

REPORT

Handling of Unattended Baggage subsequently confirmed to belong to a Departing Passenger at HKIA on 27 and 28 March 2016

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This report covers the handling of a piece of unattended baggage that was subsequently confirmed to belong to a departing passenger at HKIA. The event lasted from 2342 hrs on 27 March to 0023 hrs on 28 March. While the Airport Authority (AAHK) was in attendance at scene during the latter half of the event, the main parties handling the case were Aviation Security Company Limited (AVSECO) and Cathay Pacific Airways.
- 1.2 The report also addresses concerns raised in the media regarding security being compromised during the event. Specifically, the report will address the allegation that the manner in which AVSECO and Cathay Pacific Airways resolved the matter resulted in security requirements being disregarded.

2. The Event

- 2.1 On 27 March at 2348 hrs an AVSECO security supervisor detected an unattended bag of standard cabin baggage size located in the landside area close to Check-in Aisle B. In accordance with established AVSECO procedures (please refer to Attachment B, Annex A), AVSECO reported the case to the Integrated Airport Centre (AVSECO desk) and proceeded to carry out the stipulated security check for unattended baggage found (explosive trace detection). Subsequently, the result of the check confirmed no indication of explosive trace; allowing the bag to be treated as lost property. In accordance with

- standard operating procedures to handle lost property, AVSECO notified AAHK at 0003 hrs.
- 2.2 During resolution of the aforementioned security check, at 2359 hrs, staff from Cathay Pacific Airways check-in approached AVSECO staff at scene and informed AVSECO that the bag might belong to a Cathay departing passenger (Miss Leung CY), departing on Flight CX872, scheduled departure time 0030 hrs. Also present at the scene at similar time was a female wearing a face mask, claiming to be the mother of the passenger (subsequently recognised as Mrs. Leung).
- 2.3 Prior to discovery of the unattended bag, at 2342 hrs Miss Leung CY had approached AVSECO staff at Level 7 Departures Immigration Hall South to report that she had left a bag behind. She told AVSECO that the bag might have been left behind at the security screening point. Acting upon this information, AVSECO searched the security screening areas at both Departures Immigration Hall North and South. As the bag was physically located on the landside, near to check- in aisle B it was not discovered during this search. At 2347 hrs Miss Leung CY left the Departures Immigration Hall South to seek assistance from the airline on the airside. Miss Leung CY contacted staff from Cathay Pacific Airways at the Cathay Pacific Airways airside lounge known as the Cabin. She gave a description of the bag to the lounge staff who passed the information via telephone conversation to Cathay Pacific Airways staff at the landside scene with AVSECO and Mrs. Leung.
- 2.4 To verify the ownership of the bag, and with the information relayed from Miss Leung CY via the staff of Cathay Pacific Airways, AVSECO inspected the bag in the presence of Cathay Pacific Airways. The given description of the bag and the items inside (a notebook computer and some medication), confirmed the bag belonged to Miss Leung CY. At 0013 hrs, upon completion of these checks AVSECO released the bag to Cathay Pacific Airways, in accordance with procedures for handling

found property. Moments later Cathay Pacific Airways handed the bag for safe keeping to Mrs. Leung.

2.5 From CCTV records¹ it is apparent that discussion ensued between Mrs. Leung, and the handling staff of both Cathay Pacific Airways and AVSECO. As stated in the AVSECO report (attached at Attachment B), Mrs. Leung requested that Cathay Pacific Airways deliver the bag to her daughter on the airside. AAHK duty staff arrived at scene at 0015 hrs. A staff member from Cathay Pacific Airways asked the AAHK staff whether AAHK would deliver the bag airside and hand it over to Miss Leung CY. AAHK declined this request as AVSECO had already cleared the bag and ownership of the bag was confirmed as belonging to a Cathay Pacific Airways passenger. It was therefore more appropriate for Cathay Pacific Airways to handle. Cathay Pacific Airways staff then asked an AVSECO manager now on scene as to whether it would be possible for Cathay Pacific Airways to deliver the bag airside to Miss Leung CY at the boarding gate. AVSECO confirmed that there was no objection for Cathay Pacific Airways to convey the bag airside, as the normal security controls for aviation security purposes (x-ray screening) would apply.

2.6 At 0018 hrs, the Cathay Pacific Airways staff presented the bag for x-ray screening at the Departures Immigration Hall North. The staff member concerned was in possession of the necessary Airport Permit. Upon completion of x-ray examination of the bag and security screening of the Cathay Pacific Airways staff, the latter proceeded to boarding gate 3 to hand over the bag to Miss Leung CY. This was done at 0023 hrs. At the boarding gate AVSECO physically examined the bag in accordance with US Transportation Security Administration security requirements. These require boarding gate checks to prevent the carriage by passengers of liquids aerosols and gels on US bound flights.

