



# SECURITY CULTURE IN THE AVIATION SECTOR

Law enforcement perspective from Portugal

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### Abstract

In this article we discuss the role of security culture as a tool to prevent and combat threats in the aviation sector and in an international airport environment. Against the backdrop of the pressuring challenges that are specific to this sector, we stress the importance of **police and law enforcement** as a privileged partner. Firstly, we discuss threats to aviation, including the insider threat. Then we comment on the importance of **security being everyone's responsibility**, including community involvement and the role of law enforcement at airports. To conclude, we address the importance of fostering strong and effective security culture plans in the aviation sector.

**Keywords:** security culture, insider threat, civil aviation, law enforcement, cooperation.



### Summary:

Introduction

I.Threats and Insider Threat

II.Security is everyone's responsibility

III.Airport community involvement

IV.Encouraging reports to law enforcement officers and their role

V.And Internal Security Culture Policy

VI.Final considerations

References

*“Innovation and best practices can be sown throughout an organization – but only when they fall on fertile ground.” – Marcus Buckingham*



## Introduction

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ICAO<sup>1</sup> defines security culture as “a set of norms, beliefs, values, attitudes and assumptions that are inherent in the daily operation of an organization and are reflected by the actions and behaviours of all entities and personnel within the organization.”

This definition applies to the [Polícia de Segurança Pública](#), who from the outset are trained to develop a robust security culture in all police departments, assuming that it will make them more efficient and productive.

As we all know, there is no perfect organization. But if we put aside the old idea of working in silos, surely we can do much more to improve and foster an effective security culture in the civil aviation community. Namely amongst airports, police, airlines, handlers and many other aviation stakeholders.

Acknowledging our local experience, we present some ideas and considerations from a **police officer perspective**:

## Threats and insider threat

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Of all forms of transportation, aviation continues to fascinate criminals and terrorists. It is recognized that when an airport or airplane is attacked, it will draw the most attention from the public and the media (Price, J. e Jeffrey, F., 2016)<sup>2</sup>. And, as we all know very well, this sector has always faced numerous and challenging threats.

However, to ensure the security of all passengers, staff and the general public, it is necessary to adopt all possible and legal mitigation measures to reduce the risk to which they are exposed.

More recently, COVID-19 has also changed reality. It has brought us another new item to deal with, in our already full list of aviation risks we need to manage. Nowadays, with less passengers and reduced activity, airport employees (insiders) may also reduce their attention and may be seduced to commit unlawful acts and events.

The **insider threat** is real and it can cause significant impacts to any country, government, airport, airline, and many other aviation stakeholders, in the world. It is a major issue that must be well addressed.

AIRPOL<sup>3</sup> defines an insider as: “An individual who has, or had, authorized access and/or knowledge of an organizations assets, and uses their access or knowledge, whether maliciously or non-maliciously, to act in a way that could negatively affect the organization<sup>4</sup>.”

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<sup>1</sup> ICAO “Toolkit on enhancing security culture” 2018

<sup>2</sup> Price, J. e Jeffrey, F. (2016) - 3rd edition. “Practical Aviation Security: Predicting and Preventing Future Threats” (page 58).

<sup>3</sup> AIRPOL is the Law Enforcement Network created to build synergies for police and border guard units working in the fight against crime in the European aviation sector (<https://www.airpoleuropa.eu/>)

<sup>4</sup> AIRPOL “Insider threat mitigation in the airport community - A manual for law enforcement units” - 2018.



For AIRPOL, there are two main categories of insiders:

MALICIOUS (intent to do harm)	NON-MALICIOUS (no intent to cause harm)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Terrorist</li> <li>•Criminal</li> <li>•Disgruntled employee or others with intent to do harm</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Ignorant</li> <li>•Complacent</li> <li>•Others with no intent to do harm</li> </ul>

Airport leaders must adopt very clear rules for employees that are transferred, or leave, the organization. For example, withdrawing immediately any privileges and airport access and reminding employees of their obligations of confidentiality.

The majority of employees at airports are not a threat to their organizations. However, "Insider threat has always been a concern and events highlighted over the past few years demonstrate the issue is not going away and possibly escalating. Internet access with smart phones and social media has opened up a new world of vulnerability, both from terrorist and crime recruiting techniques, to threats to technology. Airports should look to technology to aid in tracking trends and behaviours that may lend to insider threat issues."(Price, J. e Jeffrey, F. - 2016)<sup>5</sup>.



