

Airport Care Team

Submission to the Colloquium of Six Religions

INTRODUCTION

I hereby submit for your consideration and action the matter of the **Hong Kong International Airport Care Team**.

In February 2000, the Hong Kong Airport Authority approached the Senior Airport Chaplain to request the Airport Chaplaincy Services undertake to convene the **Hong Kong International Airport Care Team**.

The Senior Chaplain, Rev Paul Ginnivan OMI, has accepted this invitation on account of the humanitarian nature of the project. The responsibilities are manifold, but because the project is urgent and of importance for the airport, and all the travelling public and their families, it is necessary for the Team to be formed.

WHAT IS THE AIRPORT CARE TEAM?

- 1.1 **The Hong Kong International Airport Care Team will be a voluntary body of approximately 200 persons, convened, trained, maintained and co-ordinated by the Airport Chaplaincy Services to respond to an aircraft 'incident'.**
- 1.2 **The purpose of this voluntary body is to provide 'first instance' compassionate support to uninjured relatives of passengers and crew involved.** This refers to emotional and practical support for the uninjured and the relatives of those involved. Some term it 'emotional first-aid' as distinct from the 'first-aid' rendered to the injured.
- 1.3 **The Airport Care Team will be activated at the request of Hong Kong Airport Authority in confirmation with the Airline concerned. This will be done through the Senior Airport Chaplain.** Volunteers will be summoned to assemble at a designated location (e.g. Airport Regal Hotel) to comfort the grieving and distraught relatives of members involved in an aircraft incident.
- 1.4 **Its purpose is to respond to any airport incident impacting on the Hong Kong airport.** This includes 'incidents' happening outside of Hong Kong, wherein the aircraft was destined for Hong Kong, or had left from Hong Kong, or may have been carrying large numbers of Hong Kong residents.

- 1.5 **The Airport Care Team will be organized independently of both Airport Authority and airlines;** this ensures legal independence for all parties. Nevertheless, the Airport Care Team coordinator will invite airline and Airport Authority involvement and support for resources.
- 1.6 **The Airport Care Team will belong to and will be an extension of the whole HK airport community, but it will be formally established under the auspices of the HKIAirport Chaplaincy Services,** the Chairman being the Senior Airport Chaplain. The legal responsibility for the Airport Care Team will lie with the Airport Chaplaincy Services which is soon to be established as a legal body and as a tax deductible Charitable Organization.
- 1.7 **The Airport Care Team will be funded by public fund-raising efforts, and by support from airlines and other commercial businesses.** Approaches will be made to the Community Chest and the Hong Kong Jockey Club and service clubs such as Rotary International.
- 1.8 **The Airport Care Team will be trained by local trainers.** These will be drawn from such bodies as Red Cross and St John's Ambulance, the Hong Kong Psychological Society, as well as resource personnel of some airlines.

Training is envisaged to be two half-day programmes, including familiarisation with Hong Kong Airport and the Regal Hotel, which will host relatives in the event of an incident. A further half-day of refresher training will be offered for the volunteers each year.

Included in the training would be basic skills such as:

- i) ability to recognize varieties of symptoms of a person in crisis;
- ii) identifying simple needs of the persons needing care;
- iii) ability to render appropriate responses to those needing care;
- iv) knowing when professional medical or psychological help is required;
- v) enabling volunteers to observe **their own reactions** to those in crisis and be willing to be 'debriefed' after their time of caregiving.

The Hong Kong Psychological Society has voiced an interest in supporting this initiative. I hope we may obtain their professional assistance for some input in training sessions.

2. Issues Surrounding Airport Care Team

2.1 Questions of Liability

- 2.1.0 Liability questions were uppermost in the minds of AOC (Airline Operators' Committee) staff members who attend the Airport Care Team meeting of 13th April 2000.
- 2.1.1 First, let me address the question of **personal liability**. We have approached the Hong Kong **Agency for Volunteer Service** to ask about the policy regarding volunteers' liabilities. They have replied as follows:
- 2.1.2 "In the concept of Volunteer Service Management, as volunteers have already contributed their time and effort, **the organization is obliged to provide a safe working environment and sufficient protection. Thus insurance coverage and subsidies for training should be included for volunteers.**" (cf. AVS Letter to S.Lucas 10 May 2000 p.1).
- 2.1.3 Therefore the Airport Chaplaincy Services will provide insurance for the volunteers. The Agency for Volunteer Service suggested we consider two kinds of insurance scheme:
1. Public Liability Insurance.
 2. Group Personal Accident Insurance.

