



A Guide to Promoting and Assessing Security Culture for Airports

1st edition, September 2021

By Regional Aviation Security Committee (RASC)



Table of Contents

I. Introduction	2
II. Background Information	2
a) What is security culture?	2
b) What is a positive security culture?	2
c) What are the benefits of a security culture?	3
III. Security Culture in ICAO's Perspectives	3
IV. Promotion of Security Culture at Airport	5
a) Obtaining organizational commitment.....	5
b) Making security everyone's responsibility.....	6
o Awareness training on threat and risk.....	6
o Dedicated awareness-raising activities.....	7
o Targeted communication.....	8
c) Providing the right environment.....	9
o Just culture	9
o Active reporting.....	9
o Staff rewards and recognition.....	10
V. Assessment of Security Culture at Airport	11
a) Security culture survey	11
b) Security breach records.....	12
c) Other indicators.....	12
VI. Bibliography	13
VII. Attachment A: Template of Security Culture Survey	14





I. Introduction

The aviation industry puts great emphasis on the importance of a layered approach when it comes to security. As the threat and risk environment continues to evolve, various new measures have been put in place by airports over the years, ranging from the enhancement of landside security measures to the introduction of advanced technologies for detecting explosives. Nevertheless, in addition to the physical security measures, one of the most valuable, but often underutilized, security assets that an airport can have are its people. Developing a robust security culture throughout the airport by embedding a security mindset into everyone in the organization will give an additional, efficient and cost-effective layer of protection to the airport. By learning from the experience of the successful implementation of safety culture, the importance of security culture at airports is increasingly recognized to be an important part of optimizing outcomes among the aviation security community over the past few years.

Although security culture has been much discussed and its benefits widely recognized, many airports still do not fully understand what has to be implemented to develop security culture. Also, there seems to be a lack of practical guidance materials on security culture specifically written for airports.

In this regard, the ACI Asia-Pacific Regional Aviation Security Committee (RASC) developed this guidance document to help airports better understand what security culture is, and to provide some practical guidance on how to promote and assess security culture both within the airport organization and external stakeholders.

II. Background Information

a) What is security culture?

Security culture is a set of norms, beliefs, values, attitudes and assumptions that are inherent in the daily operation of an organization, and is reflected in the decisions, actions and behaviours of all stakeholders within the organization with regard to matters related to aviation security.

b) What is a positive security culture?

A positive security culture is when security is viewed throughout all levels of the organization as a **core function and a shared responsibility**. It means that everyone, ranging from top executives to employees, is engaged, has a genuine concern and takes appropriate action and responsibility for aviation security issues. A strong culture can result in the development of key



values and aims which are firmly upheld and shared by all members of that organization and other related stakeholders.

Security culture takes time and commitment to develop and mature, but when realized, provides an additional, comprehensive and cost-effective layer to the protection of organizational assets. Having a positive security culture can help mitigate both internal and external threats as personnel think and act in a more security-conscious manner and are able to identify and report behaviors or activities of concern.

c) **What are the benefits of a security culture?**

Airports across the world have continued to invest significantly in technologies to help mitigate security threats. However, there are still a lot of areas in security where technology cannot replace humans for now. For example, technology does not know how to handle an unattended bag, how to identify suspicious behavior or have the ability to respond to a crisis.

Therefore, human factors are still considered a crucial element in aviation security. There are a number of benefits associated with the development of security culture at airports. An effective security culture can:

- provide an additional layer of security protection that is relatively low-cost but very effective;
- promote a sense of communal responsibility for security;
- develop an appreciation and understanding of security practices among all staff and airport users;
- reduce potential security incidents and breaches by employees thinking and acting in more security-conscious ways; and
- encourage proactive identification and reporting of suspicious activities or behaviours by staff;

III. Security Culture in ICAO's Perspectives

ICAO has placed increasing emphasis on security culture over the past few years. There are a number of ICAO regulations, documents and initiatives that highlight the importance of security culture. As these new ICAO standards and guidance cascade down to national regulations, airports will eventually be impacted and required to take actions. It is therefore important for airports to start getting prepared now if they have not done so. Below are the extracts or progress



update from some of the respective ICAO documents and a United Nations (UN)' resolution related to the subject:

