How to Make Global Air Transport More Secure?

Post Conference Report: 1st Public-Private Security Conference, Berlin, 27 May 2008

(Photo: Mönch / CL)

The first public-private security conference on how to make global air transport more secure took place on 27 May 2008 in Berlin and was part of the 2008 International Berlin Air Show (ILA). The conference was launched by Karina Forster, Managing Director of IPA Network International Public Affairs (IPA Network), Berlin, and Dr Heiko Borchert, member of the IPA Network Advisory Board, and organised in cooperation with the German Ministry of the Interior, the Federal College for Security Studies and the German Aerospace Industries Association. All in all 75 participants from 8 countries attended the conference. Among the conference speakers were public sector representatives from the European Commission, the United States, Russia, Germany, and Switzerland. Industry speakers came from major companies in the security and defense sector like Thales, EADS, Diehl, Siemens Industrial Solutions and Services, Smiths Detection, Bosch Security Systems and from Berlin Airports and the European Aviation Security Center. The conference was chaired by LtGen (ret.) Kersten Lahl, President, Federal College for Security Studies, and Dr Borchert.

Why the Conference Was Organized

The public and private sectors depend on each other to tackle today's security challenges. On the one hand most parts of any nation's critical infrastructures are owned and operated by private actors. Their security provisions very much determine national preparedness in an important area of homeland security. Business in turn depends on the public sector not only to provide the broader regulatory framework for successful operations, but also on concrete information about security risks and risk assessments as well as support for emergency preparedness and response. Therefore there is a growing need for close public private interaction in order to set up and implement sustainable security strategies in the 21st century.

According to Karina Forster and Dr Heiko Borchert air transport security was the focus of the first public-private security conference for three reasons: First of all air transport belongs to the group of critical network infrastructures, which means that air transport depends on other means of transportation (e.g. roads, railways, ships) and is itself critical for other industry sectors such as logistics. In addition, airports are evolving from gateways to aviation services to multi-business operators that provide an attractive business environment for shopping malls, restaurants and other service providers. This has major implications for the security architecture of an airport, which needs to be broadened. Third, airport security requires the involvement of many different stakeholders such as intelligence, customs, policy, immigration services and private actors like airlines, airport operators, service providers, and private security companies. Joint situational awareness and joint situational understanding are key requirements for successful public-private security cooperation. This requires a networked security approach that provides a joint information environment for all the relevant stakeholders.

Policy Perspectives

After the welcome address by the chairs the first speaker of the day, Mr. Zoltan Kazatsay, Deputy Director General, Directorate-General for Energy and Transport, European Commission provided a detailed overview of the current EU regulatory approach. Mr. Kazatsay underlined that there are common basic standards for air transport security which are binding and directly applicable in all EU member states. In each EU member state there is a National Civil Aviation Security Program. The European Commission monitors compliance at all EU airports. In terms of public-private security cooperation he argued that both sectors play complementary roles. Public authorities provide intelligence and law enforcement, are in charge of policy and rulemaking and help verify implementation of legislation (e.g. through security inspections). The private sector guarantees secure and efficient air transport operations, implements legislation and guidelines and provides research and development for technical solutions.

Mr. Kazatsay was followed by Mr. Kip Hawley, Assistant Secretary of Homeland Security for the Transportation Security Administration (TSA), U.S. Department of Homeland Security. He noted that safety and security are equally important, but both are also very distinct in a practical sense. He warned that a tried and true safety compliance mentality could be detrimental to security as it could lead to an over-reliance on regulatory compliance and a "checklist mentality". This, however, is not enough to tackle today's heterogeneous nature of security risks. From a security perspective, he underlined that the transfer of TSA from the Department of Transportation to the Department of Homeland Security was very beneficial because TSA is now better connected with the world of law enforcement and intelligence. Mr. Hawley underlined the need for spending more resources on technology that is multi-purpose and mobile such as portable explosives detection units.

Following the U.S. perspective Aleksander Nikolaevich Sveshnikov, Head of the Transport Security Department, Federal Transport Supervision Service, gave an overview of Russia's regulatory approach in aviation security. He highlighted international cooperation in this area and outlined the tasks of the different Russian Agencies and Services involved in aviation security. Mr. Sveshnikov provided very interesting insights into the Coordination Center on Air Transport Security of the Russian Federation. This interagency body brings together representatives from different ministries (e.g. Transport, Foreign Affairs, Defense, Internal Affairs), security organisations (e.g. Federal Security Service, Anti-Terrorist Units) and territorial authorities. Furthermore the Center is linked with airlines and airports. In order to further advance the level of international air transport security, Mr. Sveshnikov proposed improved cooperation in the sphere of personnel training for aviation security and hardware to provide aviation security. Furthermore he suggested to include an aviation security section into all intergovernmental agreements on air communication and asked for intergovernmental agreements on joint inspection frameworks in the sphere of aviation security.

After a short networking break Dr Markus Kerber, Head of the Planning Staff, German Ministry of the Interior, spoke about the need for close public-private security interaction in Germany because of the openness of Germany's economy and its dependence on trade relations with partners. In this context he said that 45 % of the value of German foreign trade is transported as air freight, which underlines the economic importance of air transport security. Dr Kerber proposed different avenues for public-private security cooperation such as incorporating business interests into national security strategies and updating situation reports on national and international security assessments between corporate security departments and security authorities on a regular basis. In order to advance safety and security levels he also saw a need for benchmarking regulations and standards.