Whichever is chosen, it will cost money. Furthermore, the number of members to be insured will affect the cost. The Airport Chaplaincy Services will seek assistance from interested parties to help pay for the insurance. As yet, we have no financial resources.

- 2.1.4 **Secondly, if a member of the public sues a member of the Airport Care Team**, we face the dilemma every public organization faces, the question of who carries legal bills and payouts. In this case the Airport Chaplaincy Services will need to take out insurance on itself. Advice is being sought about appropriate insurance.

2.2 Questions of Finance

- 2.2.1 **Concerning the matter of fundraising**, Chaplaincy Services in most international airports quickly discover that access to public funds is crucial.
- 2.2.2 **The initial difficulty** facing the Hong Kong Airport Chaplaincy Services in raising funds is that people are happy to give money to obvious needy causes or to long-established charities. Neither can be said to apply to the Hong Kong Airport Chaplaincy Services. Because our

Airport Chaplaincy Services are in their infancy and the Airport Care Team is yet to be formed, public generosity is unlikely to be forthcoming.

- 2.2.3 A Vancouver International Airport Chaplain**, in a handbook for chaplains, wrote about fund-raising. He dealt with it under a series of headings:
1. Airport fund-raising;
 2. Chapel (Prayer Room) donation boxes;
 3. Ministry functions (e.g. Public Services in the Prayer Room);
 4. Fund-raising for specific purposes(e.g. the Airport Care Team);
 5. Gifts in kind;
 6. Engaging a fund-raiser;
 7. Establishing a Foundation which will support the Airport Chaplaincy.

2.2.4 Some of these will be explored and employed by the HKI Airport Chaplaincy Services. In the meantime, the Chaplaincy must attempt to begin the Airport Care Team with minimal financial resources. I am grateful for the practical support offered by the Airport Authority and also for training assistance offered by Cathay. I hope others may be in a position to do the same, or to render financial support.

3. Scenario

- 3.1 The basic scenario is that the major international airports and airlines are facing up to the reality of legal concerns surrounding the uninjured and the relatives and close associates of those involved in airport incidents. Recent USA legislation (October 1996 and December 1997) in favour of families of those involved in airport accidents has given high profile and priority for airports and airlines everywhere to make adequate provision.
- 3.2 Therefore Hong Kong International Airport needs to develop appropriate measures to assist families and relatives of those involved in an aircraft incident, not only to face legal implications, but for the sake of the families and relatives of all involved.
- 3.3 As the busiest international airport in Asia, with 60 airlines operating and with 100,000 passengers handled daily during April 2000, and as the leading international air cargo airport in the world, it is imperative HKIA move to establish a skilled Care Team.

- 3.4 In the past twelve months, with the largest ever figure of 32 million passengers handled, and the figure still climbing, the potential for 'incidents' increases rather than decreases.
- 3.5 This HKIA's reputation as a leading airport should include the reputation that it has the capacity to deliver the best possible humanitarian care whenever needed. The Airport Care Team will support such a reputation.
- 3.5 The events of 22nd August 1999, with the 315 passengers and crew involved and the family members needing assistance, remind us vividly for the need to be prepared.

4. APPEAL

So I appeal very directly for the support of the Colloquium of the Six Religions in the following matters:

- 4.1 **For a contact person from each Religion** who may participate in the training program and who may facilitate relationship with the Airport Care Team when it is seeking **to recruit members of each faith**. This will thereby establish a working relationship of each religion with the Care Team and a confidence in the deployment of the Airport Care Team when necessary.
- 4.2 **For training resources**, from the simplest items such as stationery, secretarial support, to the offer of skilled trainers willing to assist in the program.
- 4.3 **For a willingness to participate in fundraising activities in support of the Airport Care Team.**
- 4.4 **For whatever further practical assistance may be rendered by interested members of the different religions in Hong Kong.**

As Senior Airport Chaplain and convenor of the Airport Care Team, I thank you for your attention to these matters.

Rev. Paul E. Ginnivan OMI (Snr Airport Chaplain)

19th May 2000.