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PROTECTION | PREVENTION | PREPAREDNESS | RESPONSE | RESILIENCE | RECOVERY



TRAVEL SAFETY

RECOGNISING RISKS & HOSTILE SITUATIONS

Humanitarian cargo logistics; Interviews with Waze & DJI; Social media & resilient communities; Data breaches & reporting dilemmas; Modelling critical infrastructure interdependencies; Maritime future of urban disaster response; Situational prevention & terrorism; Urban resilience in Skopje; Fake alarms & mass alerts; Hybrid attacks

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Editor in Chief

Emily Hough
emily@crisis-response.com

Business Development Director

Kirsty McKinlay-Stewart
kirsty@crisis-response.com

Global Operations Director

David Stewart
david@crisis-response.com

Design & Production

Chris Pettican
chris@crisis-response.com

News and Blog research

Lina Kolesnikova
lina@crisis-response.com

Web Support

Neil Moultrie
neil@crisis-response.com




Proofreading assistance

Claire Sanders

Subscriptions

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subs@crisis-response.com

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The UK's Digital, Culture, Media and Sport

Committee has published

its first interim report on its *Disinformation and Fake News Inquiry*, with its findings confirming the creeping, yet acute malaise that so many have been feeling for so long. Damian Collins, MP, Chair of the Committee, noted: "We are facing nothing less than a crisis in our democracy – based on the systemic manipulation of data to support the relentless targeting of citizens, without their consent, by campaigns of disinformation and messages of hate."

We all know rumours and fake news are easily spread and rapidly amplified online, and they can have appalling consequences – on p3 you can read how false allegations spread on a social messaging app, have contributed to mob attacks and murders in India.

The interim report notes that murky forces have attempted to influence many elections around the world. Indeed, disinformation has been called an "active threat" and is a tactic of unconventional warfare in its use of technology to disrupt, magnify and distort our views of the truth. On p43 Ørjan Karlsson discusses such hybrid warfare and attacks.

There are even more disturbing implications to this manipulation and malign influence, as Lina Kolesnikova notes on p46. She reveals how false alarms in mass warning systems could create panic, mistrust or even galvanise specific groups into acts of civil unrest or revolution. Whether accidental or deliberate, the consequences could be dire.

Along with the documented human tragedies of this pernicious trend, the values of trust and truth are also significant casualties.

So, what can be done to counter this tsunami of disinformation and misinformation? As a start, we *all* need to rediscover our natural scepticism. We need to question, check facts and overcome our ingrained biases to believe what we want to believe. The Committee report is correct to say that digital literacy should become the "fourth pillar of education" alongside reading, writing and maths.

No single body can reclaim the narrative of truth and transparency alone. It behoves us all – governments, organisations, institutions, service providers, the media and, critically, individuals – to work together. Or else we risk entering an age of denialism, characterised by sociologist Keith Kahn-Harris as: "A dystopian vision of a world unmoored, in which nothing can be taken for granted and no one can be trusted." And this truly would be a global crisis of epic magnitude.



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Team Rubicon

Spotting trouble at airports



Casey Brunelle details the story of the Airport Watch programme and the invaluable support that volunteers are providing for low-cost, sustained public safety at airports

Since the moment that humanity achieved sustained flight, communities of passionate spotters with a personal interest in observing, logging, and documenting aircraft and their operations, have existed.

In today's globalised economy, commercial aviation is one of the most critical pillars upon which modern transportation, trade, and communications are based. In a time of risk-saturation, instantaneous and grassroots communications, austerity measures, and the increasingly effective innovation of terrorist networks and organised crime, solutions to improve aviation security remain sought-after throughout the industry.

Commercial aircraft, airport infrastructure, and the millions of passengers who fly every day, are attractive targets for terrorists. No two attacks are identical, and no one-size-fits-all policy will render aviation completely immune to the threat of terrorism – even a failed attack can be deemed to be a success.

Enhancing security at airports involves 'hard' countermeasures – improving pre-boarding screening devices and scanners, employee identity passes for airside access, trusted traveller programmes, hardened barriers in and around airport infrastructure and increased physical

A Vancouver Airport Watch volunteer observes drop-off areas. Vancouver's airport authority proudly states on its website: "Our volunteers are active community members, who are dedicated to safety and security and have demonstrated a commitment to contributing to YVR's award-winning safety culture."

Vancouver Airport Authority

patrols by security personnel and law enforcement. Streamlined intelligence sharing among civilian, police, and military organisations, domestically and abroad, has also proven successful in helping to mitigate threats.

