



Press Briefing by Secretary Napolitano and International Air Transport Association Director General Bisignani on Aviation Security

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Mr. Bisignani: Good afternoon to everybody, and it has been my honor to welcome the U.S. Secretary of Homeland Security Janet Napolitano to our head office here in Geneva.

We have just concluded a very important meeting. I could call it an historic meeting on aviation security.

Security, as you know, is our top priority. It's a top priority now for governments and for all airlines in the world. Secretary Napolitano has brought a fresh, a new approach to aviation security which is very greatly appreciated by all IATA airlines.

IATA represents 230 airlines from 120 countries, carrying 2.2 billion passengers a year. Secretary Napolitano recognizes that the threats in this industry are complex and are global. More importantly, Secretary Napolitano is taking a completely different approach from her predecessors. She understands that industry and governments must work together. This is not just words. But today's meeting is proof of what I've just mentioned.

We are living in a very difficult world. Security is now at the top of the priority of governments and of airlines. The U.S. cannot keep terrorists outside its borders without the close consultation of governments and airlines, foreign and domestic. And airlines cannot keep terrorists off our planes without the good work and cooperation of government. The events of Christmas Day remind us of this fact.

Coming to our offices to engage IATA is an impressive demonstration of Secretary Napolitano's commitment to engage the industry to find workable and effective solutions to limit as much as we can the hassle of the passengers, while remembering that number one priority today is security. This is a major step in the right direction.

Of course a single meeting cannot solve the many many challenges that we face. On behalf of the airline industry, I presented the Secretary with several ideas on how we can work together to make global aviation more secure. I was there with 27 airlines representing all the regions where we operate giving a global presentation of issues that we face.

I raised to the Secretary several points, starting with working together on a continuous basis so that security policies can be written with the benefit of operational expertise. Airlines bring expertise on how we can implement security measures.

Second, we asked for alignment of security requirements with the industry execution capabilities, respecting the laws of different countries. In the conversation that followed the presentation, some CEOs from different countries gave clear examples of certain requirements that they could not carry out under local laws.

Third, we discussed making passenger data collection and sharing more efficient. Airlines collect an enormous number of information that we give to the U.S. and other governments. I think that we should be able with DHS to create a simpler way to transmit passenger information, at least creating a single program for data exchange. This would benefit the airlines and the DHS.

Fourth, we must get governments to harmonize their approach across borders. The Secretary is just coming from a very important meeting with her European colleagues which is a good sign. We must ensure that one country's requirements do not conflict another country's legislation. From the airlines perspective, we gave the example that you are quite familiar with, that of PNR data. We dealt with this for two years, battling between having a fine in the US or going to jail because we were not following the privacy law in many European countries.

Finally, we discussed the importance of following up with technology, with a next generation of security checkpoints that could combine the best technology with intelligence information. The threats have changed. We must look for bad people, not only for bad objects. If we are able to combine those two pieces of information, the screening process will be much more effective.

But let me emphasize that more important than the agenda of this very useful meeting is the new approach that President Obama and the Secretary have brought to international security of aviation.

I think that this new administration has brought a sea change to aviation security by proactively engaging the industry to combine government intelligence with airline operational expertise. This is the way forward in which we will be able to battle and win the battle against terrorists in aviation.

Thank you very much, Ms. Secretary.

Secretary Napolitano: Thank you very much. We just concluded what I think were some very productive discussions between myself, my team, and other individuals from the United States and the International Air Transport Association. Giovanni, thank you very much for pulling this meeting together and having such great representation from around the world of all different types of carriers so that we really begin looking afresh at international aviation security standards - how we are implementing them, and what we need to do from an operational standpoint - recognizing that government and the carriers themselves are working together and need to work together to continue to improve the air environment.

As Giovanni just referenced, yesterday I was in Spain meeting with the European Union Justice and Home Affairs Ministers. There, we reached a consensus on a way forward to strengthen our international aviation system with respect to information sharing; with respect to best practices sharing; with respect to investment in science and technology; with respect to increasing international aviation standards; and with respect to providing technical assistance and other types of assistance throughout the globe - not just within one country or the other - recognizing that the international aviation system is global in nature and that a traveler who gains access to it at any one point potentially can have access to the entire system. That is why it was so essential to leave that consensus with the EU and come right to IATA which represents airlines and countries around the world. They had presentations from around the world. I will leave here to meet with the head of ICAO [International Civil Aviation Organization] - which is the UN aviation body - because the United States view is that we must move globally; we must move internationally; we must move government and private sector; and we must move as an international community of responsible nations to deal with any threats to aviation security.

