

## SITA: Airlines Feel Pressure To Handle IT Security Threats

Almost 84% of the world's airlines feel increased pressure to respond to IT security threats, a rise from the high of 80% recorded the previous year, according to the second annual SITA Global Airline IT Security Survey.

SITA polled 152 airlines in late 2007 and found that 63% of respondents have created dedicated security management teams, up from 55% in 2006 (DAILY, Nov. 30, 2006). There is also a significant shift to using the specialist services of outsourced third parties, rising from 22% in 2006 to 36% in 2007.

The airlines said their increased concern about IT security includes growth in passenger numbers, the migration to IP-enabled networks and the expanded use of open systems to facilitate self-service. Almost 75% of the respondents acknowledged that the migration to IP-based networks increases exposure to security breaches that need to be addressed, the survey found.

More than half of the airlines surveyed offer check-in over the Web, and 89% expect to offer it within the next two years, SITA said. "By then, 52% of airlines are planning to offer self-boarding, and 76% plan to implement mobile phone check-in," it said. "Each of these services adds new layers to the physical and IT security equation, increases security risks and poses the challenge to deliver secure services in a fast and efficient manner."

Though the overall level of network security-related pressure has increased, there are changes in specific areas in the past year, said the study. "Since last year's report, the priority placed on both e-ticketing and IP migration has reduced somewhat, down from 63% and 49%, to 56% and 44%, respectively, suggesting that these elements of air transport industry technology strategy are starting to mature," it noted.

Although security spending continues to rise, it is at a reduced rate, said SITA. "Last year's survey predicted budget increases of an average of 4.5%, but the actual spend for 2007 was 4.2%. For 2008, an average increase of 4% is predicted," it observed.

"Clearly, airlines are taking significant steps to respond to network-related security threats, as demonstrated by the rise in dedicated security teams and outsourcing to trusted third parties, said Mark Prince, SITA head of consulting for security, voice and convergence. *-benet\_wilson@aviationweek.com*