

AVIATION TERRORISM

Aviation Terrorism

**Historical Survey, Perspectives
and Responses**

Jin-Tai Choi



St. Martin's Press

© Jin-Tai Choi 1994

Softcover reprint of the hardcover 1st edition 1994 978-0-333-59851-1

All rights reserved. No reproduction, copy or transmission of this publication may be made without written permission.

No paragraph of this publication may be reproduced, copied or transmitted save with written permission or in accordance with the provisions of the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988, or under the terms of any licence permitting limited copying issued by the Copyright Licensing Agency, 90 Tottenham Court Road, London W1P 9HE.

Any person who does any unauthorised act in relation to this publication may be liable to criminal prosecution and civil claims for damages.

First published in Great Britain 1994 by
THE MACMILLAN PRESS LTD
Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire RG21 2XS
and London
Companies and representatives
throughout the world

A catalogue record for this book is available
from the British Library.

ISBN 978-1-349-23177-5

ISBN 978-1-349-23175-1 (eBook)

DOI 10.1007/978-1-349-23175-1

First published in the United States of America 1994 by
Scholarly and Reference Division,
ST. MARTIN'S PRESS, INC.,
175 Fifth Avenue,
New York, N.Y. 10010

ISBN 978-0-312-10072-8

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data
Choi, Jin-Tai.

Aviation terrorism : historical survey, perspectives, and
responses / Jin-Tai Choi.

p. cm.

Revision of thesis (Ph.D.)—St. Andrews University, 1992.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 978-0-312-10072-8

1. Hijacking of aircraft—History. 2. Terrorism—History.

3. Hijacking of aircraft—Case studies. I. Title.

HE9779.C47 1994

363.2'876—dc20

93-15602

CIP

This book is dedicated to my father, Byung-Woo Choi, and my mother, Myo-Rae Kim, who have devoted much of their lives to my education

Contents

<i>List of Tables</i>	ix
<i>Preface</i>	xi
1 Aviation Terrorism: Its Nature and Developments	
The development of international civil aviation	1
Defining the forms of attack against civil aviation	3
A brief history of aviation terrorism	12
Classification of aviation terrorists	15
Conclusion	20
2 Aviation Terrorism: Regional Variations and Responses	
The United States	22
The Middle East	38
The Former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe	64
The Asian states	78
Latin America	89
The African states	99
Conclusion	106
3 Case Studies of Selected Incidents	
The TWA 847 hijacking	109
The KAL 858 sabotage bombing	128
Conclusion	140
4 New and Potential Threats to Civil Aviation	
Terrorist missile attack against civil aviation	142
Missile attack against straying civilian aircraft	154
Conclusion	175
5 Conclusion	
Contemporary perspectives on aviation terrorism	177
Considerations for the future	180
Concluding remarks	188
<i>Appendix 1: Protocol relating to an amendment to the Convention on International Civil Aviation</i>	190

<i>Appendix 2: International standards and recommended practices: security-safeguarding international civil aviation against acts of unlawful interference – Annex 17 to the Convention on International Civil Aviation</i>	193
<i>Appendix 3: Chronology of significant missile attacks against civil aviation (1973–91)</i>	199
<i>Appendix 4: Worldwide criminal acts involving civil aviation – countries involved (1931–90)</i>	204
<i>Notes and References</i>	205
<i>Bibliography</i>	238
<i>Index</i>	251

List of Tables

1.1	Growth of global passenger flow (1935–85)	2
1.2	Aircraft hijackings worldwide (1931–90)	6
1.3	The sabotage bombing of airborne aircraft (1949–90)	8
1.4	Attacks against airports and airline offices (1975–90)	11
1.5	Significant sabotage attacks by political terrorists (1983–90)	17
2.1	US-registered aircraft hijackings (1961–90)	24
2.2	Palestinian aviation terrorism (1968–84)	43
2.3	Aircraft hijackings in the Soviet Union (1960–90)	65
2.4	Aircraft hijackings in Eastern Europe (1947–69)	69
2.5	Czechoslovakian aircraft hijackings (1970–90)	71
2.6	Polish aircraft hijackings (1970–90)	73
2.7	Aviation terrorism in Asia (1948–69)	79
2.8	Aviation terrorism in Asia (1970–90)	80
2.9	Japanese registered aircraft hijackings (1970–90)	81
2.10	Attacks against airline facilities in Japan (1981–90)	84
2.11	Attacks against Philippine civil aviation (1970–90)	84
2.12	Aircraft hijackings in the People's Republic of China (1982–90)	86
2.13	Aircraft hijackings in Latin America (1931–90)	90
2.14	Aircraft hijackings by state (1931–90)	90
2.15	Aircraft hijackings in Colombia (1967–90)	91
2.16	Aircraft hijackings in Africa (1961–90)	100
2.17	Significant sabotage attacks against civil aviation in Africa (1966–90)	102
4.1	Missile attacks against civil aviation (1973–91)	145

Preface

The idea for this research came to me in 1987 when two North Korean terrorists blew up Korean Air Lines Flight 858, killing 115 innocent people. When did aviation terrorism begin? Who exploited it? What were the various types? What were the phases and cycles? What was being done to prevent it? What still needs to be done?