Immediately after the December 25th attack on Flight 253, we recognized that this was an international incident. It may have been a flight to the United States, but it was a flight that originated abroad, in Amsterdam. The passenger had actually started in Nigeria. There were passengers from 17 countries on that flight who would have perished had Umar Farouk's attempt been successful.

An international incident merits an international response in at least four areas. One - information collection and analysis; two - information sharing and collaboration and passenger vetting; three - international security standards; and four - development and deployment of information and screening technology.

I was with my EU colleagues yesterday - I'm here with the private sector today. I've met with the U.S.-flagged carriers already. And we have invitations now in Abuja, Nigeria, to meet at the African Regional level under the auspices of ICAO to discuss these issues. We have meetings set forth for the Western Hemisphere that will occur in Mexico City and be co-hosted by Mexico and Brazil. And we are moving forward internationally - globally - all working together to make sure that we have one consensus, one number one standard, one number and one goal - and that is the safety of any air passenger from whatever place their flight originates to whatever destination it is intended.

With that I think we're both pleased to take questions.

Question: Swiss Television. What is your answer regarding the privacy concern with the body scanning, especially in countries where maybe bodies, female bodies are a very sensitive issue.

Secretary Napolitano: Two things. First, I think it's important to recognize that the scanning technology itself has already evolved from the original iteration which was the focus of so many privacy concerns. One common device that is used masks the face. In the United States we mask the face. The reader is not even at the place where the scanner is so you can't associate anything with an individual. No records are made or kept of the actual screening.

Amsterdam uses another type of device where you actually only get like a cartoon stick figure that merely points out where someone in secondary screening should do some enhanced searching.

So the technology has advanced very, very rapidly from a privacy point of view as well as an efficiency point of view.

That being said - this is not about use of body scanners or not. This is not something that the United States is seeking as an international mandate. There are many many things that go into safety in the air environment, beginning with good intelligence

collection, good intelligence analysis, good information sharing, good passenger information sharing, good procedures at airports that can include explosives detection - can include behavior detection officers, can include canines and magnetometers. So there's a whole mix of tools in that particular tool box of which the body scanner is only one.

So the idea is - moving forward - consensus on the continued need for emphasis on security standards to provide assistance to nations where meeting standards is difficult from a resource perspective and other perspectives, and to simply put those kinds of scanners as one option available to countries, that they may choose to use or not. In the United States we're going to move to use them.

Question: BNA, Washington. This is a question more to Mr. Bisignani.

I know these are early days and you don't have a consensus yet on what is needed in terms of heightened security measures, but do you have any inkling of what this might cost, who will pay for it, and what this might mean for your already pretty dismal prospects in 2010? I think you're going to lose some five billion in your industry this year you project, and what this might have in terms of making that figure even bigger. Thank you.

Mr. Bisignani: We are always stressing that security is a government responsibility and we need the government to pay the bills. Unfortunately, we have seen that not many governments are paying the bill. The airlines have paid last year is \$5.9 billion. In an industry that's losing a lot of money this is a big issue. But it is important that all expenses must have a cost/benefit analysis. This is what we would like to see.

Referring to what the Secretary just mentioned regarding screening, I think it's important to think of screening as part of a risk-based approach. We must combine the new screening technology with some intelligence. This means having some information on the passenger—the origin of the passenger, the way that the ticket was paid for, and other behaviors. Having this data to hand, we can take a certain kind of risk-based approach at the moment that we screen the passengers.

Question: Madame Secretary, I represent Kuwait News Agency.

I'd like to ask you, how could you avoid racial profiling when 14 of the countries chosen to be scanned, their citizens, 13 of them are Muslims. How could you avoid antagonizing the Muslim world, racial profiling, and making the balance of security at the same moment? Thank you.

Secretary Napolitano: Obviously the kind of radical violent Islam that is represented in al-Qaida and satellite movements doesn't represent Islam. We begin with that from the United States perspective.

That list of countries was developed with the U.S. State Department. It is based on the list of state sponsors of terrorism and other state countries of interest. We have been very clear in discussions with countries that have raised questions about this - that the countries may be added or subtracted from the list.

We've also been very clear about the following. It doesn't matter what country you are originating from right now, even from other countries we are requiring that over half of passengers received enhance screening. So we are in a very much enhanced screening environment and it is risk based in the sense that the threats have been to aviation—to flights that come into the United States—and it is that risk that we are mitigating through some of these measures.