The aviation sector will continue to be a very attractive target to terrorists, because it is one of the most dynamic and challenging activities, and for that the risk analysis is much more complex.

In order to mitigate these threats, the Portuguese Civil Aviation Authority (ANAC) - an active and helpful partner of ICAO - have developed and implemented a National Aviation Security Instruction (ISAC). This ISAC includes national common rules for the Portuguese aviation sector, **incorporating security culture policy** in the security programs of all organizations.

<sup>5</sup> Price, J. e Jeffrey, F. (2016) - 3rd edition. "Practical Aviation Security: Predicting and Preventing Future Threats" (page 274).



## Security is everyone's responsibility

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In airports "The complexity and size of the industry also make it an attractive environment for crime" (Price, J. e Jeffrey, F. - 2016<sup>6</sup>).

In recent insider threat events in the aviation sector, there were some observable behaviours that could have been spotted before the action was committed. For that reason, we believe we must develop **strong and diverse communication campaigns**, in order to improve the **knowledge** and **awareness** of employees and passengers. Knowing their security role, and the consequences of their negligence, are also essential. Our experience has shown that the majority of people who work or use the airport, when **well informed** and **prepared**, are willing to help and to comply with the security procedures.

Therefore, we believe it is vital to instil a strong concept that **security is everyone's responsibility**, and that every employee must feel integrated and committed to their mission and willing to contribute to their organization.

Airport security must be seen as a strong chain of trust that must never be broken. And, if it happens with intention, it must have serious consequences for the perpetrators.

## Airport community involvement

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In our activity, we believe that it is vital to bring together all aviation stakeholders, in a problem-solving model approach, allocating part of the responsibility to the airport community itself.

Firstly, it is necessary to develop **trustful** and **genuine relations** with the local airport community, understanding that this is the only way to succeed.

Secondly, it is vital to create a **special and dedicated group** to deal with security culture in the organizations. Having professionals, with all necessary skills and competencies, willing to implement the internal security culture policy is key. Without this basic **knowledge**, we will never be able to promote and foster a very strong security culture in our airport and/or organization.

This cooperation with the airport community will give us new and intelligent ways to address problems and risks. We will gain fantastic knowledge and information, and subsequently we will be able to find the best solutions for our daily routines, decisions and procedures. Airport community involvement will also help in the previous detection and identification of concrete signs of crime, radicalization and even terrorism.

In this process, it is vital that all **airport leaders** understand that **people** are their most important asset. As each one of them belong to a larger airport community, and one person can be vital in an insider threat event or acts of unlawful interference. In that sense, **recognizing and rewarding efforts** made by employees, promoting and supporting the implementation of an internal security culture policy is vital for the success.

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<sup>6</sup> Price, J. e Jeffrey, F. (2016) - 3rd edition. "Practical Aviation Security: Predicting and Preventing Future Threats" (page 41).



## Encouraging reports to law enforcement and their role

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ICAO Annex 17 - Security - Chicago Convention, relates directly to the security of international civil aviation operations, and its Recommendation "4.4.5 refers that – Each Contracting State should ensure that practices are established at airports and on board aircraft to assist in the identification and resolution of suspicious activity that may pose a threat to civil aviation."

The Airport Council International (ACI) handbook "Addressing Insider Threat<sup>7</sup>" states that "Security culture can be promoted together with a just or "no blame" culture. (...) This allows the person reporting to be exempted from punishment under specific circumstances, in spite of wrongful conduct."

The Framework for an Aviation Security Management System (SeMS)<sup>8</sup> defends that "Regardless of the source or method of reporting, once the information is received, it should be stored in a manner suitable for easy retrieval and analysis. Access to the submitted reports should be restricted to protect the identity of the source, where appropriate. The security reporting system should include a feedback system to the reporting person on the outcome of the occurrence analysis."

It is also vital to report security vulnerabilities at airports. It is a crucial aspect of the success. Employees in the frontline of duty are well-suited to detect and to report any kind of risk indicators. For that reason, fostering reports should be mandatory and promoted.

In the Portuguese Airport Police, we have been engaging and exchanging information with a variety of partners and stakeholders at airports. We have been exchanging a lot of precious information on a daily basis, which has led to several arrests and convictions for crimes committed inside the Portuguese airports. In that sense, **sharing knowledge and expertise between police and stakeholders** in aviation sector is vital to the mitigation of risks, and surely is an excellent contribution to the mitigation of threats.

