

"Security is not by accident."

*Pierre J. Jeannot
Director General of IATA*

What might be described as the first act of sabotage in aviation occurred over two centuries ago when, on August 27, 1783, French physicist J.A.C. Charles launched a hydrogen-filled free balloon in Paris. It lifted off from the Champs de Mars and soared through a rainy, overcast sky to land some 25 kilometres away, near the small farming village of Gonesse.

Unfortunately, nobody had thought to warn the local peasants, who immediately attacked the "monster" from the heavens and demolished it with scythes and pitchforks. They then tied it to a horse's tail and had it dragged through the fields until only shreds remained. It was subsequently enacted into French law that no more such flights could be staged during the harvest season!

While this may seem comical today, like something out of a Monty Python film, it was certainly a laughing matter for the terrified balloonist who fortunately lived to tell the tale.

The same cannot be said of the ill-fated Pan American Flight 103, destroyed on December 21, 1988, over Lockerbie, Scotland. Shot down from the sky by a bomb hidden in a radio cassette player stowed in the plane's luggage compartment. Nor of the thousands of other innocent people who have become victims of sabotage, terrorism and hijackings in international civil aviation over the past 25 years.

PROTECTING THE SKIES AND AIRPORTS FROM UNLAWFUL INTERFERENCE

While there had been other minor isolated incidents during the early days of man-powered flight, such devastating phenomena, known today in the aviation world under the umbrella term "unlawful interference", were unforeseen back in 1944 when the first ICAO Convention was drafted.

And while safety has always been a cornerstone of the Organization's mandate, since that day, security has unquestionably become its first and overriding priority. Indeed, ICAO has become the

undisputed leader in developing aviation security programs at the international level.

In brief, the principal objective of ICAO's aviation security programs is to assure the safety of passengers, crew, ground personnel and members of the general public by first attempting to deny would-be offenders access to the primary target. Namely, the aircraft. The program also contains contingency measures to be applied in the event that acts of unlawful interference do occur.

