

MEETING THE AIRPORT SECURITY CHALLENGE

Report of the Secretary's Rapid Response Team on Airport Security

October 1, 2001

Extraordinary challenges require extraordinary measures. The terrorist attacks on America of September 11, 2001 require that we reform our Nation's aviation security system in fundamental ways. On September 27, President Bush launched this process of reform by announcing his proposals for (1) an expanded federal air marshal program, (2) a \$500 million federal grant program to strengthen aircraft security, (3) federal management of airport security and screening services, and (4) pending full implementation of federal oversight of airport security, the call-up of National Guard troops by State Governors to augment existing security staff at commercial airports nationwide.

To build on the President's proposals and make the Nation's airports more secure, the Rapid Response Team has concluded that:

- **Airport passenger screening must be placed under the direct control of a new federal law enforcement agency housed within the Department of Transportation.**
- **Relevant law enforcement and intelligence information must be shared on a continuing basis with those responsible for aviation security.**
- **New technologies must be deployed more widely to augment the aviation security program.**
- **Airport passenger screening and other security procedures must be strengthened to ensure that they provide adequate protection for air travelers.**
- **There is an urgent need to establish a nationwide program of voluntary pre-screening of passengers, together with the issuance of "smart" credentials, to facilitate expedited processing of the vast majority of air travelers and to enable security professionals to focus their resources more effectively.**

This report addresses the security issues that arise at airports in connection with travel on commercial airlines.¹ A detailed discussion of specific actions follows.

¹ Issues arising in connection with general aviation, including the operation of corporate aircraft, are beyond the scope of this report. The Team recommends,

A separate Rapid Response Team will report on security issues arising in connection with aircraft construction and operation.

This Team recognizes the need to achieve a balance between improving airport security and minimizing air travel disruptions. The freedom to travel not only is a basic tenet of the American way of life, but also contributes to the livelihood and economic well being of every American citizen. For this reason, as the Department of Transportation and other federal agencies work to implement the recommendations of this report, the airline and airport communities should be provided with the opportunity to participate in the design and validation of new requirements as they are formulated.

Finally, the Team wishes to underscore its conviction that the measures proposed in the pages that follow can and should be implemented in a way that is wholly consistent with America's commitment to the protection of civil rights.

however, that a similar initiative be undertaken to explore ways of further enhancing the security of general aviation facilities and operations.

RECOMMENDATIONS

FEDERALIZATION OF AVIATION SECURITY

Recommendation 1: Establish a new federal security agency, housed within the Department of Transportation, to serve as the law enforcement arm for U.S. transportation, starting with commercial aviation.

The Rapid Response Team applauds the President's decision to place under federal control the management of passenger screening at U.S. airports. The Team also believes that this function should be vested in a new federal transportation security agency with full law enforcement authority. The agency's responsibilities for airport security would include the supervision of all functions related to airport passenger and baggage screening. The screening function would be significantly higher in quality, while preserving accessible air transportation as a competitive, vital, and essential component of our economy.

Consistent with the President's proposals, the new transportation security agency would establish new standards for security operations; would perform intensive background checks and train and test screeners and security personnel; would purchase and maintain all equipment; and would work cooperatively with other law enforcement authorities at the federal, state, and local levels.

The new security agency would hire, train, and deploy to airports throughout the Nation a cadre of uniformed federal transportation security officers. Consistent with the President's proposals, these officers would oversee and manage the full range of airport security functions to be carried out by federal or contract personnel, including but not limited to:

- screening of passengers, baggage, and aircraft;
- patrolling secure areas of the airport;
- monitoring the quality of the airport's access control;
- exercising federal arrest authority;
- training of contractor personnel in the performance of screening and selected other security functions; and
- working with law enforcement authorities at the federal, state, and local levels and serving as a key facilitator of coordination with the Department of Homeland Security.

The federal transportation security agency would also have responsibility for:

- monitoring and disseminating relevant threat information, law enforcement data, and other relevant intelligence;
- overseeing air carriers' compliance with FAA security regulations; and
- conducting background checks required of persons working at an airport.

The new security agency would provide an effective response to the perceived passenger screening and airport access deficiencies in the present structure. In particular, the new office would be able to attract and retain a motivated corps of law enforcement and security professionals. Likewise, security background checks would be conducted in keeping with consistent federal standards, while training in security requirements and procedures would be provided on a more comprehensive, uniform basis. Most important, standards would be consistently high throughout the Nation, allowing travelers to enjoy the convenience of air travel with a heightened level of confidence in the integrity of the system.