Corporate Perspectives

After lunch the conference turned to the corporate perspectives with Dr Manfred Bobke-von Camen, Managing Director, Human Resources, Security and Environmental Affairs, Berlin Airports. He gave an overview of the complexities of constructing the new Airport Berlin Brandenburg International BBI while maintaining business operations at the existing site of Berlin Schoenefeld Airport. He outlined

Conference Speakers in Auditorium. (Photo: Mönch / CL)

that current and future regulation needs to be closely monitored while establishing the new airport. The challenge is to remain flexible enough to incorporate possible future regulatory changes. He also addressed the critical importance of different new technologies such as the use of radio frequency identification devices (RFID) to track people, vehicles and material movements. Furthermore Dr Bobke-von Camen referred to BBI as a show case for regional S&T capabilities. To this purpose MATNAT (Modern Airport – Testbed for New, Efficient Technologies), a regional initiative to advance the use of modern technology at BBI, was initiated.

Philippe Meleard, Vice President, UK Civil Government and Homeland Security Sectors, EADS Defense & Security, and Dr Klaus Schymanietz, Vice President, Chief Technical Officer, EADS Defense & Security gave a joint presentation. In view today's multi-faceted security risks they argued that there is a growing need to enhance networked knowledge that builds on experience from the defense and security environments. Dr Schymanietz addressed the need to focus more strongly on integrated security solutions that blend human, technological and organizational aspects rather than isolated on-the-spot products that help tackle only single security issues. He also underlined the growing need to understand security not only as a product but as a process that needs to include many different stakeholders in various public and private organisations.

Dr Markus Hellenthal, CEO Thales Germany, addressed the context in which public-private security cooperation takes place and outlined the needs for action to bring together the interest of both sites. Dr Hellenthal reminded the audience that private business is much more driven by more short-sighted needs, which makes it difficult to justify investments in security. As other speakers he put major emphasis on a system of systems approach in the civil security domain and called on the industry to understand itself as a security capability enable. He argued that a security capability enabler needs to master the relevant technologies and their interplay with end user skills, should have strong expertise in systems architecture, systems integration, program and project management, sourcing and vendor management, financial controlling and quality assurance, and should be fully aware of the end users' operational requirements.

The next one to speak was Mr. Michael Langer, Vice President External Relations EU/NATO, Diehl, who argued that air transport should be seen as part of a broader intermodal understanding of different means of mass transportation. Security for mass transportation as a critical infrastructure sector requires a holistic view to deal with the interfaces between air, rail, road and sea transport. Mr. Langer provided a brief overview of the EU's 7th Framework Program with a focus on security research. In this context he also touched upon PATIN, one of the first projects sponsored under the Preparatory Action for Security Research of the European Commission (2004-2006). Led by Diehl, PATIN (see also article by Dr Scheerer in this issue) looked at different security concepts and technologies for airport terminal buildings, airfields and aircraft. Building on this experience the PATIN industry consortium, which will be reconfigured, proposes a "Roadmap to a Coherent Approach to Security in Mass Transportation and Critical Infrastructure Protection".

Security for Airports

After these general aspects and a short break the conference looked into the more specific area of security for airports. Dr Alexander Renner, Vice President Intelligent Traffic Systems, Siemens Industrial Solutions and Services, argued that the changing needs of airport security are driving security technologies in particular towards integrated approaches for people and material flow management. Dr Renner identified integrated command and control systems as key instruments to provide joint situational awareness and joint situational understanding. He also underlined that integrated command and control systems will focus attention on the system's architecture and referred to service-oriented architectures and open standards as two aspects that will become even more important in the future. With regard to future developments he referred to self-learning systems as one promising future application.

Dr Renner was followed by Bill Mawer, Vice President Strategy and Technology, Smiths Detection, who spoke about advances in checkpoint technology and Michael von Foerster, Head of Association Governmental & Public Affairs, Bosch Security Systems, who gave a comprehensive overview of the different airport protection security tasks. He made the important argument that security systems have to be customisable to fit local requirements and need to be able to operate with legacy systems. Like Dr Renner he also focused on the role of integrated command and control and presented Bosch's comprehensive Building Integration System (BIS) for integrated security management. He touched upon different Bosch products in the fields of CCTV, biometric access control and mobile outdoor surveillance systems. To round off the conference by Dr Wolfgang Rehak, Deputy Chairman, European Aviation Security Center, presented the center and its training and simulation methods.

Interplay Between Critical Infrastructure Protection and Emergency Management

The closing remarks for the conference were provided by Mr. Gerold Reichenbach, Member of the Internal Affairs Committee, German Bundestag. Mr. Reichenbach looked at the interplay between critical infrastructure protection, standards and emergency management. In particular he emphasised the need for interoperability between different security-relevant stakeholders in the air transport sector and the emergency management community. Mr. Reichenbach argued that the prime responsibility for protecting airports rests with the owners and operators, but he also underlined the general public's interest in the reliability of such critical infrastructures. Therefore he saw a need for binding statutory regulations to ensure the right level of security. In addition, he argued in favor of regulatory frameworks that set incentives for security investments.

Summarising the main findings of the conference Karina Forster and Dr Heiko Borchert argued that air transport security concepts and applications should be comprehensive in scope with regard to the diverse set of security tasks. There has to be a multi-layered and all-hazards approach to risk management. A holistic understanding of interdependencies between all stages and all stakeholders of the global air transport supply chain is needed.

Security has to be understood as part of all air transport business processes. Therefore networking between planners, decision-makers and operators is of high importance. Another key aspect is interoperability to take into account the existing equipment of different stakeholders and to make sure they can work together seamlessly across existing organisational boundaries. This requires real-time exchange of information between different security processes (e.g. passenger screening), security instruments (e.g. command and control center) and security organisations (e.g. intelligence, border police, customs, airlines) at national and international levels. In the long run there is the need for a performance-oriented approach to regulation with a view on incentives for corporate investments into safety and security of air transport supply chains.

All presentations of the 1st Public-Private Security Conference are available for download at: www.ipa-international.org/ppsc. ■