- **[UN Security Council Resolution 2309](#)**: States were called upon to take all necessary steps to ensure security measures are effectively implemented on the group on a continuing and sustainable basis through “*the promotion of an effective security culture within all organizations involved in civil aviation*”.
- **[ICAO Global Aviation Security Plan \(GASeP\)](#)**: One of the five priority actions of the GASeP is to develop security culture and human capability, stating that “*the promotion of effective security culture is critical to achieve good security outcomes. A strong security culture must be developed from the top management across and within every organization. The existence of a well-trained, motivated and professional work force is a critical prerequisite for effective aviation security*”.
- **[ICAO Annex 17](#)**: At the time of publication of this guidance document, a new recommendation in Annex 17 on the promotion of security culture was being proposed and discussed at the ICAO Working Group on Annex 17 (WGA17). If approved by the ICAO AVSEC Panel and the ICAO Council, the new recommendation will be included in next amendment to Annex 17, which is expected to become effective in 2022 or earlier.
- **[ICAO Doc 8973 \(Aviation Security Manual\)](#)**: A dedicated chapter (chap. 9.2) on security culture has been added in the ICAO Doc 8973 since the publication of the 10th edition in 2017.
- **[ICAO Year of Security Culture \(YOSC\)](#)**: The Resolution 40-11 adopted at the 40th Session of the ICAO Assembly designated 2020 as the Year of Security Culture (YOSC). However, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the ICAO Council decided to extend the YOSC for one year to 2021. For more information on the YOSC initiatives, please refer [HERE](#).



IV. Promotion of Security Culture at Airport

a) Obtaining organizational commitment

A good security culture can only begin if there is a **clear buy-in from the airport senior management**. Any kind of organizational culture, including security culture, can hardly be developed without the support and commitment from the management of the organization.

It is unreasonable and unrealistic to expect all levels of an airport to fully participate if there is a lack of senior leadership on the issue. Therefore, as the foremost step to build good security culture, senior management should always act as role models by demonstrating and recognizing that security is critical to business success.

Though not intended to be exhaustive, the following provides some practical examples of the commitment that can be taken by the senior management for the promotion of security culture:

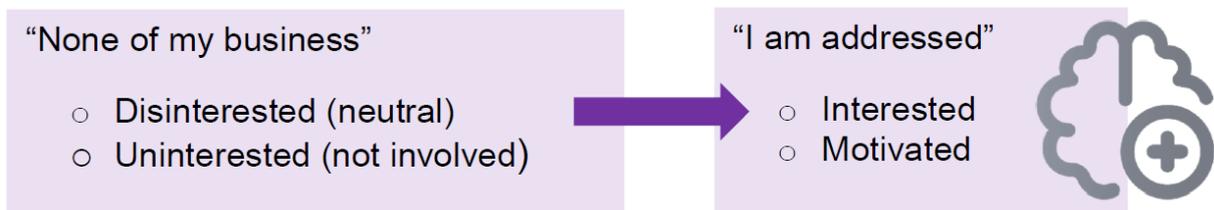
- **A declaration of intent** on the importance of security should be made by the airport senior management, preferably from the Chief Executive Officer or equivalent. This should be documented for example in the Airport Security Programme (ASP), strategic documents and vision/mission statements, and widely communicated to employees and other stakeholders. The message does not have to be long and complicated. It can be as simple as *“upholding high standards in security is a core value for the airport”*.
- Airport executives should always **lead by example**, as their behaviours normally would inspire staff to do the same. Therefore, no staff, including the senior management, should be given exemptions from security measures because of their status and seniority. As bad examples observed during some ACI APEX in Security¹ reviews, some airport executives were allowed to enter the security restricted areas without wearing the airport pass or were exempted from security screening.
- To display good security leadership, airport management at every level throughout the organization should consider adding a security “moment” at regular company meetings, even the non-security related ones, to highlight good security practices or raise awareness of a particular security incident that has happened and the learnings derived from it.