INFORMATION INTEGRATION AND SHARING

Recommendation 2: Integrate law enforcement and national security intelligence data with airline and airport systems, including passenger reservation, screening checks, employee background checks, employee and passenger identification, and access protocols to aircraft and secure areas within airports. This could be carried out under the auspices of the Office of Homeland Security.

It is time to change fundamentally the way our airports, airlines, and law enforcement and intelligence communities use, share, and process law enforcement and national security data. Doing so will provide the underpinning for (1) rapid response by airline and airport operators to terrorist threats; (2) an enhanced screening of airport and airline employees and passengers, including the more effective use of the Computer Assisted Pre-screening Passenger System; and (3) the application of new technologies for identification purposes and to enhance security access at airports.

Recommendation 3: All airlines and airports should designate a senior-level security officer and that officer should possess a security clearance at a level required to act on sensitive intelligence information.

Airport authorities and airlines must have a person at each airport in possession of a security clearance at a level sufficient to enable effective interaction with the

law enforcement and intelligence communities and ensure that swift and decisive action is taken in response to sensitive information that is made available.

EXPLOITING BREAKTHROUGH TECHNOLOGIES

Recommendation 4: New technologies for the positive identification of passengers, airport workers and crews, detection of explosives, and more effective passenger and baggage screening should be incorporated in airport security programs as soon as practicable.

An array of new technologies exists with the potential to enhance dramatically the quality of passenger and employee identification, tracking, and verification. Similar improvements in explosive detection technologies and passenger and baggage screening are also being developed. Properly deployed, these tools can be a powerful weapon in the war against terrorism. The Rapid Response Team urges that available technologies be incorporated more widely in our airport security program as soon as practicable.

Recommendation 5: The Federal Aviation Administration should establish an Aviation Security Technology Consortium, including public and private sector participants, to identify, sponsor, and test new security-related technologies at our Nation's airports.

The Team urges the creation of an Aviation Security Technology Consortium under the auspices of the FAA -- including public and private sector members -- to identify, sponsor, and test new security-related technologies at our Nation's airports.

Recommendation 6: The Department of Defense should conduct an accelerated review of classified technologies with potential application to aviation security with a view to identifying and, consistent with national security requirements, declassifying applications likely to be of value.

As part of the Nation's effort to exploit new technologies in protecting aviation against terrorism, it is essential that sensitive technologies currently subject to government classification be reviewed to ensure that applications of possible relevance to the aviation security challenge are not overlooked. Where such applications hold potential promise and can be adapted without compromising national security, they should be appropriately declassified.

IMPROVED PASSENGER SCREENING AND ACCESS CONTROL

Recommendation 7: Apply the Computer Assisted Passenger Pre-Screening System (CAPPS) to all passengers.

CAPPS is a new process for analyzing information known about a passenger in the carrier's reservation system and "scoring" the passenger either as a "selectee" or a "non-selectee." This process allows the security system to focus attention on a selected population of passengers for each flight, while the majority of passengers process through the standard security system. Application of this new process to all passengers would materially strengthen overall security.

Because it is essential that all passengers be subjected to a CAPPS screening prior to boarding, the Team recommends that all passengers now be required to check in at a location where CAPPS can be applied. It is preferable, where possible, that selectee status be determined prior to the passenger's processing through a screening checkpoint. Airlines estimate, however, that 40-80 percent of passengers do not check baggage and proceed directly to boarding gates for checkin there. The configuration of many major airports is based on this pattern. Requiring all passengers to check in prior to processing through passenger screening checkpoints, therefore, is likely to clog the checkin process unacceptably at a great many locations. Accordingly, the Rapid Response Team believes that airlines and airports must work together with the FAA to find effective ways of applying CAPPS to passengers prior to their passage through screening checkpoints.

Recommendation 8: Each person traveling from an airport required to meet Federal Aviation Regulation Part 107 (which governs security at airports with scheduled commercial air carrier service) should be screened at an approved screening checkpoint. In addition, all carry-on items in the possession of each person traveling on a scheduled commercial air carrier should be screened at an approved screening checkpoint. This provision should apply to all air carrier employees and crews.

Under current provisions, air carrier employees, such as baggage handlers, mechanics and ticket agents, may fly as passengers without having been screened. The Team recommends that this exception be terminated immediately, and that every passenger, regardless of status, be required to pass through a screening checkpoint prior to boarding.

Recommendation 9: Institute improved processes for screening persons and carry-on items/baggage.

