

Big issues top the agenda at major London Transport Security Expo and Conference

Aviation, maritime and supply chain security professionals from around the world will gather in London in September for Transport Security Expo and Conference 2010.

The annual event is being held this time around against the backdrop of abject failure on the part of the aviation sector to prevent Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab from attempting to blow himself up on a Detroit bound jetliner, a continued inability on the part of the maritime sector to minimise high profile incidence of piracy on the high seas and a considerable disconnect emerging between the United States and Europe over delivery of a more robust supply chain security model.

Clearly, professionals from within each of the industry sectors have much to talk about during the two-days of this leading event.

Found wanting

Security in the aviation sector is rather obviously the prime focus of conference. Abdulmutallab's attempted downing of Northwest Airlines flight 253 on Christmas Day, revealed widespread systematic failures in the security regime intended to prevent people with both the intent and means to do hard from getting on planes. Only good fortune prevented him from succeeding in blowing up the flight as it descended into Detroit Metropolitan Airport.

Despite changes made to intelligence gathering and sharing in the wake of the above incident, the airport security regime was once again shown to be a failure in May when Faisal Shahzad almost skipped the United States after attempting to set off a car bomb in Time Square in the heart of downtown New York. That he was sitting aboard Emirates flight EK202 which was preparing for take-off at the runway threshold when his presence was discovered, speaks volumes of the ability of border agencies, security and airlines to prevent wanted individuals doing a runner.

Delegates attending the Transport Security Expo aviation security conference will discover the implications of these two events on an industry caught between the rock and a hard place of delivering meaningful and effective security in the continually challenging economic environment it finds itself in. Both revision and introduction of new European Union (EU) regulation (particularly in respect to Liquid, Aerosol & Gel detection) will also impact heavily on airports in the coming couple of years, thus financing of new security initiatives will also feature. Meanwhile, the industry continues to debate the pressing need to improve the customer experience while meeting the statutory requirement to ensure appropriate security controls.

Acts of piracy surge

The EU has acknowledged that the pirate threat in the Horn of Africa region is "an expanding phenomenon", both in terms of level of activity and range.

Rear Admiral Peter Hudson, Operation Commander EU Naval Force (Navfor), enumerated the continuing threat of piracy in the region, when he recently stated that a huge surge in Somali pirate attacks meant that activity in March was double that of the three months from September to November last year. Hudson says that the priority for international navies is now to increase co-operation and concentrate forces to counter this new swarming tactic on the part of the pirates.

The North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) Shipping Centre (NSC) offers maritime world

delegates attending Transport Security Expo & Conference 2010, the opportunity to take part in a unique tactical floor exercise which will follow a vessels' voyage from departure in Rotterdam to the attack point in the Gulf of Aden, through its capture and on to its eventual release.

This highly specialised full-day exercise offers much in the way of both mission critical and real world advice designed to aid in the safe passage of shipping through such pirate infested waters.

The International Maritime Organisation (IMO) conference will complement the tactical floor exercise with its clear focus on an examination of both current and future international policy and regulations in respect of maritime security and how this impinges on the shipping industry.

With incidence of pirate attack continuing to climb and becoming increasingly wide ranging, including within the so called Internationally Recommended Transit Corridor (IRTC) established to aid in safe passage through the Gulf of Aden, the importance of these two key conference streams deliver vital information to the maritime sector.

Supply Chain Disconnect

August will see yet another deadline missed to deliver effective security for belly-hold freight on passenger flights.

This news was broken by Gale Rossides, Acting Administrator of the Transportation Security Administration (TSA), in testimony before the US House of Representatives Appropriations Committee subcommittee on Homeland Security in early March.

Rossides told the subcommittee that while 100 percent screening of belly-hold cargo on domestic flights would be achieved by the deadline, it would take up to another two years before the same could be said for inbound international belly-hold cargo. But others at the regulatory level elsewhere in the world argue that this time line may well be over optimistic.

EU regulation 300/2008 incorporates three specific and tough US requirements on supply chain security - independent validation of known consignors; a mandatory EU cargo database embracing known and unknown or unaccredited consignors and a distinction between direct and transit cargo - to ensure compliance.

Eckard Seeböhm, Head of Aviation Security, European Commission (EC) admits that there are huge challenges ahead for the aviation industry and the supply chain in meeting these regulatory requirements. He is also on record stating that the US may just have to accept an alternative (such as sniffer dogs) to x-raying every item of belly-hold freight, given that the piece level 100 percent screening requirement favoured by the TSA could potentially bring air-freight movement between Europe and the US to a grinding halt if a hardware only solution were to be rigidly enforced.

With EC regulation 300/2008 having just become law and much debate consequently still raging between regulators and within the industry over how best to achieve compliance, the key issues will be outlined and discussed in detail at the forthcoming Transport Security Expo & Conference.

The event is expected to bring focus to the fundamental issues the regulation raises, help in identifying who within the extended supply chain has responsibility for what and attempt to answer the vexed at what cost question.

Principal speakers from the International Air Transport Association (IATA), Association of European Airlines (AEA), Swissport, CEVA Logistics, Cargolux and DHL amongst others, will be on hand to share knowledge and invite in-depth discussion on achieving a 100 percent cargo screening regime within a one-stop security environment.

Given that so many major security issues still need to be addressed, Transport Security Expo &

Conference 2010, being held 14-15 September at London Olympia, is the must attend event in the aviation, maritime and supply chain security sectors.

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