¹ <https://aci.aero/apex/how-it-works/security/>

b) Making security everyone's responsibility

If you noticed your neighbor's house was on fire, you would call the fire department. You would want to help the neighbor and also ensure that the fire doesn't spread to other homes. It takes a lot of people to protect your neighborhood. Everyone in the neighborhood has some responsibilities to ensure everyone's safety.

Security at airport is no different than the analogy of watching out for fire in the neighborhood. A good security culture is that **security is seen as a priority by everyone**. Security-conscious actions should be embedded in the day-to-day duties of staff at all levels among the broader airport community, not just those with a direct connection to security.



An illustration on staff being engaged in security (Source: FOCA Switzerland)

General security consciousness of staff could be enhanced by many different ways depending on the local situation of each airport. Some examples for consideration include:

- Awareness training on threat and risk

Even though many airports already provide mandatory general security training to all staff when they first join the company, airports should consider providing something additional that goes beyond the usual compliance-orientated training. The objective is to ensure that the persons addressed understand security and are motivated to implement the desired objectives, instead of simply following the rules.

In addition to the regular security training, airports could consider offering complementary training on the evolving security threats and risks. These complementary trainings may not require an extensive commitment of time but it must be regularly revisited to ensure the message and level of understanding is current and consistent. Ideally, everyone in the organisation should be made aware that the global aviation security threat is real and that security incident could happen anytime and anywhere at the airport. All existing staff, especially the front-line personnel, should be equipped with a basic knowledge of the possible threats and risks faced not only by the organisation at local level, but also the entire aviation industry at global level, such as the imminent threats of insider, landside security, unlawful use of drones and more. Middle and senior managers should be given detailed and targeted



trainings to enhance their understanding of threats and risks. During trainings, real-life examples of security incidents that happened locally or in other countries should be referenced to help staff better understand the potential operational, financial and reputational impacts that can be inflicted on airports, and how personal safety and job security could be eventually affected.

- Dedicated awareness-raising activities

Airport staff, especially those with non-security functions, can sometimes become complacent about security risks and may believe that they have no role to play in security. If they are not provided with regular training, information, advice and support, they may not remember what security behaviours are expected of them nor have the confidence to exhibit those behaviours.

To engage everyone, airport should organise regular security awareness-raising campaign targeting all staff in the organisation. Such activities can be conducted in many different forms based on the local circumstances of the airports. Some examples for consideration include:

- Designating a specific day or week as “security day” or “security week” to raise awareness;
- Setting up booths or exhibitions to convey updated security messages in prominent areas of the airport;
- Devising creative and fun initiatives to encourage staff to propose suggestions to improve security; and
- Conducting regular “voice of employee” survey to understand how security is perceived at the airport.

Even though this handbook does not intend to go into details of the implementation of such campaign, the guidance document developed by the Federal Office of Civil Aviation (FOCA) of Switzerland² provides some practical examples on how a campaign can be effectively implemented. Ultimately, with an overall heightened sense of security awareness, everyone could become the “eyes and ears” of the airport, and thus hopefully be able to identify suspicious activities in a more proactive manner.

² <https://www.icao.int/Security/Security-Culture/Documents/Switzerland%20FOCA%20-%20Guidance%20on%20development%20and%20expansion%20of%20SC%20and%20awareness%20raising.pdf>

- Targeted communication

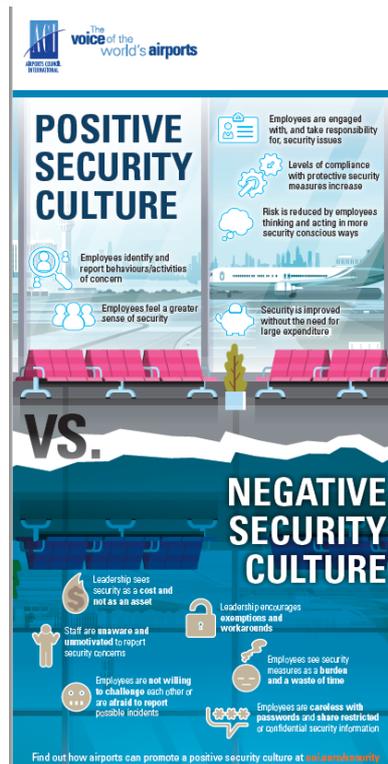
Apart from training and dedicated campaigns, the method of how security messages are communicated is also a critical factor. An effective communication should be able to identify the correct audience, develop key messages and deliver clear information that is easily understood. Fear-inducing or intimidating communication (e.g. you will be penalised if you fail to report suspicious activity) is often counter-productive, since this is more likely to instil fear in staff rather than motivate them.