While the prospect of terrorism remains most prominent in the minds of both policymakers and the public, more common and mundane hazards can be found within day-to-day airport operations – wildlife within the perimeter or conventional wear-and-tear in infrastructure, as well as negligent or criminal acts by members of the public.

Reactive and traditional countermeasures go a long way towards preventing and responding to terrorism and other security threats, but a holistic and proactive solution that discerns and addresses the everyday hazards posed to modern airports could prove to be the most effective and sustained investment in long-term and cost-efficient public safety.

Founded in 1999 by proactive officers from the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) and the Ottawa Police Service at the Ottawa International Airport, Airport Watch (AW) utilises community members who have an interest in aviation and airport operations as an additional layer of eyes and ears in and around the airport perimeters.

AW volunteers are not security contractors, law

enforcement or airport employees. Volunteers do not act as policing entities, they are not granted special privileges of access to restricted areas (unless previously arranged), nor do they replace the existing security apparatus of an airport. Rather, they are aviation enthusiasts of any demographic and professional background who spend hours every week in and around publicly accessible areas of airports observing aircraft, often with high-grade cameras and binoculars. Many are employed in professional contexts in and around the airport, some are professional photographers or writers, others are off-duty or retired military or law enforcement. The volunteers are united by their common interest and passion for aviation. In many cases, these individuals know more about the airlines, aircraft components and operations, and the airport infrastructure and perimeter than many of those formally employed within the industry.

In some airports throughout North America – including those that boast some of the largest or most proactive AW groups – traditional security once viewed these spotters with inherent suspicion. The programme, however, readily acknowledges these community members as key players in public safety awareness and crime prevention.

The AW programme soon grew from Ottawa to airports at Montreal (Trudeau and Mirabel), and Toronto's Pearson International Airport, which is the busiest airport in Canada. Currently, the AW programme stretches across Canada, with groups operating out of Vancouver, Kelowna, Calgary, Toronto, Ottawa, Montreal, and Halifax. In the US, AW maintains large groups at Chicago's O'Hare and Midway airports, Minneapolis-Saint Paul, Fort Lauderdale and Miami. Fledgling groups are in the process of being formally initiated as far south as Dallas/Fort Worth (Texas) and as far north as Iqaluit (Nunavut), where the relatively remote geography and cold weather do little to discourage a dedicated community of spotters.

Following the continued expansion of the programme over a decade, 2010 saw the formation of the International Airport Watch Association (IAWA) in Chicago by law enforcement officers who had assisted in the establishment and co-ordination of AW groups in Canada and the US. These officers represented the efforts of Canada's RCMP, as well as the US-based Chicago Police Department, Bensonville Police Department, and the Minneapolis-Saint Paul International Airport Police Department in creating a formal network of AW groups in support of safer airports through community awareness and local stakeholder support, often operating with the direct endorsement and support from the relevant airport authorities and law enforcement agencies.

IAWA does not operate as a centralised office, rather it serves as a collective forum to share best practices, co-ordinate activities among individual groups domestically and internationally, and as a centre of excellence working alongside spotter communities to establish AW groups across the world. In line with the mantra that there can be no one-size-fits-all policy prescription in aviation security and public safety, IAWA advises on how to custom tailor the AW groups to match the demands, layouts, management styles, and operating language of each airport individually. IAWA executives are volunteers and its members are former or

current law enforcement and military; the association maintains personal and active relationships with the co-ordinators of the North American groups, as well as with like-minded programmes throughout the world.

AW acts as a formalised and vetted neighbourhood watch. For each of the individual groups, the law enforcement agency of the jurisdiction performs background checks and issues photo identification. The volunteer recruit agrees to participate in AW activities, workshops, meetings and training to the best of their ability and availability according to the directions, procedures, and policies established by the local airport authority, as well as the AW group, to maintain their membership in good standing and complete sufficient patrol hours for each reporting year. In most cases, such patrols are composed of typical spotter activities, often parking in the public access areas outside of the airport perimeter and observing aircraft.

Other possible strategies include driving around the airport exterior through roadways and parking lots or, with the approval of the airport authority, patrolling on foot in public access areas of the terminal, multi-storey car parks and other open facilities.

Critical, urgent assistance

The volunteers of each group adhere to policies passed down by airport management, via the group's respective co-ordinator. All volunteer activities are consistent with those enjoyed by any spotter anywhere in the world and there are many documented cases in which volunteers have provided critical, often urgent, assistance to airport authorities.

Rather than relying exclusively on traditional physical patrols by airport security or local law enforcement, the consistent presence of spotters with a vested interest in the safe operation of airport infrastructure, acts as a significant deterrent against crime and dangers to public safety.

