

SPEECH BY A/P HO PENG KEE, SENIOR MINISTER OF STATE FOR LAW & HOME AFFAIRS, AT THE LAUNCH OF THE REGULATED AIR CARGO AGENT REGIME ON MONDAY, 8 SEP 2008, 10.00 A.M. AT THE SINGAPORE AVIATION ACADEMY AUDITORIUM

=====

Distinguished Guests,

Ladies & Gentlemen,

Good morning. I am happy to join all of you today to mark the official launch of the Regulated Air Cargo Agent Regime in Singapore.

Constant Review of Aviation Security Measures

The aviation industry has and will continue to play a vital role in the global economy. Indeed, its importance will increase. With this will come a corresponding array of risks and threats.

At the APEC Air Cargo Security Conference held in Bangkok in June this year, the US Transport Security Administration's Office of Intelligence assessed that terrorists remain relentless in seeking opportunities to mount attacks. A vulnerable area in the aviation industry targeted by terrorists is the transportation of cargo onboard passenger aircraft. It is therefore necessary for security personnel at global airports to remain vigilant to potential threats. Singapore should be no exception.

To strengthen our defence against terrorist attacks, the Singapore Police Force (SPF) and the Civil Aviation Authority of Singapore (CAAS) have implemented restrictions on Liquids, Aerosols and Gels on departing flights since 8 May 2007 to protect users against liquid explosives. This came after the discovery that terrorists in London had tried to use liquid explosives to blow up airliners two years ago.

Enhancing Air Cargo Security

Protecting the aviation industry from dynamic terror threats is not a simple matter ; especially when air cargo volume has grown tremendously worldwide throughout the years with some 40 million tonnes of freight being flown annually, of which Singapore handles about 1.8m tonnage per year. It is therefore imperative that the SPF and CAAS constantly review security measures at Singapore Changi Airport to continuously enhance aircraft and airport security. The Regulated Air Cargo Agent Regime or RCAR for short is a result of such a proactive and systematic approach.

The RCAR, implemented pursuant to the International Civil Aviation Organisation's standards of security, will ensure multiple security checks and measures. This regime has also been adopted and implemented in several other countries such as Australia, United Kingdom, Hong Kong and Japan.

For example, cargo agents who have successfully registered to be Regulated Air Cargo Agents (RCA) will be required to put in place security measures and procedures across its entire supply chain to ensure that the cargoes under its care is safe for air carriage. These include performing documentation checks, verifying the consignor and the cargo before the cargo is accepted for export, and ensuring that the cargo is stored in a secured environment, such as under CCTV surveillance and restricted access control.

These security measures are documented in the RCAs' Security Programmes which are to be submitted and approved by the SPF. Regular and surprise inspections are conducted by SPF on the RCAs to ensure their compliance with the measures spelt out in their Security Programmes. Those who fail the inspections risk having their RCA status suspended.

At the airfreight terminals, all cargoes tendered for export on passenger flights are subjected to screening by X-ray machine or explosives trace detector. The quantum of screening will however differ¹, depending on whether the cargoes originate from a *known consignor* through an RCA, or otherwise.

The RCAR represents a new initiative to enhance air cargo security. It is a positive measure that will strengthen Singapore's position as a safe and secure global air hub. It will not only further boost the confidence the aviation industry has in Singapore, but also secure safer journeys for travellers.

Close Cooperation with the Industry

Airport authorities alone cannot ensure that Singapore continues its success as a global air hub. To do so, they require the close cooperation and strong support from the aviation industry and from all of you here as well. While the government will do its part in safeguarding Singapore, the air cargo industry too has a role to play in strengthening the security of their own operations.

I note the authorities' close partnership with the industry. Industry players demonstrate their unwavering commitment to aviation security by actively participating in the many RCAR public consultations and outreach seminars, providing valuable response and feedback in the process.

Indeed, like any other industry, the aviation sector can be successful only if its stakeholders share a common vision and commitment to work together. As of 25 Aug this year, we have 273 RCAs registered with us. This number is a further testament to the strong support and commitment shown by the air cargo industry in our collective efforts to tighten aviation security on passenger aircrafts.

Later, I will present tokens of appreciation to industry bodies such as the Singapore Aircargo Agents Association which have provided its strong support to the regime, and not forgetting cargo agents who had participated in the pilot implementation, which has enabled the authorities to review and fine-tune the RCAR policies. With their support, I believe we now have in place holistic and well-conceptualised policies best suited for the aviation industry.

On this note, I am pleased to launch the RCAR. Thank you.
