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# 2026



**Committee on Aviation Security**  
**Topic 1**

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## **Flight Path to Safety: Orchestrating Security Intelligence Across Nations.**

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## The Intelligence Gap in Aviation Security

Modern civil aviation security spans hundreds of jurisdictions, each governed by its own national security apparatus. While States through ICAO sets global Standards and Recommended Practices (SARPs) through its Annexes, implementation remains a national responsibility. This fragmentation may create persistent intelligence gaps — windows of vulnerability that threat actors can exploit.

Aviation security threats have evolved well beyond traditional hijackings: improvised explosive devices (IEDs), improvised incendiary devices (IID) in cargo, insider threats, cyber-attacks on Air Traffic Management (ATM) systems, weaponized unmanned aircraft systems (UAS).

As an example, the attempted destruction in flight of the Northwest Airlines Flight 253 in December 2009, known as the “Underwear Bomber” incident, demonstrated the cost of fragmentation: a known threat actor appeared in a U.S. terrorism database yet boarded an international flight, perhaps linked to the fact that intelligence was not shared across relevant agencies and States. Against the backdrop of the current geopolitical instability, this Committee is called upon to negotiate and adopt a Resolution of the ICAO Council establishing a forward-looking political framework for the orchestration of security intelligence across national boundaries.

## The International Legal Framework

Annex 17 to the Chicago Convention constitutes the primary binding framework for aviation security standards. It requires each contracting State to establish a National Civil Aviation Security Programme (NCASP) based on a national risk assessment conducted by relevant authorities. However, its provisions impose sharing acts of unlawful interference with ICAO but stays general on information sharing between States and with operators, leaving significant discretion to States.

Several legal instruments complement Annex 17:

- The Montreal Convention (1971) and its 1988 Protocol, criminalizing sabotage and airport attacks;
- The Beijing Instruments (2010), extending offences to cyber-attacks on ATM and the use of aircraft as weapons;
- UN Security Council Resolution 2309 (2016), calling on all States to implement ICAO Standards and share threat information.

ICAO’s Universal Security Audit Programme (USAP-CMA) assesses States’ effective implementation of security SARPs in both Annexes 17 and 9. However, due to the sensitivity of audit findings, only an overview of results are shared between States. They are not shared in real time with other States, limiting their value for intelligence purposes. Regional bodies — EASA, the EU Commission, TSA’s Last Point of Departure agreements — provide complementary frameworks with varying effectiveness.

## Existing Mechanisms and Their Limitations

ICAO Security-Related Information System.

ICAO maintains a mandatory mechanism to report Acts of unlawful interference with a voluntary complementary system allowing States to report incidents and occurrences. Participation is inconsistent: States are sometimes reluctant to share intelligence, fearing exposure of sources, diplomatic repercussions, or revelation of national vulnerabilities.

## PNR/API Systems.

Annex 9 and UNSCR 2396 (2017) underpin Passenger Name Record (PNR) and Advance Passenger Information (API) frameworks. Despite their power, significant capacity disparities persist across States and interoperability between national systems is limited. No truly global, real-time, interoperable system accessible to all ICAO contracting States currently exists — a critical gap starkly illustrated, as an example, by the 2009 Christmas Day incident.

## Emerging and Evolving Threats.

### Information Security and Cybersecurity Threats.

The digitalization of ATM, reservation, and airport operational technology (OT) systems has vastly expanded the attack surface. ICAO's Aviation Cybersecurity Strategy (2019) provides a framework, but real-time international intelligence sharing on cyber threats remains nascent.

### Unmanned Aerial Systems (UAS).

In addition to military grade UAS, the deliberate weaponization of commercial drones as delivery vehicles for explosive or CBRN payloads is a rapidly evolving threat. Effective counter-UAS intelligence requires new protocols for real-time exchange between States and between civil and military authorities.

### Insider Threats and State-Sponsored Interference.

The 2015 destruction of Metrojet Flight 9268 over Sinai — attributed to an IED introduced by a person with airside access — is one of the example of the risk posed by insider threats.

The 2021 forced diversion of Ryanair Flight 4978 by Belarus illustrated a State involvement using civil aviation as an instrument of hybrid warfare.

Addressing these threats requires intelligence-sharing frameworks extending beyond traditional counterterrorism channels.

## Regional and Industry Initiatives.

The EU's common aviation security framework (Regulation (EC) No 300/2008) represents the most advanced example of supranational security integration, with Member States sharing threat intelligence through coordinated secure channels. Other alliance exist and maintain robust aviation security intelligence-sharing among like-minded States, raising questions about broader accessibility.

On the industry side and in Cybersecurity, the A-ISAC demonstrates the potential of public-private information security intelligence sharing on a voluntary basis.

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## Analysis and Proposals for the Committee.

Considering the evolving threat landscape and the persistent fragmentation of aviation security intelligence, you are invited to reflect on the respective roles of ICAO, Member States, international organisations, and industry stakeholders in building a more effective global aviation security intelligence architecture.

You will make recommendations to the Council, in the perspective of the 43rd ICAO Assembly, encouraging ICAO, States and industry to address the following matters:

- Considerations on the need for improved sharing of information in aviation security in the current geopolitical context, including State-sponsored interference ;
- Considerations on the development of a harmonized international standard for aviation security threat classification and intelligence reporting formats, while ensuring the protection of sensitive information;
- Improvement of a multilateral aviation security intelligence-sharing platform, with different access levels for States and industry and capacity-building provisions in the spirit of the ICAO Strategic Goal *No country left behind*;
- Strengthening the link between the USAP-CMA and information sharing, considering protocols and limitation for sharing audit findings relevant to systemic security risks;
- Considerations on civil-military coordination frameworks for UAS threats, cyber incidents, and conflict zones;
- Development of a structured public-private partnership framework for aviation security intelligence, including standardized protocols for airline and airport reporting to national authorities;
- Ensuring that enhanced intelligence-sharing arrangements comply with international human rights law, data protection standards, and the principle of non-discrimination.

## Bibliography

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