Question: French Press Agency, AFP. Good Afternoon. For body scanners there were privacy questions or doubts from countries. But also for data sharing on passengers, and this has been the case in the past too, from European countries and other countries in the world.

You're talking that there's now a broad consensus. What exactly does that mean? How far do you feel are your European partners willing to go in sharing this information? Does this mean that you will get whole lists? How detailed is this information? How far are you in this consensus? How concrete is it?

Secretary Napolitano: I think this is important to recognize what we're talking about is advanced passenger information. Passenger name records - that information is designed for ensuring the safety of the air environment and enabling governments and airlines to verify the identity of and the security of passengers who are coming to board a flight before they even get into the airport environment. That's how it is structure - that is how it is limited.

Now we're talking - And there was, I must say, broad consensus - broad consensus in the EU meetings yesterday that what has been happening bilaterally within European countries now needs to happen amongst the EU - and the validity and utility of that sort of data sharing. And that is something that we will be moving forward on and I think the EU will be moving forward on. I think the issues now are, how do you make sure you're getting the data you need as it's standardized and so forth? Because you're talking - as Giovanni said, his association represents airlines that move billions of passengers a year. So how do you set up so that the information is shared in the most efficient way to protect passenger safety?

Mr. Bisignani: We've seen that we had some problems two or three years ago between Europe and the US with the access to PNR data. It took a bit of time, but after those problems were solved it showed that cooperation is the way forward when handling this data.

Question: Associated Press. Madame Secretary, this conversation, I know you weren't in your position nine years ago, but it sounds somewhat similar to the talk we heard after 9/11. What hasn't really happened in the last eight years, and why is it necessary to do this now, more than eight years after 3,000 people died on U.S. soil?

Secretary Napolitano: You're right - I wasn't in this position nine years ago - and let me just say that there has been a lot of advancement in that nine years. For example - PNR [Passenger Name Record] data being shared with the United States.

However, there is more that needs and can be done. There is more globalization of the measures that needs to occur. This is not just about the United States. It is about the safety within the entire international environment. It's about the increasing ability of technology to assist us in improving the efficacy of what we're doing - the need to make sure that whatever intelligence gaps there were as described by Admiral Blair the other day in the Senate, are repaired. It means moving forward in a very aggressive way - always constantly understanding it is a changing threat environment.

I've heard many times, "what's different now than 9/11? Why are we doing this now after the attempted Christmas attack?"

9/11, you need to understand, was a very different kind of attack. It was orchestrated over a long period of time, involved many individuals, it involved taking over the aircraft themselves and using them as weapons to fly into the World Trade Center, into the Pentagon, and - but for the intercession of passengers - probably into the Capitol. Right?

This was not that kind of attack. This was an individual who was recruited basically to be a suicide bomber on a plane using an explosive material known as PETN. The kinds of things that were done on 9/11 to take over the aircraft have been fixed. It's an ever-evolving threat environment. It means we have to be able to have intelligence that understands that individuals will be used to try to get through gaps in the system. It means that threats may be coming from countries like Yemen that previously perhaps were not the focus of attention - so much attention. It means that we cannot simply rely on magnetometers to pick up weapons that could be used to take over an aircraft - it means we have to have screeners that can detect liquids, powders, gels and other material.

What is different now is the threat environment is different, the technology is different, the global aspect of this has greater recognition. There were passengers from 17 countries as I said, on 253. And the recognition that as we move forward this needs to involve the international community of nations - that's why ICAO is so important; and it needs to involve the private sector, the carriers themselves, and that is why IATA is so important.

Mr. Bisignani: By all means, flying is much more secure than before. Much more secure. But it's an ongoing process as the Secretary was saying. On our side airlines are taking the burden of \$5.9 billion of costs every year. We still have a problem with the hassle factor for our passengers which we must try to mitigate. We had some discussion how we could better communicate to passengers to explain what we're doing with our approach to security. And we have to take advantage of new technology, including the new tools that the Secretary was mentioning.

I think that we are moving in the right direction. It's important that we keep the pressure on, but we can very clearly say to our passengers that the atmosphere in which they are flying, the environment in which they are flying, is much more secure than before September 11th.

Question: Spanish News Agency EFE. I'm sorry to be away off the subject today, but it refers to security as well. I would like to ask you if you could please elaborate, why the FBI used the image of a Spanish politician to show how Bin Laden will be in the future?

Secretary Napolitano: I think that's a question addressed to the FBI. I think they've already apologized for that, however.

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