into their hold baggage upon arrival into the U.S., it significantly reduces the burden placed on vendors and air carriers.

2.16 Before these measures can be applied on a more global basis, certain issues remain open for further discussion. Such issues include the control of the tamper evident bag to ensure it is not accessible to those who would target aviation, and verification of the security of the supply chain to ensure that duty free goods are effectively secured from the manufacturer's warehouse to the airport vendor. As strides are made in addressing these critical questions, we move closer to simplifying the process for passengers to transport their duty free purchases during their travel.

3 Conclusion

3.1 The international community continues to improve and expand on the interim procedures agreed upon and distributed by ICAO in March 2007 while ensuring the security of the traveling public. Securing the aviation sector against the threat from liquid explosives requires that we work together to explore effective means for countering the liquid threat and ensure future opportunities for collaboration as other threats emerge and the security landscape evolves. The challenge for the Caribbean, as well as its international partners, is to look for new, innovative, and inexpensive means to counter threats while meeting or exceeding international aviation security standards and practices. The United States stands ready to support local and regional efforts to collaborate, and we seek the type of communication and relationships with Caribbean States that will allow us to work together to implement countermeasures against any new and emerging threats.