

THE EXPERIENCE OF THE TERRORIST ATTACKS AGAINST THE CIVIL AIRPLANES

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Abstract: *The number of the terrorist attacks committed against the air transport decreased by orders of magnitude in our days, but underestimating the danger would be a mistake because of characteristics and unpredictability of the international terrorism. It is almost a commonplace that the terrorism has historical roots, which the global inequality is just increasing. One single state may not resign from protection against terrorism and this can only be successful if it is harmonized at an international level. Decreasing of the air transport's terror threat is not only can be achieved with restricting and observing the security rules of the branch. The danger of terror actions may decrease if the counter-terrorism measures are handled as one solid system. It is also important that the security rules of civil flight be set to the characteristics of terror threat. The rules themselves are worth something if they are observed. In air transport has to use same procedures, methods in the whole world in favor of the air transport security. The prevention of the terrorist attacks against airplanes and airports can be successful only in this way. The terrorist attacks on 11th September 2001 showed, how injuriable the aviation is and how serious consequences could have a terrorist action. Similar order of magnitude of casualties can occur on the world's big airports. In the course of the peace keeping operations the security of the airports is equally important from the points of view of operations and logistics.*

Keywords: *terrorist attacks, sabotage, air control devices, rules of air transport.*

1. INTRODUCTION

In the circles of researchers coping with terrorism and those who interested in this problem it's a well-known fact that the evolution of modern-age terrorism can be bound to the hijackings and the terror attacks against the airports of the late 60's. This type of terror actions from the late 60's to the mid 70's were committed mainly by Palestinian guerillas or extreme leftist terror groups which were sympathizing with the Palestine affair. Several scientific definitions were revealed in the international and domestic literature. I do not have the opportunity for the lengthy science theory examinations of different interpretations of terrorism because of volume reasons and content viewpoints. I suggest the acceptance of three very important common criteria amongst the dozens of definitions of the terrorism: 1. the employment of violence or threatening with it; 2. be a drawn political

aim in the background of terror attacks; 3. personal and property security of civilians get into danger on the course of terror attacks* [2]. The acceptance of these common criteria may be important political and a methodological question in selection of research methods connected to terrorism, in the examination of the terrorist organizations' operation or in the content definition of tasks of the fight against terrorism. I examine the experiences and characteristics of the terrorist attacks against the civil airplanes until now keeping the listed criteria before an eye. Dealing with this topic is also actual because the analyzing of the air-transport-coherent terror threat may considered under-represented in spite of that a comprehensive study was revealed from Miklós Szabó on the end of 1999 [3], but since

* Jonathan Barker worded this recommendation on the basis of researches of Boas Ganor, the dean of Israeli Lauder School of Government and Diplomacy

then ensued the „Big Terror Attack” on the area of the USA on 11th September 2001, which not only exercised serious influences on the rules of air-transport security but made powerful affects on the world-politics of our age.

There happened a considerable and spectacular development in the civil air-transport at the late 60's and early 70's. The bigger airplane factories – for example Boeing, Lockheed, McDonnell-Douglas, or even the Tupoljev – are produced wide-hulled faster airplanes with more seating-room than before [3]. The technical development was reasonable because of the transport demands' growth. For the result of this development the achieving the travel aims falling distant geographical with an airplane in the wealthier countries was not only a privilege of the economical and social elite anymore, but it became more and more accessible for the broader middle class too. Besides the increasing of private and tourism-aimed ticket purchase, it is also increased the air-transport demand, that the employees of the bigger corporations interested in maintaining and expanding international economical connections were travelled more and more on airplanes.

In the study I am dealing with experiences of the terror attacks against airports. I am touching sabotage actions and unlawful seizures of airplanes just in case that they are happened on airports or in the direct neighborhood.

Targets of terror actions on the airports in the history of modern-age terrorism: 1. airline offices; 2. airplanes on runways; 3. departure and arrival halls; 4. air control and radar devices

2. EXPERIENCES OF TERROR ATTACKS AGAINST AIRLINE OFFICES

In the beginning of modern-age terrorism not only the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) and terrorist organizations connected to it – for example: Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), or Black September Organization (BSO) – committed terror attacks against airline offices. The

Palestines are committed firings mainly against the western European offices of El Al Israeli airlines. Terror actions like this were carried out many times by different leftist and separatist organizations. Amongst the others the Angry Brigade, the ETA, the Baader-Meinhof Group... These attacks had a common characteristic, that they did not claim any casualty and made only property damages. It is not allowed to underestimate the danger of the attacks against the airlines despite this.