The international air transportation industry provides a vital communications link which brings prosperity to many states in our modern age. This invaluable link has not only been threatened by terrorism and other factors, but also by failures in the aviation security system. Airlines have been one of the most attractive targets in the eyes of terrorists for several reasons, including particularly the international and symbolic nature of aviation, and the potential of multi-governmental involvement which can inevitably generate wide publicity. Acts of violence against civil aircraft have been committed since the earliest days of civil aviation history. The first attack against civil aircraft dates back to the early 1930s. Since then, aircraft hijackings and other forms of attack against civil air transport operations have become one of the most serious challenges to the safety of flying.

The number of direct victims of aviation terrorism is, in a statistical sense, small compared with the human loss resulting from natural disasters and accidents. From 1984 to 1988, throughout the world, 752 people were killed and 136 people were injured in attacks against civil aviation in the form of aircraft hijackings and in-flight sabotage bombings.¹ In the same period, in the United Kingdom alone 1 597 067 casualties resulted from road accidents.² In addition, terrorist attacks directed against civil aviation represent only a small percentage of total international terrorist incidents. For example, in 1989 alone a record 528 international terrorist incidents were reported.³

The impact of aircraft hijackings, the sabotage bombings of airborne aircraft and attacks on airline facilities, however, have been far greater than any other type of attack on the civilian population anywhere in terms of political, economic and psychological cost. Aviation terrorism tends to focus on highly dramatic acts, whose impact goes far beyond the act itself. There appears to be a peculiar quality about civil aviation which focuses public attention on aircraft hijackings and sabotage bombings much more than does violence in a more static situation. In fact, aviation terrorism has proven to be an effective tactic when utilised by terrorists for generating

mass impact and attracting wide mass-media coverage. This was clearly demonstrated by the TWA 847 hijacking of June 1985.

Aviation terrorism is not only a concomitant feature of the development of international civil aviation but also of political upheaval throughout the world. It is not suddenly going to cease or disappear. It is unlikely that terrorists are going to stop hijacking aircraft, although hijacking is only one of the methods by which international terrorism expresses itself. Sabotage bombing, kidnapping and armed attack are also means of aviation terrorism, and they need not depend on the presence of a commercial aircraft. The employment of violence against certain airlines, with the intention of discouraging people from using them, is undertaken frequently to attack the national interests of a state. In fact, no other industry in the world has ever been under such violent and sustained terrorist and other criminal attack as that endured by the aviation industry over the past three decades. This was clearly demonstrated by the attacks at Rome and Vienna Airports and the Pan Am 103 disaster. It is also a form of terrorism which presents a great threat to private citizens and crew members as well as to others who operate in the air transport system. A large number of the deaths and fatal injuries that have occurred in the civil aviation industry are attributable to such attacks. Terrorists are not concerned about the threat to human rights, property, the integrity of sovereign states or world peace. They are only intent upon undermining and destroying them.

As the numerous domestic and international incidents of violence directed against civil aviation aircraft, airline facilities, and innocent airline passengers and crew continue, aviation terrorism must be taken seriously. Dealing with aviation terrorism has become a problem of some magnitude and urgency, and is increasingly recognised as a challenge to the international community. However, the lack of political will and cooperation between governments, national and international organisations and airlines, the unwillingness of some states to enforce the recommendations of international conventions concerning aviation crime, and the inadequate training of security staff constitute the current reality of the situation with regard to combatting aviation terrorism. In this respect it is necessary to evaluate acts of violence against civil aviation with a view to tackling such attacks. This will be a monumental task. However where there is a will, there is a way.

This volume consists of five chapters. In order to foster a better understanding of the problem, a brief history of aviation terrorism is presented in Chapter 1. That chapter describes the complete historical development of violence against civil aviation, as well as defining the various forms of aviation terrorism and classifying aviation terrorists according to their

motives. Chapter 2 analyses and describes the variations of aviation terrorism by geographical region. It examines the problems and trends of aviation terrorism and details the responses of governments to such acts of violence. In Chapter 3, two particular incidents are examined in order to study the specific problems of aviation security and the international responses. Chapter 4 discusses the new and potential threat to civil aviation, drawing on the previous chapters. The special threat of missile attack on civil aviation is examined and the ways in which the international community have reacted to such attacks are discussed. The chapter also takes a global view of aviation terrorism. Finally, Chapter 5 looks at contemporary perspectives of aviation terrorism and consideration for the future.

This book is a revised version of my dissertation submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy at St. Andrews University in 1992. In that connection, I would like to express my profound appreciation to Professor Paul Wilkinson, an international authority on terrorism, for his skilful supervision and continual encouragement during the research and writing of this work. I am also deeply grateful to Professor Trevor Salmon, who has provided invaluable advice. Special thanks must go to my colleagues and friends, Dr Robin Hill, Frances McKee, Michael Page, Charles Drake, Dr Andrew Pettegree, Mark Taylor, Jacqueline McHarg, Young-Bok Kim, Beom-Jin Lee and Ching-Young Lee, who have provided a constant support. Finally, special thanks are due to my brother, Jin-Mo Choi, and his wife, Myung-Sun Kim, as well as to my two sisters, Sun-Cha Choi and Sun-Duk Choi, whose husbands should also be mentioned for their moral and financial support throughout the four years of the research project.

JIN-TAI CHOI