

## Informal Transport Council Aviation Security

A Coruña, Spain  
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### **Speaking points by Vice-President Siim Kallas**

I am grateful for the decision of the Spanish Presidency to add Aviation Security to the agenda of our meeting.

The Detroit terrorist attempt in flight No. NW253 on 25<sup>th</sup> December has confirmed the reality of the threat against aviation. It remains a target for the terrorists.

Aviation Security has to be guaranteed by all means. The travelling public, media and aviation stakeholders legitimately ask us whether protective measures are good enough or whether we need to take action.

And the first thing that we have to acknowledge is that we are confronted to a complex challenge, where there are no magic solutions.

The Commission has carefully analysed this issue. The first thing I would like to stress is that EU standards on aviation security were correctly implemented on 25 December at Schiphol airport. Nevertheless, in spite of that, a dangerous situation had arisen and a terrible disaster was avoided only narrowly.

How could this happen?

In my view, two elements are of particular relevance. First, it appears that the US competent intelligence services did not draw the right conclusions to information about the arrested person available to them. The President of the United States himself has talked about a failure “to connect the dots”. Therefore, the capacity of the authorities involved to identify passengers who pose a risk needs to be strengthened. This is, by the way, also an issue for Europe.

This has been one of the conclusions of the recent informal meeting of Interior Ministers in Toledo. We need to improve the cooperation between the intelligence services, encourage information sharing and improve analysis of the data collected. Although this aspect is outside the competence of the Transport Ministers, this is an important lesson to be drawn for the purposes of future aviation security rules.

Secondly, how did the Nigerian passenger manage to bring explosive powder onboard of the aircraft?

Here, we are confronted with certain limits of the detection equipment and procedures currently used and laid down in EU legislation. Such small quantities hidden in the underwear are extremely difficult to detect, even if 100% hand search would have been done.

What are the consequences for us?

I see three avenues for policy action to look at.

First, a fresh look at more advanced technologies is required. There is already a debate about the use of whole body imaging technology at airports. These machines can be more performant in terms of detection capacity. This is why some Member States have already started using them on a trial basis in certain airports. At the same time, however, they raise a number of concerns relating to privacy, to data protection and possibly, to health issues. These concerns were put forward by the European Parliament in November 2008.

We must take such concerns very seriously. I understand that newly developed machines of the second generation can address such concerns much more effectively. If so, optional use of these machines at EU Airports should be encouraged, on the basis of EU standards, because a community framework guarantees better uniform application of security standards throughout the single aviation market, and is the best way to protect our citizens in accordance with high common rules. I do not believe that individual action by certain countries is the best option, since it can lead to dispersion and divergent rules.

I intend to present in April a report about body scanners and issues related to their use at EU airports. This should give Council and EP a possibility to assist the Commission in its work on legislative proposals that may follow. I think it is essential that we act together and that today we send a strong unanimous message to public opinion stressing our common approach in this very sensitive area.

Secondly, I do believe that the response to the most recent incident cannot again lie in simply adding another layer to the existing aviation

security system. Already now, the queuing up at control points during peak times is demonstrating that this traditional approach is reaching limits.

Therefore, we need to find ways to be more targeted when implementing security controls. Instead of treating every individual passenger as a potential terrorist certain forms of passenger profiling as well as unpredictable variations of control techniques need to be looked at. This is not an easy task but we need to work in this direction, since terrorists keep adapting constantly to every new measure. But this work will have to be done, and the Commission will do so, in close cooperation with Member States through our institutions.

Finally, I am convinced that parts of the proper response to this incident lie in strengthening international cooperation, both bilaterally and multilaterally.

In a bilateral framework, the Trans-Atlantic link is essential. Close cooperation with the U.S.A. through our aviation agreement remains a priority to ensure more effective protection for our citizens, and at the same time aim forwards one-stop security.

More generally, we will need to reflect about options to improve the security of flights arriving from Third countries and continuing their journey via an EU airport.

This is an important point inside the current system which needs to be addressed soon. The forthcoming ICAO AvSec Panel as well as the ICAO Assembly later this year are platforms to do this important work.

Dear colleagues, in conclusion today we should reaffirm our strong commitment to enhanced European action to strengthen the protection of our citizens through reinforced common security rules at European level, while at the same time underlining the key role of the Trans-Atlantic and multilateral cooperation. This is the only way to effectively work to continue to face the terrorist challenge to the aviation sector.