3. EXPERIENCES OF SABOTAGE ACTIONS AGAINST AIRPLANES

In the late 60's the terrorists are tried to attack airplanes on the ground but not to hijack them. These attempts were not really successful. The attack of Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) at the Zurich International is a good example. Four armed attacker drove at the runway with a passenger car, shot 200 bullets and threw an incendiary grenade on the airplane of El Al airlines heading from Zurich to Tel Aviv. There was a firefight between the Palestine guerillas and the security personnel of the airplane. One attacker shot dead, there were wounded and three passenger of the line were also wounded [4]. This case shed light on that an airplane which is taking off with a relatively high speed can be forced to stop but cannot be destroyed with success. After this practically unsuccessful action the terror groups rather chose hijacking in terror attacks against air flight. There was another moral. After the perception of terror threat at the El Al they are started to employ travel marshals relatively quickly who successfully prevented the terror attack at this case. Of course even well-trained and well-equipped security personnel cannot solve any danger situations but they may prevent terrorists from committing terror actions.

It is not enough to ensure security on the working areas of the airports in connection with terror attacks against the airplanes. Nearly impossible to figure out the number of those American and ex-Soviet surface-to-air missiles, which are easily obtainable on the illegal weapon-markets. Usage of these partly

obsolete partly modern surface-to-air missiles is meaning serious danger for taking off and landing airplanes alike. The relatively easy-handling shoulder-fired missiles are meaning a real threat also in the military and civil air traffic.

This danger is not only present in the crisis-areas although it is doubtless that the danger on those territories is bigger than airports on other areas of the world. Because of this in Afghanistan, in Iraq, in Kashmir and in Pakistan where the terror threat is a daily danger the security control should be expanded to the neighborhood areas from where surface-to-air missiles could be launched to taking off and landing airplanes.

Fortunately this type of terror attacks is not to be considered common so except the crisis-areas the continuous increased military and police presence is not necessary in these security zones. However when the level of terror threat is raising then the control of neighborhood of the airports needs prompt ensuring. This happened on 12th February 2003 when the British Secret Intelligence Service warned the government of the United Kingdom that Islamic fundamentalists in connection with al-Qaeda are smuggled SAM-7 missiles to England. The government is immediately decided about restricting the keeping of Heathrow International Airport. They controlled the neighbor roads, villages and towns with 1000 soldiers and policemen [5]. Every state and airport has to prepare such events. The security of an airport and its neighborhood is not only can be ensured with military and police forces but for example with constructing and operating CCTV systems.

Not only the airports have to prepare for defense against surface-to-air missiles but the airplanes also have to be provided with missile-repellent devices. This is a rather expensive procedure but it may be effective. This is already proven in some cases. In 28th November 2002, when a missile was fired to an airplane of El Al Israeli Airlines 8 miles away to the south of Mombasa International Airport – in the same time with the blast which was happened in the Paradise Hotel – the missiles are missed the target owing to the missile-repellent system. This case is also

proving that although the number of terror attacks against air transport is decreased it is worth to spend money for the security devices.

4. EXPERIENCES OF THE TERRORIST ATTACKS AGAINST THE AIRPORTS IN THE DEPARTURE AND ARRIVAL HALLS

Face with the terrorist attacks, it can be considered that the airports' weakest points are possibly the departure and arrival halls. The all-out checking of the boarding passengers, their followers and the landing passengers can't be done with such efficiency as the hangars', air control devices', runways', etc. guarding. The terrorist attacks trend to the persons, who are in the terminal, and their characteristics that the gunmen shoot indiscriminately. Although in this context it has to note, Palestinian terror groups choose primarily Israeli passengers as a target. Before entering to the airport, can't use such strict check in system as before boarding to the airplane.

The terrorists are also quickly come upon the terminal's weak points the first notable terrorist attack was perpetrated in Tel Aviv Lod International Airport, in 31st May 1972. After the Japanese Red Army (JRA) terror group got out from the plane from Paris, 3 of them opened fire to the passengers who were waited there and threw hand grenades towards them. 25 died 76 wounded [6] through the terror action. This incident brought up many questions. Among these maybe the most important was how could the attackers take their guns to the Air France Airline's plane in Paris? From time to time the international conventions' security orders have to modify because of such events. This terror action demonstrated that the terrorist groups are able to cooperate on international level too because the attack was supported by Palestine terror groups.

