



Hidden in Plane Sight

Human Trafficking by air is the crime few want to talk about, but formal training of aircrews and airport personnel could reduce the global problem. Robert W. Moorman reports.

The stories are numerous, endless and sad.

On a May 2016 America Airlines flight from London to Chicago, a seven-year-old frightened Albanian girl onboard appeared to observant flight attendants to be a victim of human trafficking. When a senior flight attendant tried to learn more about her, an older man traveling with her told the flight attendant not to interfere because he had purchased the girl. She was his property. The flight attendant informed the Captain to notify law enforcement, in accordance with airline procedure. Concerned about ruining the man's life by possibly making a false accusation, the Captain did not notify authorities. And the man and the young girl vanished once the plane landed.

The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime defines human trafficking as the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harboring or receipt of persons by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion. In plain English: human trafficking is a lucrative form of slavery in our modern era, a cancer with no apparent cure.

Law enforcement considers human trafficking a particularly sinister crime because it often strikes the most vulnerable in society, children or young girls sold into forced labor or prostitution. Various law enforcement agencies state that human trafficking is the world's second most profitable crime worldwide, behind drug trafficking. As of 2014, human trafficking earned traffickers \$150 billion a year, \$99 billion from commercial sexual exploitation, according to the International Labor Organization (ILO).

Despite significant interest by the United Nations, various governments and businesses, including airlines, the subject of

human trafficking does not appear to be a high priority, according to experts. However, work continues among some committed government agencies, airlines, airports and related associations.

"We haven't made very good strides in the 16-years of working on it," said Sherry Saehlenou, founder of CAA Training Solutions LLC. Saehlenou became aware of the problem many years ago as a flight attendant with Pan American World Airways.

Airlines and other organizations can't comprehend the idea of human trafficking, particularly of children, and are at a loss of how to combat the horror.

"It's a subject people don't want to talk about or really know exists," said Saehlenou, who spoke extensively on the subject at WATS 2016. "People don't want to hear about the dark side of life. It is too overwhelming and sad."

Compounding human trafficking is a class-system based bigotry among some cultures. Traffickers regard victims as lesser human beings, commodities. Victims include ethnic minorities of children and women, mostly. Asia remains the largest provider of victims of human trafficking, according to the ILO.

Above
Human trafficking
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CAA Training Solutions is in the process of firming up a contract for human trafficking and security awareness training with Peak Pacific Ltd., Hong Kong. For proprietary reasons, Saehlenou declined to discuss specifics of the proposed curriculum, which is still in development, but indicated it would involve e-learning and on-site training and have a train-the-trainer module.

Determination & Training

Despite the enormity of the problem, and the lack of will by some in air transportation, there are several organizations committed to fighting human trafficking, whether it is by air, land or sea. Innocents at Risk and Airline Ambassadors International (AAI) are two groups dedicated to reducing human trafficking. Both organizations keep the subject on the front burner and often brief local, state and federal leaders and airlines and airports on the subject.

AAI has developed a training curriculum for airline, airport and the hospitality industry that is similar to the Blue Campaign of the US Department of Homeland Security, which includes the Transportation Security Administration (TSA).

AAI's one-day training program conducted by two-to-four trainers includes the history of human trafficking and tips on how to recognize trafficking in-flight as well as protocols on how to report

trafficking to law enforcement. The AAI training team often includes a survivor of human trafficking.

Knowing what to look for is a key aspect of the training. Signs of human trafficking include: the person being trafficked is inappropriately dressed for travel; has a vacant or scared look about them; is unaware of any flight details and not in control of their travel documents; and doesn't know their final destination. Often the victim is ravenous and afraid of the person with whom they're traveling.

Trainees interact and provide their responses to potential scenarios in breakout groups. The training is tailored to the travel industry, segments of the airline and airport business, hotel and tourism industries, law enforcement and ground transportation businesses. AAI claims to be the first organization to have their human trafficking curriculum adopted by the International Tourism Management Institute. Having a trained cabin crew acts as a first line of defense against traffickers.

"We realized some time ago that the training of airline personnel on human trafficking would be a turnkey solution in identifying traffickers and trafficking victims," said AAI Founder Nancy Rivard. "And it would cost almost nothing because the airlines already have the infrastructure." She added, "It is abso-

lutely essential for airlines to train their staff on human trafficking."