¹ CCTV records will not be released for security reasons.

- 2.7 A sequence of events prepared by AAHK and based on CCTV timings capture is at Attachment A1. A timeline of events prepared by AAHK duty staff subsequent to the event is at Attachment A2. Supporting reports prepared by AVSECO and Cathay Pacific Airways are at Attachments B and C respectively.
- 2.8 The report by Cathay Pacific Airways refers to "approval" being sought from AVSECO to convey Miss Leung CY's bag airside. Provided the airline complies with aviation security requirements and presents the item for x-ray screening by AVSECO, there is no specific restriction to prevent the airlines at HKIA from conveying to airside from landside an item belonging to one of its passengers, for the purposes of returning the property to the passenger. (Please also refer to comment at 3.7 below).

3. Implications for Airport Security

- 3.1 Based on International Civil Aviation Organization international standards and recommended practices, the Hong Kong Aviation Security Programme (HKASP) allocates responsibilities to various stakeholders. AAHK, being the airport manager of HKIA, is responsible for establishing and implementing measures to protect the enhanced security restricted area through security screening of persons, their baggage and items carried for entry into the enhanced security restricted area at HKIA in accordance with the requirements of the HKASP.
- 3.2 In fulfilling the above requirements, AAHK has established procedures and measures including access controls for passengers, crew and airport staff seeking to enter the Airport Restricted Area (ARA). In addition, measures to screen passengers, crew and airport staff entering the enhanced security restricted area as well as baggage and

articles carried into this area have also been established. These measures are to detect and prevent the movement of restricted articles into the enhanced security restricted area.

- 3.3 At HKIA passenger hold baggage (i.e. check-in baggage) is screened after acceptance by the airline at check-in. The screening system is built into the HKIA baggage handling system, such that every item is security screened and cleared prior to being loaded on board an aircraft. The model that HKIA has adopted to screen hold baggage is widely used in other international airports. In the event that a hold bag cannot be cleared by screening technology, it will need to be physically inspected. In such cases AVSECO will notify the airline concerned and then convey the bag to the relevant aircraft. At the boarding gate, the airline will identify the owner of the bag. The airline will then escort the passenger concerned downstairs to the AVSECO search vehicle, where the owner's bag will be physically searched. The passenger will open the bag. AVSECO will then physically inspect the bag and its contents. Any restricted article will be removed and will not be allowed to be carried on board the aircraft. Once cleared AVSECO will release the bag for carriage as hold baggage on the aircraft.
- 3.4 Hold baggage is not allowed to be loaded on board an aircraft in the event that the owner of the bag fails to fly on the aircraft for any reason. For instance, should a passenger fail to arrive at the boarding gate, or arrive at the boarding gate too late to board (a "no show" passenger), the airline is required to remove that passenger's hold baggage from the aircraft hold. This process (known as baggage reconciliation) ensures a positive check is undertaken before flight departure that any bag belonging to a no show passenger is removed from the aircraft.
- 3.5 Passengers and cabin baggage are screened at the designated screening locations at HKIA. Originating passengers are screened at one of the 3 Departures Immigration Halls (2 in Terminal 1, 1 in

Terminal 2). Transfer passengers are screened at any one of the 9 transfer security points located at HKIA. Ordinarily passengers will convey their respective cabin baggage through the security screening channel. It is possible however for other parties to convey items belonging to passengers through security controls for the purposes of returning such items to the owners. Please refer to the examples under paragraphs 3.6 and 3.7 below. The purposes of security screening of passengers and their cabin baggage is to detect and prevent the carriage of restricted articles past the security check point. In the event that a restricted article is present, (or suspected to be present) in a passenger's cabin baggage AVSECO will carry out a secondary search of the bag. AVSECO will request the passenger to open the bag. AVSECO will then physically inspect the bag and its contents. Any restricted article discovered will be removed for disposal. Any item detected possession of which is illegal under Hong Kong law, will be handled by the Hong Kong Police Force.

- 3.6 AAHK has established procedures that cover the handling of lost and found property. Lost and found property handling allows AAHK staff and the relevant contractor, subject to availability of manpower, to provide courtesy delivery of found property to its established owner. These procedures also include taking the found property into the ARA (airside) if the passenger is airside. For the period March 2015 to March 2016 some 517 courtesy deliveries of items were recorded. Items including travel documents, bags, wallets, clothing and electronic items were taken from the landside and after the required security screening, into the ARA (airside) and returned to their owners.
- 3.7 As stated previously, provided that the airline complies with airport security screening requirements (x-ray screening of the item) there is no specific restriction to prevent airlines at HKIA from providing a similar courtesy delivery of passenger found property to their

respective passengers airside. Whether the airlines choose to provide such service depends on their own discretion.