On the different basis organized terrorist groups did a lot of terror attack on airports, beyond the Tel-Aviv case. After it the scenes of action were especially the departure halls. On the score of compass, I have no opportunity to analyze these; I am touching

only 3 actions in short form. The first 2 was happened in same time, in 27th December 1985 in Schwechat and in Leonardo Da Vinci International Airport of Rome. In Wien 2 people died, 39 injured, in Rome 16 died, 99 injured through the terrorist action committed by the Abu Nidal terrorist group's gunmen [6]. It is praising the organizer skill of the terror group that they were able to execute terror attacks on the airports of 2 different countries simultaneously with serious consequences.

The other event, what I would like to touch was happened in 17th June 2007 in Glasgow. A Jeep Cherokee car that was in flames was driven to the departure hall of the Scottish town's airport.

The car was like a Molotov-cocktail or a human's torch. Fortunately the car didn't explode just burnt [7]. This action was a part in the series of terrorist attacks that was planned to execute in the United Kingdom by fundamentalist Muslim doctors. The moral of this case that the terror groups despite of decreasing the number of the terrorist attacks against the airports did not renounce of destroying the airports. In favor of its success, they choose more and more radical tools, methods. There is no telling exactly what counted the terrorists in Glasgow, but according to the authority, an accidental blasting would taken roll hundreds of lives (or people would died hereupon). Therefore between the elements of the critical infrastructure, the airports have to treat as important elements!

5. AIR CONTROL DEVICES

The terrorist attacks against the air control devices, can't count as frequent ones in the history of terrorism until now. It is due to, that these tools are placed in good defensible service areas of the airport. The airport's keep in operators ensure about the defense of the control towers, radars next door to everywhere on the world. The air control devices count as especially sensitive and vulnerable elements of the air transport. Therefore it is very important also hereunder, protect these tools and ensure the safety of operation. It has to spread out for the protection against cyber terrorism, because

these tools can make unserviceable get paralyzed.

6. INTERNATIONAL STANDARDIZATION OF THE RULES OF AIR TRANSPORT

It was unambiguous in connection with the terrorist attacks against the airports and airplanes, that it is necessary to standardize the political, legal, security and air traffic actions on an international level during solution of crisis situations connected to already hijacked airplanes. In the early 70's, the agreements and contracts – which were signed in Montreal and Chicago in the 40's and 50's and ruling the air traffic – had been renewed and complemented for preventing terror actions against airports and airplanes [8]. After the ratification of amended agreements the unlawful seizure of airplanes was unambiguously penitentiary offence and its legal consequences were theoretically unavoidable besides the guarantees of the international legal agreements.

Perhaps the most important amongst the other amended international aeronautical agreements was the so-called „Chicago Agreement“. Its Annex 17 – titled „Security - Safeguarding International Civil Aviation against Acts of Unlawful Interference“ – is defining the security actions and rules which are in connection with air traffic [8]. The Annex circumscribes those safety regulations, procedures that may be and have to be done with the passengers, luggage and other shipments on the airport and airplanes for the flight security. The (ICAO) is reviewing safety regulations or amends, rejects or accepts the temporarily introduced restrictions in connection with a terror attack, threatening with a terror action or anything else flight event. This also happened by the effect of the big terror attack of 11th September 2001. The Council of International Civil Aviation Organization amended the Annex 17 about international cooperation relating to threat information; national quality control; access control; measures related to passengers and their cabin and hold baggage; in-flight security personnel and protection of the cockpit; code-

sharing/collaborative arrangements; human factors; and management of response to acts of unlawful interference. Similar restrictions were introduced in summer of 2006 too – after the terror threat alert on Heathrow, London – when the range, packaging and quantity of objects and beverages which can be taken onto the deck of the airplanes was restricted. In connection with the Annex 17 of the so-called “Chicago Agreement” it is an elementary requirement for the flight security that the requirements booked in the annex be set to the expectations of flight security and to the level of terror threat nowadays and in the future too.

The rules are applicable for the airplanes and for the airports too. We must not forget about the importance of the luggage security check on the airports, because that can detect the explosive devices before the airplanes’ take-off.

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