

On the evening of 11th September, I was due to depart to the UK on my first bmi flight.

That evening I attended an RGBB board meeting, immediately followed by a Financial Service SIG meeting, both held in the DQ.

When I eventually tore myself away from the meetings at about 9:35pm, I knew that I was pushed for time.

At home, changed, tidied up a bit, chucked a few things in a small bag (some workshop cutting tools), drove off to my office, left a few messages, dumped the company car then quickly legged it out to find a taxi.

I was carrying a jacket as I had an early morning meeting in London. Made sure all travel documents were to hand. There was a longer than usual wait at the check point on the airport road so I was ready with my ID, "just in case."

Paid off the taxi and strode confidently into the airport terminal.

Horror struck me, no ticket, even worse, no passport! Both must have slid out of my inside pocket in the taxi, which I had waved off a few seconds earlier. I went through the security check where the guards were amused by this silly old gaffer with a check-in bag full of nasty sharp machine cutting tools. I reported in to bmi and explained my predicament. The bmi staff recommended that I contact the security police who may be able to catch my taxi driver leaving the airport outer perimeter boundary.

The police were very good and put their mobile phones into action. They said that there was a reasonable chance of getting my documents back. By then, it was about 11:20pm with my flight departing at 00:40am.

Phoned the Missus to explain the situation and suggested that I will try to make the next flight. The police kept coming up to me to see if there was any news and giving comforting remarks.

Eventually one of the bmi counter staff come over to me to say that the flight will have to close soon but they will keep it open for an extra ten minutes, just for me.

Just before 0:20am I had given up hope and gave my contact details to the police then ventured outside to phone my wife and take a taxi back to Riyadh. During the phone call I looked up to see someone running towards me calling out "Sir, sir, sir." There was the taxi driver waving my passport and ticket. He had seen them on the floor when he was back in Riyadh. Needless to say, I gave him a generous reward.

Back through the check-in security, same bemused guards, only to find that Swiss Air had replaced bmi. They had a later flight that I could have taken and connected through to London.

I was just about to make the arrangements when one of the security police called out to me to following him out again. He took my ticket and passport, instructed me to "Wait there" then disappeared through to the airside.

A few minutes later the policeman was back, grabbed my arm and lead me through to the back of the immigration desks. Phoned wife again to confirm that I was now on the flight again. Passport in my sticky hand, I was baulked by the security check.

Oh dear! I would have to surrender all my tools which were intended to have been sent as checked-in baggage.

The guards took pity on me and stuffed everything back into my bag. One of them picked it up and carried it to the departure gate. Another two guards each took an arm and hustled me along to the gate.

The contents of my bag were examined by the bmi staff who accepted to put it in the baggage hold.

A boarding card was thrust into my eager hand, I shook hands with three policemen and then was then poured onto the aircraft. The door closed soon behind me. My checked baggage receipt was delivered to my seat.

The flight departed on time.

Special appreciation thanks to the unknown taxi driver who had the honesty and integrity to return all the way to the airport with my documents

Special appreciation thanks to the airport police for their personal and caring intervention to assist me at a time of stress.

Special appreciation thanks to the bmi staff for treating me as "a special passenger" and hanging on until the last second.

Chris Maybury

It's not all bad news

(A short tale of
welcome
cooperation and
coordination)



Just in case you
didn't know, bmi now
fly direct three times
each week between
London and Riyadh.
see: www.flybmi.com