# IFALPA
## The Global Voice of Pilots

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# IFALPA expresses concerns over the effectiveness of new Israeli security system

Chertsey 26 July: The International Federation of Air Line Pilots' Associations (IFALPA) says that the trial implementation of the Security Code System (SCS) by the Israeli Ministry of Transport has revealed a number of flaws in its effectiveness.

More than three years ago IFALPA first expressed doubts about the practical effectiveness of the SCS system. These concerns, shared across the industry, centre on the ease with which the system could be compromised inadvertently or through malicious intent, the practical administration of the system and, most importantly, the impact the requirements of the system will have on flight safety.

 The SCS system requires that each pilot that may have reason to operate flights to Israel is issued with an electronic smart card enabled by a personal identification numbers (PIN) which supposedly will confirm the users identity as pilot security cleared to operate into Israeli airspace or indicate that the security of the flight has been compromised. However, this presents a number of issues:

▶   Activation of the system requires pilots to enter the PIN into the smart card prior to entering Israeli airspace. While in normal operations this does not present a significant problem, if unexpected and not uncommon problems also crop up (for example weather issues, a technical problem, fuel shortage or perhaps a passenger taken ill) then the identification process might interrupt normal fight management and distract pilots' attention. Moreover, under these conditions there is greater potential for an incorrect code to be entered in error, resulting in a false alert which will complicate the situation even more.

▶   For aircraft arriving from the north (as significant percentage of the flights bound for Israel do) this comes at a point about 180nm from the Israeli coast and in an area of complex and disputed airspace (see IFALPA Safety Bulletin 07SAB07). On this routing the issues raised above may arise even in normal operations.

▶   A positive identification does not guarantee that the pilots are not acting under threat equally a negative indication does not necessarily mean that a threat exists. Moreover, there is no guarantee that the person entering the code is the person that the card was issued to.

▶   Many thousands of these cards will have to be issued (IFALPA estimates between 10-20,000) and it is impossible to ensure the security of such a large number of cards. It is a virtual certainty that cards may be lost, stolen or simply left behind in error. Clearly, once out of the hands of the intended recipient, there is the possibility that the card could be sold to those hostile to Israel.

▶   The existence of the system is now public knowledge and as a result must be considered as compromised. Indeed, it may have already been copied and in the hands of terrorist organisations.

▶ The procedures following an unsuccessful identification are not detailed in any Aeronautical Information Publication (AIP). This will have detrimental effect on flight planning since it unclear where an aircraft will be required to divert and therefore how much fuel will be required to reach that destination (while remaining clear of Israeli airspace). Of even greater concern is the action that might be taken by the Israel Defence Forces (IDF) against an airliner that has broadcast an incorrect or stress code in error.

▶ The first priority of pilots is to ensure the safe arrival of their passengers and crew. Therefore, the threat of action by the IDF may also act as a strong deterrent to pilots to enter a stress code when the situation may suggest that they should.

IFALPA will always welcome any initiative that improves the security of the travelling public but the SCS brings, at best, a marginal benefit to security and may actually open a new loophole for terrorists to exploit. The cost of the system in terms of flight safety and the potential for system errors far outweighs the hoped for benefits. Accordingly, the Federation calls on the Israeli government to abandon the SCS system. As always, IFALPA stands ready to enter a dialogue which will allow its security experts to work together with the Israeli Government to improve the security and safety of the travelling public.