First and foremost, the public expects visible improvements in passenger screening. Second, the most effective way to fulfill the public's expectation and increase the probability of stopping an attack is to focus the highest level of scrutiny on those passengers most likely to pose a genuine security risk. Third, the measures employed must cover the widest possible array of threats, from handguns to explosives to knives, which may or may not be detected by metal detector.

The Rapid Response Team has recommended, in a submission restricted to official use only, ways of screening both selectees and non-selectees consistent with these basic principles.

Recommendation 10: Carry-on luggage should be limited to one carry-on bag and one personal article such as a purse or briefcase. The existing limitation on "passengers only" beyond screening checkpoints should be continued.

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The enhancements recommended in this paper, particularly with respect to screening selectees, will require that more time and attention be devoted to each piece of carry-on. By limiting the number of items needing to be screened more time is made available to screen items carefully. Overall, a more thorough and less time-pressured screening will increase effectiveness.

This recommendation logically follows already enacted limitations on who may have access to sterile areas through screening checkpoints. The overriding concept is to limit the amount of screening to be done, thereby having more time to do it well.

Recommendation 11: Until the new federal transportation security agency becomes fully operational, each airport required to meet FAR Part 107 should station a fixed-post law enforcement officer or National Guard member at each screening checkpoint while it is in operation.

Currently, most screening checkpoints in the United States are staffed by contract security personnel. Stationing a uniformed officer at the Nation's screening checkpoints will immediately improve public confidence in the screening process and it will better enable timely law enforcement support of the process.

Recommendation 12: Each airport required to meet FAR Part 107 should revalidate identification and access media that provide access to secured areas of airports.

Historically, accounting for access and identification media has been difficult and an overall weakness in airport access control systems. Already underway, this action is prudent, as it simply establishes a clean baseline from which future access media and identification enhancements may be built.

Recommendation 13: Each airport, airline and related service company required to meet FAR Part 107 and 108 should begin revalidation, under federal standards, of the background and criminal history checks previously conducted on all persons who have access to secured areas of the airport. This revalidation should include checking each person against a coordinated federal security database and notifying appropriate federal authorities of discrepancies or other relevant information discovered during such revalidation processes.

Under current rules, persons have been allowed access to secure areas of airports based on a review of their employment history and, only when there are unexplained gaps in employment, a criminal history check. The type of terrorist planning that was displayed on September 11 indicates that this level of check is not adequate. By checking individuals' records against a database of criminal history, known terrorists or persons illegally in the United States, it is more likely that access to secured areas of airports can be protected against undesirable persons. It is important to point out that these requirements will be largely dependent on implementation of Recommendation 2 (integration of law enforcement and intelligence information).

Recommendation 14: To the extent not already accomplished subsequent to September 11, 2001, each airport operator required to meet FAR Part 107 should change codes on all access doors and re-key all lock systems. The codes should be changed within 72 hours and the re-key should be accomplished within 30 days.

Like access media and identification, lock and key control has historically been difficult for airports to manage. It is prudent to accomplish re-keying so that a new control baseline is established. Regarding access hardware that utilizes codes, compromise of the codes is another recurring problem. Codes can be easily captured by observation or even by the fact that careless employees sometimes write these codes on the wall next to the access point.

Recommendation 15: The FAA should begin reviewing airport security programs containing exclusive-use and tenant access control agreements to determine the necessity of, and reasonable time frame for modification of, such agreements in order to ensure that a single entity is responsible for security in all areas of the airport.

Currently, the diffusion of responsibility for airport security among the FAA, the airports, and airport tenants creates an unacceptable level of fragmentation and potential loss of control over security management. Some fixed-based operator tenants, for example, do not have security personnel, resulting in weak or little monitoring of access to secured areas.

SHARPENING THE FOCUS OF AIRPORT SECURITY

Recommendation 16: There is an urgent need to establish a voluntary means by which passengers might submit to an effective pre-screening regimen and thereby qualify for more expedited processing.

As passenger volume returns to normal levels, more efficient ways of moving passengers through the security system to the aircraft will be required. The Team believes that there is an urgent need to establish a nationwide program for the voluntary pre-screening of passengers, together with the issuance of “smart” credentials (taking advantage of biometric and other emerging technologies to validate personal identity). Passengers whose identities and backgrounds have been validated in advance through such a program could be processed, upon presentation of their credentials, through a less intense security process, enabling security professionals to focus their resources more effectively. Even prior to the establishment of such a program, the use of U.S. passports as a discriminator should be considered as a possible means of facilitating the passenger screening process. These approaches would streamline passenger screening without compromising security requirements.