



Positive Security Culture

BACKGROUND

Aviation security measures are generally perceived as efficient. However, it must be understood and accepted that the security chain is a very complex system. It requires constant adaptation to new threats and the full engagement of all relevant personnel in an environment which gives them both the tools and the confidence to actively contribute to the mitigation of these threats. This can only be achieved with the implementation of a positive security culture.

TERMINOLOGY

In the early 2010s, the safety side of ICAO abandoned the term "Just Culture" and elected to use "Positive Safety Culture" instead. This move, supported by IFALPA, has since been reflected in the relevant ICAO Annexes (such as Annex 19 – Safety Management) and Documents (such as Doc 9859, the Safety Management Manual).

One of the main reasons for the change was that the adjective "just" - or its equivalent in national legislation - is associated with the concept of punishment in many countries. In these countries, social or legal systems have created a culture that demands blame and retribution, even for mistakes. As a result, when an accident or incident has occurred, the outcome of the relevant investigation is only perceived as "just" if someone (or a group) is found guilty and punished.

Political interests may, in turn, want to give the false impression that the aviation system will be improved as a result of such punishment. In most cases, safety occurrences are unintentional, and blaming someone for something they did not mean to do is counterproductive and shifts the focus away from safety improvement.

Despite these concerns though, the term "just culture" still appears in ICAO's security-related documentation such as Doc 8973 (the Security Manual). This is inconsistent and has a strong potential for generating confusion as to which terminology States should use. IFALPA, IATA, and IFATCA believe that there should be a common terminology, and that "positive security culture" should also replace "just culture" in all security

documentation.

The Federation therefore welcomes the recent [educational Security Culture films](#) "*designed for senior managers in aviation (in security and non-security roles) to help them understand the wider benefits of a positive security culture and the importance of security as a core business value,*" and produced by ICAO.

KEY ASPECTS OF A POSITIVE SECURITY CULTURE

Need for involvement of all personnel

A positive security culture begins at the legislative, regulatory, and judicial level. It must subsequently be embraced by all levels of an organisation. Every employee, not just those directly involved in security, can influence the establishment of a security culture, and should be engaged in this process.

Understanding errors and mistakes

Making errors and mistakes is inherently human. In their dynamic, fast-paced work environment, personnel engaged in aviation security often find themselves in situations where decisions must be made quickly, in real time, with the information perceived at that exact moment- information which can also be presented in a confusing or incomplete manner.

In hindsight, some of these decisions may be judged as less than optimal, even when they were made by someone with a high level of professionalism and security training and/or experience. When an error has taken place, the analysis should focus on determining all contributing factors and understanding the decision-making process, not on blaming the individual.

While a positive security culture endorses fair treatment, it does not mean that employees are no longer accountable for their actions or inactions. Nor does it seek immunity for deliberate misconduct, criminal activity, or intentional recklessness. It ensures that unintentional errors and mistakes, or poor decisions, are not viewed as stand-alone events, but always in the context in which they occurred.

Promotion of non-punitive security reporting

The early identification and mitigation of security threats and risks that have the potential to generate an incident is a fundamental element of a [Security Management System \(SeMS\)](#). One of the key methods of recognizing these potential security shortcomings is to establish and promote non-punitive security reporting and encourage personnel to participate.

It is a known fact within the aviation industry that many errors or omissions that did not lead to incidents go unreported and remain hidden, simply because those involved do not trust their reporting structure and are fearful of management or regulatory authority penalties. Only with the implementation of a positive security culture could the rate of voluntary reporting be improved, and potential precursors to security incidents be identified and acted upon in time.

Non-punitive reporting systems are promoted by international aviation organisations such as IFALPA, IFATCA, and IATA as they enable an uninhibited flow and exchange of information which is vital to improving safety and security. Security reporting should be supported by clear, well-known guidance setting the policies and processes. It should give employees the confidence that they are listened to and regarded as a valuable security resource, and that they can report their own errors, including errors in judgment, without fearing retribution as a result of disclosure.

POSITION

IFALPA, IATA, and IFATCA strongly believe that the establishment and maintenance of a positive security culture is a key component of aviation security. Understanding errors, mistakes, and unintentional actions, and allowing them to be reported in a non-punitive environment is essential to the identification and management of both existing and emerging security threats.

ICAO has already committed to the concept of a positive safety culture and incorporated it into its safety documentation. It is now desirable that a similar commitment take place for the implementation of a positive security culture environment, and that this common terminology be used in all ICAO documentation.

IFALPA, IFATCA, and IATA also call for States and Operators to implement a positive security culture throughout the aviation industry, and make sure that it is reflected in all security-related documentation and procedures.