Security messages could be delivered to airport staff through a variety of methods including:

- Print (e.g. posters, flyers, leaflets, wallet cards);
- Electronic (e.g. social media, YouTube video, e-mailing, email signature, e-newsletter, employee app, intranet, SMS, computer desktop reminder);
- Auditory (e.g. public announcements, bespoke messaging when there is an event or a change in threat level);
- Ambient (e.g. back of the airport permit, ticket stubs, coffee cup holders).



Examples of security messages on the back of airport permit (Source: ISS)



Example of security culture pamphlet (Source: ACI World, click [HERE](#) for high-resolution version)

c) Providing the right environment

- Just culture

A good security culture can never be nurtured without a healthy Just Culture (or known as “no blame” culture). As an established concept in the safety world, a Just Culture is a concept which sees that the causes of errors are resulted from organisational defects instead of personal faults. For example, after an incident, one should ask “what led to the incident?” rather than “who is responsible for the incident?”.

The Just Culture concept allows the organisation to learn from mistakes and to create a climate in which people report their mistakes independently and frankly so that lessons can be learned for the commonality and mistakes can be avoided in the future.

- Active reporting

Promoting a good security culture requires a practice of active reporting of security incidents by all stakeholders. So, the establishment of an appropriate reporting mechanism is important and the reporting procedure should be simple and clearly understood by all staff, irrespective of which part of the airport environment they work in. Multiple options of reporting, such as text/ sms, telephone or speaking to someone in person, should be made available to

maximise the chances of reporting. Many airports have also implemented “see something, say something” campaigns to further enhance reporting culture.

In addition, anonymous self-reporting of poor security behaviour should be encouraged. Despite wrongful conduct, the person reported should be exempted from punishment under specific circumstances if the individual has not acted wilfully or in intentional negligence. However, in case of an aviation accident or a severe incident, the individual should not be exempted from punishment under any circumstance. National legal frameworks will usually specify what these boundaries are.



Example of “see something, say something” campaign (Source: TSA)

- Staff rewards and recognition

Airports may wish to offer employees rewards for good security behaviours such as reporting of suspicious items or behaviour. A reward approach to create and maintain staff buy-in can have a positive change. However, this has to be carefully managed so that false reporting is not encouraged, and security does not become a competition between staff members. As an example, Toronto Pearson Airport (as shown in the image below) offers tiered awards for proactive actions within a job function, for safety and security behaviour outside of the normal job role and for actions that are above and beyond expectations.



Example of airport security tiered awards programme (source: Toronto Pearson Airport)

V. Assessment of Security Culture at Airport

Culture is easy to sense but hard to measure and quantify. Security culture could be assessed and measured in many different ways. In order to assess accurately and comprehensively the effectiveness of security culture, multiple measurement tools might have to be used in combination. This section will provide some basic and practical methods for airports to measure security culture. Even though the examples provided may not be exhaustive enough, they could serve as a good starting reference to help airports, especially those which have not had a measurement system in place yet, to develop their own set of measuring tools based on their local needs. It is also important to note that the examples provided in this section are only for gauging the level of security culture, but not the overall performance of the entire security system of the airport.

Some possible tools on assessing security culture include:

a) Security culture survey

A survey is one of the most direct methods to find out how staff perceive security. Compiled by the Regional Aviation Security Committee (RASC), a template of a security culture questionnaire is enclosed in [Attachment A](#) of this document for reference.