The **Public Security Police (PSP)** is the oldest police organization in Portugal, and is responsible for public security of all the airports in the country, including Azores and Madeira islands. Interesting steps have been taken in this area of **insider threat** and **security culture**, in close partnership with international law enforcement organizations, like AIRPOL. Other initiatives have been taken with several national stakeholders, for example:

- Since 2015, programmes against radicalization and terrorism at Portuguese airports have been implemented, with the precious collaboration of the airport administrators;
- Since 2018, also in collaboration with the airport administrators, the PSP has implemented programmes against insider threat at Portuguese airports;

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<sup>7</sup> ACI Addressing Insider Threat Handbook - First Edition 2019

<sup>8</sup> In [https://publicapps.caa.co.uk/docs/33/CAP%201223%20SeMS%20Framework\\_Feb18\\_corrections.pdf](https://publicapps.caa.co.uk/docs/33/CAP%201223%20SeMS%20Framework_Feb18_corrections.pdf) UK Department of Transport - Framework for an Aviation Security Management System (consulted in 25-11-2020).



- Additional and practical training on the recognition of explosives and their precursors was provided to airport security staff;
- An online survey to airport staff, to assess their opinion about radicalization, insider threat and security culture was carried out;
- The effectiveness of employee vetting procedure in the Portuguese airports was optimized; and
- An increased presence in several national and international forums and seminars of civil aviation security.



The **knowledge and experience of law enforcement** in every country is very important to the aviation sector. And if combined with the knowledge and experience of security managers, when all of them genuinely cooperate, you will certainly foster an effective security culture, with spectacular results.

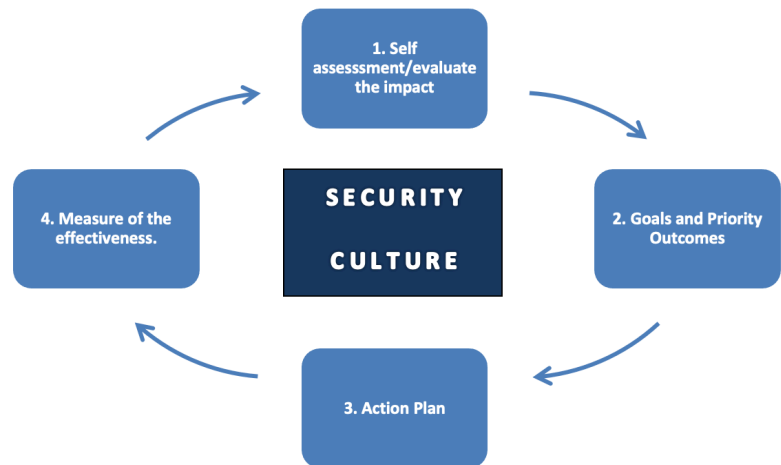
## Internal Security Culture Policy

Critical for success is that every airport **senior leader supports** completely, and feels engaged, with the internal security culture policy. Leaders need to give the necessary resources to organizations, setting and leading by example, and having the local law enforcement as partners.

Taking in consideration the ANAC ISAC, four stages are needed for the successful implementation of security culture.

The initial self-assessment is a very important stage. It defines what critical assets you want to protect and how you are going to achieve that goal.

Then, it will be necessary to include initial and recurrent **training** and/or **awareness sessions**. As well as **continuous learning activities** about security culture, and many other practical actions. A well-designed and **targeted communication and security awareness campaign** is also vital.





On the other hand, the internal security culture policy should contribute to a clear definition of everyone's role in security, including a job description that everyone must clearly understand. To finish, the internal security culture policy should be reviewed at least every 2 years.

For detailed guidelines, and in order to successfully implement this internal security culture policy, we strongly recommend the *ICAO Security Culture Toolkit* as created by the ICAO Aviation Security Panel's Working Group on Training.

## Final considerations

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This article offered some insights into how we can help develop and implement security culture in the aviation sector. But, we have to consider that there is no *"one size fits all"* approach. We have to adapt a variety of different procedures, measures and best practices, best suitable for our organization, in order to be successful.

Nevertheless, your efforts will be worthwhile. A robust internal security culture policy will increase your multi-layered, risk-based, and intelligence-driven aviation strategy, and help you in the mitigation of your threats.

To conclude, we believe that it is vital for all aviation stakeholders to foster a ***"sense of urgency for security culture"***, in every organization, in order to create a strong and effective security culture.

## Security culture is the glue that unites everything!

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