3.8 In the following paragraphs, the security requirements set out under ICAO documentation, the HKASP and the HKIA Airport Security Programme (HKIA ASP) which may be considered relevant to the current case are summarised with comments offered in respect of the relevant security implication. Extracts of the relevant documents are at Attachment D.

3.9 Screening of Passengers and Cabin Baggage

- ICAO Annex 17, Standards 4.4 & 4.5 (Attachment D1)
- HKASP Part 6, paragraphs 6.2.6 to 6.2.12 (Attachment D2)
- HKIA ASP Part 8 (6.1 – 6.12) (Attachment D3)

Requirement : All items of cabin baggage shall be security screened, generally by means of x-ray technology. In circumstances where x-ray screening is not applicable, AVSECO shall conduct physical search on the item concerned, and where necessary supplement by trace detection technology.

Comments: The bag in question had undergone explosive trace detection when it was handled as an unattended bag and was considered "cleared". When the bag was carried airside by a Cathay Pacific Airways staff, it was screened through x-ray screening as required and was once again cleared.

3.10 Secondary Search of Cabin Baggage

- ICAO Document 8973, Aviation Security Manual paras 11.5.8 & 11.5.9 (Manual searches of cabin baggage) (Attachment D4)
- HKASP Part 6, paragraphs 6.2.8 to 6.2.10 (Attachment D2)
- HKIA ASP Part 8 (6.7) (Attachment D3)

Requirement: A reasoned secondary search of the cabin baggage shall be conducted if there is a suspicion and the search shall be conducted in the presence of the passenger.

Comments: The requirement for the passenger to be present applies when the bag appears suspicious and a secondary search is necessary. In this case, there was no requirement for a secondary search and the presence of the passenger was therefore not required. Some commentary to date has asserted this requirement (for the passenger to be present) applies in respect of all x-ray screening, which is not the case.

3.11 Staff Screening

- HKASP Part 6, paragraph 6.2.4 (Attachment D5)
- HKIA ASP Part 8 (8) (Attachment D6)

Requirement: The screening of airport staff and their belongings shall be screened in the same manner as that applies to passengers and their cabin baggage.

Comments: The Cathay Pacific Airways staff and the bag carried were subject to the same manner of screening as that respectively applying to passengers and cabin baggage.

3.12 Unattended Baggage and Articles Handling

- HKIA ASP Part 11(12) (Attachment D7)

Requirement: If an unattended bag appears suspicious, precautionary measures will need to be taken by AVSECO staff or the Police including the use of a trace detection unit to test the item for trace of explosives. If the result is negative, this will normally be sufficient to enable the bag to be 'cleared' and treated as found property.

Comments: Having cleared the bag (through explosives trace detection and inspection) and confirmed that it was the property of a Cathay Pacific Airways passenger, AVSECO released it to Cathay Pacific Airways staff.

4. Conclusion & Way Forward

- 4.1 AAHK is satisfied that at no time during the event was aviation security compromised. The bag underwent the required security clearance while being treated as an unattended baggage. It was physically examined to confirm ownership. At the screening point the Cathay Pacific Airways staff and the bag underwent the required security screening and both were cleared.
- 4.2 It is recognized that appropriate handling of lost and found properties is essential in promoting customer service at HKIA without compromising safety and security. Together with other stakeholders, AAHK will review and fine tune the existing handling procedures for lost and found items, and promulgate specifically to the airlines any change of the arrangements whereby properties may be returned to their owner inside the ARA (airside).

Airport Authority Hong Kong

April 2016

- Attachment A – AAHK Sequence of Events & Duty Staff Report
Attachment B – AVSECO report
Attachment C – Cathay Pacific Airways report
Attachment D1 – ICAO Annex 17, Standards 4.4 & 4.5
Attachment D2 – Hong Kong Aviation Security Programme paragraphs 6.2.6 to 6.2.12
Attachment D3 – Hong Kong International Airport: Airport Security Programme, Part 8 paragraphs 6.1. to 6.12

- Attachment D4 – ICAO Document 8973 Aviation Security Manual paragraph 11.5.8 & 11.5.9
- Attachment D5 – Hong Kong Aviation Security Programme paragraph 6.2.4
- Attachment D6 – Hong Kong International Airport: Airport Security Programme, Part 8, paragraph 8
- Attachment D7 – Hong Kong International Airport: Airport Security Programme, Part 11, paragraph 12