Security culture is intrinsically different from security awareness. Having a good security awareness at individual level does not necessarily imply a good security culture throughout the company. For example, a person can be well aware of what they have to do to comply with security protocols but the company itself may not be providing the right policies and environment to nurture the security culture. So, the questions in Attachment A intend to be different from the



usual security awareness/ compliance test that many airports require their staff to complete during their airport pass application process. The survey template attempts to assess the overall maturity of security culture from various perspectives, including:

- general perception;
- personal ownership;
- leadership and commitment;
- awareness and communication;
- reporting;
- training; and
- corporate security

The survey template is designed for all kinds of airport workers to fill in, both security and non-security staff, and it is recommended to be conducted on a recurring basis. The survey results over time should be able to reflect the trending in changes of the level of security culture of the airport.

b) Security breach records

“Security breach” is defined as any incident involving unauthorized access of an individual or prohibited item carried into a security restricted area of an airport that presents an immediate risk to security, and requires emergency response by appropriate authorities. Some examples of security breach include: passenger bypassed screening by walking through a disability gate, carry-on bag containing a knife bypassed screening and airport staff entering the sterile area without wearing a security pass.

Ideally if a good security culture is in place, the number of security breaches should decrease accordingly. So, the number of breach records over a certain period of time could be a good indicator for security culture and allows analysis for further improvement.

c) Other indicators

Apart from surveys and breach records, security culture can also be assessed based on many different aspects and the measurement tools can therefore differ greatly from airport to airport.

Some other possible indicators for security culture include:

- Covert or overt testing
- Threat Image Projection (TIP) scores
- Security inspections or audit results



Nevertheless, for whatever measurement tools chosen by an airport, a target must be set for every indicator, so that the results can be compared to these targets. Indicator should always be SMART: Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Time bound. This SMART approach allows consistent interpretation and identification of trends over time.

VI. Bibliography

- **A Guide to Developing and Implementing a Suspicious Activity Identification Program at Airports** – Department of Infrastructure and Regional Development of Australia
- **Embedding Security Behaviours: Using the 5Es** – Centre for the Protection of National Infrastructure of the UK
- **Guidance on the Development and Expansion of Security Culture and a Possible Awareness-raising Campaign** – Federal Office of Civil Aviation of Switzerland
- **Guide to the Running of a Security Culture Campaign** – ICAO
- **ICAO Document 8973 (Aviation Security Manual, 12th edition)** – ICAO
- **Management of Security Handbook (1st edition)** – ACI World

VII. Attachment A: Template of Security Culture Survey

Security Culture Questionnaire

Airport where you work: _____ (enter 3-letter IATA code)

Organization: _____

Country: _____

Email (optional): _____

Part 1 - General Personal Details

Please indicate the core business which best describes your organization:

<input type="checkbox"/>	Airline	<input type="checkbox"/>	Airport operator
<input type="checkbox"/>	Maintenance	<input type="checkbox"/>	Ground handling
<input type="checkbox"/>	Navigation service provider	<input type="checkbox"/>	Custom/immigration/quarantine
<input type="checkbox"/>	Police/law enforcement	<input type="checkbox"/>	Cargo handling
<input type="checkbox"/>	Commercial tenants	<input type="checkbox"/>	Other _____

Please indicate the ranking or seniority of your position at your organization:

<input type="checkbox"/>	Senior management	<input type="checkbox"/>	Middle management	<input type="checkbox"/>	Employee
--------------------------	-------------------	--------------------------	-------------------	--------------------------	----------

Please indicate if your work is directly related to aviation security:

<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes, related	<input type="checkbox"/>	No, not related
--------------------------	--------------	--------------------------	-----------------

Please indicate where the majority of your work is taken place at the airport:

<input type="checkbox"/>	Landside	<input type="checkbox"/>	Airside
--------------------------	----------	--------------------------	---------

Please indicate your age range:

<input type="checkbox"/>	<=29	<input type="checkbox"/>	30-39	<input type="checkbox"/>	40-49	<input type="checkbox"/>	>=50
--------------------------	------	--------------------------	-------	--------------------------	-------	--------------------------	------

Please indicate your gender:

<input type="checkbox"/>	Male	<input type="checkbox"/>	Female
--------------------------	------	--------------------------	--------