In 2009, AAI's mission was expanded to help protect people — children and young women mainly — from traffickers. In 2010, AAI conducted the first industry-specific training program on human trafficking. Since then, the organization has conducted 41 training sessions to 4,000 individuals in the US; Kiev, Ukraine; Budapest, Hungary; the United Nations; Riga, Latvia and Bucaramanga and Bogotá, Colombia. On August 24, 2016, AAI provided human trafficking awareness training at the El Dorado International Airport in Colombia.

To help notify authorities, Airline Ambassadors developed a Tip Line App, which can be downloaded for free from Google or iTunes, and takes you directly to law enforcement. The app is available in numerous languages.

Determining how many are trafficked today by air is difficult. The last estimate in 2004 indicated that between 600,000 and 800,000 individuals were annually trafficked by air, said Rivard, who recalled another story of human trafficking by air that had a better ending.

On another American flight from Europe to the US, backpackers asked senior flight attendant Sandi Fiorini to help a teenage girl traveling alone, who didn't speak English. Someone had handed the young girl to them to help

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her board a flight to Washington D.C. But when the plane landed, no one was there to meet the girl. She did have a phone number. Fiorini called the number, but a man answering became angry, saying the girl arrived earlier than expected. Fearing that the girl was a victim of human trafficking, Fiorini called the authorities and the young girl was saved.

While this is a success story, there are thousands of victims of human trafficking that are not rescued.

Flight attendants have been particularly vocal about the need for in-depth awareness training, and they support current legislation before the US Congress that would mandate training of certain employees.

"Human trafficking training should be universal," said Debora Sutor, International vice president for the Association of Flight Attendants (AFA). "It should not be left up to the carrier. It should be mandatory."

Stephen Schembs, AFA Government Affairs director agreed, saying the voluntary programs are well intentioned but inadequate and need to be adopted industry wide. "We have been frustrated about getting this training into airlines voluntarily. Which is why we seek to have this corrected legislatively." (See related sidebar on pending legislation.)

Pilot groups have been supportive of human trafficking awareness training, but CAT could not determine if any pilots

undergo this kind of training separately or with cabin crew.

"The Air Line Pilots Association, International (ALPA) is a strong supporter of government and private anti-human trafficking efforts and is committed to helping maintain a safe environment for all our passengers," said ALPA president Captain Tim Canoll.

Airlines, management particularly, have been slow to embrace human trafficking awareness training collectively, but there are leaders in this effort. Delta Air Lines, Aer Lingus, JetBlue Airways, American Airlines and Silver Airways, a Miami-based regional airline, have initiated limited classroom and online training programs designed to teach cabin crew how to spot traffickers and their victims. Part of the training stresses the need to recognize the signs of human trafficking.

Air France was one of the first airlines to address the problem years ago with in-flight videos and notices to employees about human trafficking. But, at present "we do not have any specific training in human trafficking for our crews," said an Air France spokeswoman.

Atlanta-based Delta is actively involved in human trafficking awareness training and has adopted anti-trafficking policies. In 2011, Delta became the first US carrier to sign a Code of Conduct outlined by the End Child Prostitution, Pornography and Trafficking initiative, which

includes a network of organizations working together to eliminate the commercial sexual exploitation of children. Two years later, Delta adopted the Human Rights Abuses policy, which requires all employees to report "actions that indicate a passenger or employee is engaged in human trafficking," said the airline.

As for training, Delta implemented the DHS Blue Lightning training program/protocol in September 2013. This is a computer-based training program that provides airlines with tools to help identify and report instances of human trafficking. Today, more than 68,000 Delta employees have taken the training. It is part of initial and recurrent training for Airport Customer Service, Reservation Sales and Customer Care, Flight Operations and In-Flight Service divisions, as well as for many merit employees.

Aer Lingus, a subsidiary of the International Airlines Group (IAG), the parent company of British Airways, Iberia and Vueling, is ramping up its human trafficking awareness training programs in a two-step process. The carrier recently launched a training program for all front-of-house staff. Aer Lingus is working with the Hope for Justice charity, a UK and Irish organization that has rescued numerous victims of trafficking. The charity provides training and guidance for various organizations and government agencies, including law enforcement in the UK and Ireland.

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Part of this initiative is a train-the-trainer program and cabin crew and operations personnel are part of this initial training effort. Employees will get general information on human trafficking training and tips for cabin and flight crew on how to spot traffickers and their victims.

Over the next few months, Aer Lingus will launch its own human trafficking awareness training program. Specific courses for cabin and flight crew are being developed, and another course for ground staff. The training will be part of the airline's Continuous Development and Recurrent Training program. For the 2017 module, which kicks off in November 2016, all cabin and flight crew and newly hired crew will receive awareness training.

