



September 2021

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## Remembering 9/11 – a lesson from the past

11 September 2021 is the 20th anniversary of the terrorist attacks commonly referred to as 9/11 – the worst example of terrorism in civil aviation history. Throughout the morning four hijacked aircraft conducted coordinated attacks that ultimately led to the deaths of nearly 3,000 people including crew, passengers, first responders and the public.

Despite their complexity, the nature of the planning that was undertaken prior to these attacks did provide an opportunity for people to intervene and raise alarms. Suspicious activity was observed, and it is your ability to see something, or hear something and report it that will contribute to stopping attacks of this nature in the future.

The imagery from this day is etched into the minds of us all. At the New Zealand Civil Aviation Authority, including the Aviation Security Service, and with the support of our partners and stakeholders, we are committed to a strong security culture that protects all of those who interact with our airports in any way, to be safe and feel safe.

We all contribute to security and throughout this month we encourage you to think about the critical role you play in the security of our airports and in keeping people safe. It's extremely important that we take the lessons from the past so events like this never happen again. Where you see or hear something that isn't quite right, please report it!

# See it, hear it, report it – the #1 lesson

## ***Terrorists plan, and that's an opportunity for us to notice***

### **9/11**

Planning and preparation for the attacks of 9/11 took years with every part of the plan overseen by al-Qaeda's leaders in Afghanistan. 83 times the terrorists took flights before the attacks of 9/11. 83 times they flew business class, booking the same seats each time due to the view that those seats provided and observed the activity between the cabin crew and the flight deck. 83 times observing that the doors of the cockpit were never kept locked. 83 opportunities to see or hear suspicious behaviour and report it.

But the planning wasn't solely limited to flights. It also involved other activity spanning the globe, including:

- meetings in Malaysia;
- flying lessons in various parts of the world;
- money transfers from Dubai;
- recruitment of suicide operatives from countries around the Middle East;
- the establishment of terrorist cells and the hijackers themselves in the United States.

These activities all demonstrate the global reach of terrorism, and New Zealand was not immune. In 2006 a person was deported from New Zealand for being "directly associated" with those responsible for the 2001 attacks. This person had qualified as a pilot in the United States and prior to deportation joined a local aero club in New Zealand.

### **Norway terrorist attacks**

On 22 July 2011 Anders Behring Breivik detonated a fertilizer bomb outside the office of the prime minister in Oslo before travelling to Utoya Island where he posed as a police officer, killing 69 people.

Breivik planned this attack for nine years including:

- Writing his manifesto and obtaining his first firearms;
- playing video games for 'training-simulation'; and
- buying large amounts of artificial fertiliser and other chemicals.

Taken on their own, none of these activities might present as out of the ordinary. It is critical that you understand the context of the situation and ask yourself "does this feel right?" For example, why would an ordinary person need to have such large quantities of fertiliser or chemicals? If it doesn't look or sound right, report it.

## Christchurch mosque shooting

Closer to home, the Christchurch mosque shooter also meticulously planned his attack with the Royal Commission report noting that by January 2017 he already had a 'terrorist attack in mind'. As with the examples above, the planning phase provided opportunity for suspicious behaviours to be seen or heard, and reported:

- the terrorist had made enquiries with a rifle club near Dunedin and learned to shoot;
- joined the gym to improve his physical fitness and embarked on a steroid regime inspired by Anders Breivik;
- refused to have breakfast at a migrant run café with his mother because he wanted his money to go to white New Zealanders;
- he had commented of his fear that his extremist opinions would be picked up by intelligence agencies;
- conducted research of mosques in New Zealand – studying floor plans, locations, and identifying their busy periods; and
- In the months prior to the attack, he travelled to Christchurch and flew a drone over his primary target, the Al Noor mosque

*In the three examples above, terrorists have shown that planning is the precursor to their terrorist act. What we learn from this is that each aspect of a terrorist's planning is an opportunity for us to notice their behaviour.*

## Auckland supermarket attack

On Friday 3 September 2021 an individual committed a terrorist attack at an Auckland supermarket. The investigation into this individual is ongoing and at this stage it would be too early for us to comment on this incident.

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# Terrorism morphs

While meticulous planning is the hallmark of a terrorist attack, the way in which they attack is constantly evolving.

Despite the complex planning, the 9/11 hijackings themselves were relatively simplistic in nature with box cutters being used to take control of the aircraft. Since then, aviation related terrorist attacks have continued to evolve, with the aviation community having seen terror attempts including:

- attempts to detonate a bomb in flight by concealing the device in shoes and underwear;
- terrorists planning to carrying liquid explosives on board aircraft, then mix these and detonate them mid-flight;
- three landside attacks at Glasgow, Brussels and Ataturk airports; and
- the use of insiders to facilitate an improvised explosive device being placed on board aircraft – Daallo Airlines, and the Russian Metrojet that crashed into the Sinai Peninsula.

While reactive measures may prevent similar incidents in the future, enhancing our security culture and continuing to examine and ensure the integrity of our security controls could be the best measure to prevent an act of terrorism in Aotearoa.

Never be reluctant to report something you see, hear, or feel that doesn't seem quite right. What you see may be just a small piece in a bigger puzzle. You have a vital role to play and no matter what your position description, security is your responsibility too. You are a guardian and protector of aviation and together we all contribute to airport security.

## See it. Hear it. Report it.

Be safe.  
Feel safe.

# Airport security

## We all contribute

Something not quite right?

See it. Hear it. Report it. ☎ 04 385 5124

CAA  
Civil Aviation Authority  
of New Zealand  
Te Kaitiaki Takekōwhiri

Aviation Security Service  
Ewhiriwhiri Takekōwhiri

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