A key directive for all AW volunteers is that a member must never put themselves or others in harm's way, or respond directly to potential security threats or safety risks. This is encapsulated in the programme's motto of 'Observe, record, report'. Volunteers are provided with contact information for the airport operations personnel, and all urgent and non-urgent matters are relayed to the civil authority via telephone or email. AW members are provided with routine training seminars on how to recognise suspicious activity and spot

A member of Ottawa Airport Watch at the perimeter, displaying some of the group's insignia for ease of identification, spreading awareness of the programme, and acting as a deterrence against potentially illegal or unsafe activities

Shahriar Shah



potentially urgent safety risks – for example, holes in perimeter fences, open or unlocked gates, foreign object debris (FOD) inside the perimeter fence, large birds on the runway or near the approach lines, overgrown vegetation that affects any of the infrastructure, or dumped garbage and the illegal use of lasers and drones.

Relatively small amounts of funding are provided by the airport authority, law enforcement or local corporate sponsors for most AW groups. When on duty, volunteers display their photo identification and often don approved and uniform clothing. In some cases, resources are provided for vehicle door magnets, stickers and flags.

Proactive relationships

The crux of a functioning and co-ordinated AW programme lies in effective and proactive personal relationships. Space for meetings in conference rooms is routinely provided, as well as tours of otherwise restricted airside property, including control towers, hangars and security facilities. Local law enforcement, airport employees and specialist units, such as aircraft protective officers and K9 units, provide training seminars on security awareness, signs of suspicious activity, local response measures.

In the 19 years since the first AW group was established, and the eight years since the IAWA was formed, the programme has seen rapid and sustained expansion throughout North America, and has inspired similar efforts in the UK and Australia, as well as an Airport Watch group at the USAF's Ramstein Airbase in Germany, which is employed in conjunction with its Eagle Eyes general awareness programme. In partnership with the RCMP's Border Integrity units, Canadian AW groups near the Canada-US border assist with the federal border interdiction programme at smaller,

often rural, airports, supporting law enforcement efforts to deter drug and contraband smuggling.

Groups who adhere to the structure of the Ottawa Model now stretch from the Gulf of Mexico to the Arctic and the Pacific to the Atlantic. The programme has been formally recognised as a best practice of the RCMP since 2000, has been praised by local law enforcement agencies across the world, and has received recognition from the International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO), InterPort Police, BorderPol and many other institutions.

The Ottawa Model has served as the inspiration for several like-minded networks outside of North America. The Australian Federal Police (AFP) directly oversees and administers a community-driven public safety programme at each of Australia's major airports. This AFP variant is strictly of an awareness-building nature, often geared specifically to existing airport employees, rather than a formalised, dedicated, and vetted community volunteer group.

In the UK, Sussex Police established the first Aviation Watch scheme at London Gatwick Airport as a crime prevention programme, and over the last decade, the programme has spread to many major airports in the UK, with thousands of spotters across the country.

IAWA maintains several corporate sponsors and partners, many of which play leading roles in improving aviation security and public safety. For instance, a UK-based software company has supported IAWA over the years, including showcasing its software package for focusing response to stand-off weapons at airports.

For airports in North America and elsewhere, the AW concept has proven to help enhance public safety and crime prevention. As a low-cost, sustained, and effective community-driven effort of volunteers, the sky is the limit for the AW programme.

Author

CASEY BRUNELLE is an intelligence and strategic studies consultant with extensive experience in both the public and private sectors. He is a graduate of the Department of Politics and International Studies at the University of Cambridge, as well as the School of International Development at the University of Ottawa. Casey currently serves as the Strategic Advisor for the IAWA

■ The founder of Airport Watch and Director of IAWA, RCMP Sgt. Jacques Brunelle (ret), can be contacted at: airportwatch@gmail.com

■ www.internationalairportwatch.org

Escorted Airport Watch members near the active runway at Chicago's O'Hare International Airport, enjoying one of the perks often granted to programme volunteers by the local airport authority and law enforcement

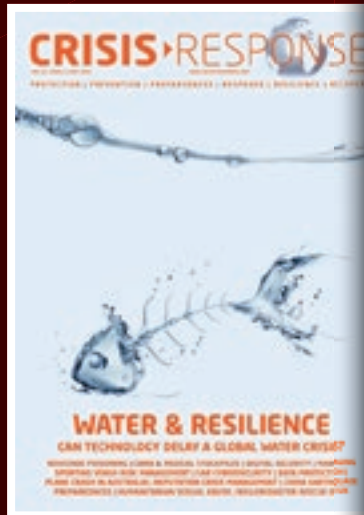
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