Please indicate your work schedule:

<input type="checkbox"/>	Day time	<input type="checkbox"/>	Night time	<input type="checkbox"/>	Day/night shift
--------------------------	----------	--------------------------	------------	--------------------------	-----------------

Please indicate your years of experience at your organization:

<input type="checkbox"/>	<=2	2-5	<input type="checkbox"/>	6-10	<input type="checkbox"/>	11-15	<input type="checkbox"/>	>=16
--------------------------	-----	-----	--------------------------	------	--------------------------	-------	--------------------------	------

Please indicate your contract type:

<input type="checkbox"/>	Full time	<input type="checkbox"/>	Part time	<input type="checkbox"/>	Contract staff
--------------------------	-----------	--------------------------	-----------	--------------------------	----------------

Part 2 – Questionnaire

Please indicate using the five-point scale how true the following statements are:

| <input type="checkbox"/> |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Strongly disagree | Disagree | No opinion | Agree | Strongly agree |

General Perception

1. There is enough staffing and resources put into security at the airport.
2. The security measures/ procedures of the airport are well implemented.
3. The security facilities/ equipment at the airport are well maintained.
4. The airport provides a work environment which drives and facilitates good security practices and behaviours.

Personal Ownership

5. I have a role to play in ensuring security at the airport.
6. I am aware of what security behaviours are expected of me.
7. I feel confident enough to challenge those who are not complying with security policy/ procedures regardless of their position in the organization.

Leadership and Commitment

8. The senior management within my organization sees security as a top priority.
9. My immediate supervisors always lead by example by demonstrating good security behaviours.
10. My co-workers generally recognize the importance of security and demonstrate appropriate security behaviours.

Security Awareness

11. I understand the type of security threats and risks that my airport is facing.
12. I understand well the consequences of breaching security rules.
13. I pay attention to the surroundings at the airport and know what unusual or suspicious behavior looks like.

Communication

14. Security information is effectively shared among staff members at my levels in my organization.
15. Security issues of the airport are discussed in my team meeting/ briefing on a regular basis.
16. I am promptly informed about any security incidents happened at the airport and the respective "lesson learned".
17. Security awareness materials, policy and/ or procedures are easily accessible for me to read and understand.

Reporting

18. The security incident reporting system of the airport is well established and effective.
19. I know how and who to contact in the event of a security incident.
20. I feel that staff within my organization in general are proactive and willing to report suspicious activities or security incidents.



21. My organization provides an environment that allows security concerns or wrongdoings to be reported and discussed in an open and “blame-free” environment.

Training

22. The security training that I have received is sufficient and practical for my work.

23. Through the security training offered, I have attained good understanding of my organization's security policies and regulations.

24. I am provided with regular refresher training to keep me updated on the development of security matters (e.g. changes in security policies and procedures, lesson learned of recent security incidents and more).

Corporate Security

25. Sensitive information is disposed or filed appropriately in my organization.

26. I normally lock my computer or electronic devices when leaving them unattended.



Airports Council International Asia-Pacific

Unit 13, 2/F, HKIA Commercial Building
1 Sky Plaza Road, Hong Kong International Airport,
Hong Kong SAR

Website: www.aci-asiapac.aero

Email: info@aci-asiapac.aero

Disclaimer

No subscriber or other reader should act on the basis of any information contained in this publication without referring to applicable laws and regulations and/or without obtaining appropriate professional advice. Although every effort has been made to ensure accuracy, ACI Asia-Pacific shall not be held responsible for loss or damage caused by errors, omission, misprint, or misinterpretation of the contents hereof, including for contributions provided by third parties. Furthermore, ACI Asia-Pacific expressly disclaims all and any liability to any person, whether a purchaser of this publication or not, in respect of anything done or omitted, and the consequences of anything done or omitted, by any such person through reliance on the contents of this publication. No part of this publication may be reproduced, recast, translated, reformatted or transmitted in any form by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording or use of any information storage and retrieval system, without prior written permission from ACI Asia-Pacific.

© 2021 Airports Council International (ACI) Asia-Pacific. All rights reserved