

Aviation Group News



On 23rd June, the Aviation SIG held its AGM at Frank Drayton's residence. Frank, as most members will know, was the Chairman of the SIG and has since departed the Kingdom permanently. We all thank Frank for his work as Chairman and for his kind hospitality in hosting the SIG meetings.

The current Aviation SIG committee was voted in as follows:-

Chairman - Roger Smith
E-mail: smith@metco.com.sa

Deputy Chairman - Chris Maybury
E-mail: chris@sese2000.net

Secretary - Maxwell Fletcher
E-mail: emaxwell@naseej.com.sa

For future Aviation SIG meetings, Wing Commander John Bartram has very kindly offered to host the meetings at his residence.

All RGBB members are reminded the Aviation SIG is the original and longest running group, within the Business Group and is open to all who have an interest in Aviation and related affairs.

We don't all have "handlebar" moustaches and sit around wearing leather flying helmets and long silk scarves!

Best regards
Chris Maybury



One Year On The New Realities

(A few thoughts for us all)

Shortly after the terrible events of last year, now known as "911" the 33rd Session of the Aviation Wing of the UN, International Civil Aviation Organization, opened in Montreal. Naturally, the original agenda was amended to deal extensively on security matters.

The first resolution passed and adopted strongly condemned the acts of terrorism of 11 September and called for an international high level ministerial conference to be held as soon as possible. The purpose being to develop and enforce measures for "preventing, combating and eradicating acts of terrorism involving civil aviation". The ICAO council agreed to convene such a conference in Montreal in February.

Another resolution urged all ICAO Contracting States to deal severely with anyone who uses a civil aircraft as a weapon of destruction, as well as any person responsible for organizing such acts or for aiding, supporting or harbouring perpetrators.

The reported events of recent weeks have reminded us that there is still a threat out there and it is rewarding to know that our airports are still alert to the serious issues and that there is no place for complacency.

We, as the traveling public are always conscious of the visibility of extra security measures at our airports and on our aircraft, be it a more thorough screening of passengers and baggage or the plastic cutlery we have to suffer on board.

It is still a very difficult task and you will remember the passenger with explosives in his shoes.

Explosives in "Sheet" form are easy to conceal and such materials have forced the improvement of screening equipment to unimaginable levels. Remarkable surveillance technology is under development to enable agents to confirm the identity of "known people", whose details are stored on a database. Biometrics has been developed to give incredible identification accuracy.

The capital expenditure costs of new equipment and staff training programmes have come at a time least affordable by the aviation industry.

Behind the scenes, there has been an intensive effort put into the screening and vetting of airport and airline employees and contractors.

On board, apart from the aforesaid plastic cutlery, (now available in silver/grey simulated stainless steel!), we have seen the introduction of reinforced flight deck doors and additional vigilance training for the crews. The subject of onboard air marshals is still an on going issue, whether armed or not. Who would be in charge of an incident, the marshal or the captain? How would the marshal be presented, as a uniformed crew member or as a "passenger"? Certainly, guns are not a good idea on a civil aircraft. A shooting match on an aircraft does not bear thinking about.

One of the big issues facing airports and airlines is that most perceived terrorist threats were with "International" flights. To have four "Domestic" flights violated in one day has totally destroyed the "like jumping on a bus or train" routines for local flights. The whole security issue is one of continuous progress, review and assessment, hoping to keep ahead of evil minds and we must all cooperate with the accredited authorities at all times.

I just wish there was more to do at Riyadh airport after check-in other than looking at other passengers and trying to remember their names.