"Human trafficking is a problem in every country in Europe," said Noel Houlihan, Safety Training Officer for the In-Flight Safety and Training Department, Aer Lingus Training Academy. As a result, "we are very keen to introduce this training, which is needed to combat this growing problem," he added.

Legislation recently passed in the UK, which affects Aer Lingus because it is part of the UK-registered IAG, mandates that all airlines provide human trafficking awareness training for all staff.

Sometimes well-intentioned employees and security personnel looking for criminal activity, including human trafficking, get it wrong and could indicate why better training could help. In December 2016, eight members of a Korean girl band were detained at Los Angeles International Airport (LAX) because authorities suspected they were sex workers, according to a short item in the February 2016 issue of Aviation Security International.

Government Solutions

Flight attendants and other air transportation employees favor government mandated human trafficking awareness training for most employees over voluntary efforts to deal with this growing problem.

Below is a brief overview of active legislation before the US Congress, which would make human trafficking awareness training a requirement for flight attendants:

- H.R. 4430 - the "Secure Our Skies Act of 2016" introduced February 2, 2016 by Reps. Dina Titus (D-Nev.) and Barbara Comstock (R-VA). This bill has 29 bipartisan cosponsors currently.
- S. 2642 - the "Stop Trafficking on Planes (STOP) Act of 2016, introduced March 3, 2016 by Senators Amy Klobuchar (D-Minn.) and John Warner (D-Va.).

The current funding for the FAA was to have expired on July 15. However, at the eleventh hour, Congress passed H.R. 636 "FAA Extension, "Safety and Security Act of 2016" providing a one-year funding extension for the agency. A provision that "requires training for flight attendants in recognizing and responding to potential victims of human trafficking" was included in the Act.

In addition, The House Appropriations Committee included language in the Transportation, Housing and Urban Development (THUD) appropriations bill encouraging DOT to explore human trafficking training for airline staff at each major US airline. The bill's language was put forward by Rep. Michael Honda (D-CA).

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When in fact, the pop group, "Oh My Girl," traveled to the US for a photo shoot. The octet was carrying numerous costumes and props, which raised the suspicion of customs officials. The girls were detained for 15 hours and released.

The number of airlines actively involved in human trafficking awareness training pales in comparison to the number of carriers worldwide that do not. In the US, there are reasons why some carriers shy away from being part of the DHS training effort. The one wrinkle to the Blue Lightening Protocol run by DHS's Customs and Border Protection division is a requirement that participating airlines sign a Memorandum of Understanding about the training. Several airlines decline to sign the MoU because of the possible legal implications and time required for training, said Rivard. Consequently, widespread acceptance of Blue Lightening among US airlines remains spotty.

Nevertheless, there is mounting concern among cabin crew particularly, that human trafficking by air will not diminish unless airline related personnel are properly trained to deal with this vile crime. **cat**

Airports Involvement

The Columbus (Ohio) Regional Airport Authority (CRAA) and California's Mineta San José International Airport (SJC) recognize the value of human trafficking awareness training for their employees.

"I strongly encourage anyone who comes into contact with the traveling public to have some form of human trafficking awareness training," said Rod Borden, COO of the CRAA. "It is a horrific problem. As a society we cannot turn our backs on this issue."

The CRAA, in cooperation with the Ohio Department of Public Safety and the US Department of Homeland Security/Transportation Security Administration (TSA) produced a 28-minute human trafficking awareness video for selected airport employees. A 15-minute version is being developed for all employees.

The video, which defines human trafficking in terms of forced labor and prostitution, is an offshoot from a state task force on human trafficking formed years ago by Ohio Governor John Kasich (R). In time, Borden would like to see

more in-depth training for front-line airport workers.

CRJ oversees the operations of Port Columbus International Airport, Rickenbacker International Airport and Bolton Field airports in the Columbus area.

The City of San Jose first offered human trafficking awareness training to SJC in January 2014 and January 2016. Increasing awareness of human trafficking has been a priority in the Silicon Valley. So this training for airport employees is likely to continue once a year or more often, said the airport.

Airport personnel at ticket counters, gates and other areas of airport operations are in a unique position to identify and report of potential victims and traffickers to law enforcement.

The training is invaluable to those in a position to understand that the problem is "hiding in plain sight," said Rosemary Barnes, Public Information Manager for the airport. SJC employees are now part of the solution to the human trafficking by air problem.

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