

Fall 12-7-2016

Aviation Security and the Challenges the Industry Faces Providing Safe and Secure Transportation

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Recommended Citation

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Transportation

Comparison of Aviation Security before and after 9/11

It was much easier for passengers to board planes in the United States before the 9/11 attack. According to Dempsey (2011), private companies were in charge of security at airports. Airport management employed private security firms that would check the luggage and confirm the identification and bookings for passengers. Passengers were also allowed to board planes carrying a lot of personal items. Blades of up to four inches, liquids, and electronic devices were previously not prohibited. A passenger was allowed to arrive at the airport an hour before the time of departure of the flight. People accompanying the passenger were allowed into the terminal. Thus travelers would spend time with their loved ones up until boarding time. The appearance of the passenger was not taken into much consideration. Nothing that an individual wore or resembled was seen to raise any suspicious. There was little emphasis placed on the background checks of the employees working at airports. The rules that made individuals qualify to be placed on the no-fly list or the terrorist list were based on the home country's information. However, these circumstances were considered to pose a danger to the passengers and the country after September 11th. Security constraints were thus stepped up after the attack.

In the present day, traveling by air is a much more complicated affair. The government is now in charge of safety through the Transportation Security Administration (TSA). Those traveling are required to arrive at the airport three hours before departure; not factoring in the hours spent at the airport in case of a delay. The screening of both the body and luggage of the passenger coming into the airport is conducted very rigorously (Johnstone, 2006). There is the use of body scanners, explosive detection scanners and luggage perusal by airport security personnel. Those getting into the country are required to give in-depth explanations of the reasons for their visit and the date they intend to depart from the country.

One's behavior and appearance at the airport can be a cause for alarm. While this action borders on violation of a person's constitutional rights, officers are urged not to base their investigations on ethnicity, race, religion, or sex, but use behaviors as the main catalyst for observation. Some of the actions considered suspicious include excessive laughing, fidgeting, having a tight grip on one's luggage, hesitation when asked for one's papers, and excessive yawning. Regarding physical appearance, any bulges in the clothing, pale skin that appears as if the individual has just shaved and also flushes on the face are termed suspicious.

Federal air marshals are present on some passenger flights. These are trained and armed TSA employees who provide security during the flight. However, the air marshal's service does not have the manpower to provide security to every flight departing in the United States.

The watch lists for individuals prohibited to fly are scrutinized very carefully. The background checks performed on the employees dig much deeper to analyze and confirm the information given at the initial point employment. This is done to identify individuals with criminal records or false social security numbers.

The Founding of the TSA

The TSA was founded according to the Aviation and Transportation Security Act created by the 107th Congress on November 19th, 2001 under the Department of Homeland Security. According to the TSA's website, the institution's objective is to protect the United States transportation systems so as to ensure the free movement of both people and goods. The coordinated attack in Pennsylvania, New York, and Virginia resulted in the creation of the TSA to prevent terrorist attacks in the future. This agency is poised to achieve this objective through education, intelligence, regulation, and screening. The individuals that hold positions in the TSA undergo testing and evaluation before they are hired, and afterwards they receive intense training

and periodic testing to keep the employees on their toes. An annual certification process is conducted to recertify the employees already employed. The evaluation of an employee continues throughout the duration of the employee's employment.

There exist various categories of TSA employees. First are the air marshals who ensure the implementation of the institution's laws as well as ensuring safety during flights (Price and Forrest, 2009). There are also officers who stand at the entrance and exit points where screening takes place. The security and aviation officers inspect the cargo and passenger transportation systems. There also exists the explosive detection team that detects small traces of explosives on luggage and passengers using sniffer dogs with special handlers. Lastly, there are officers strictly in charge of behavior-detection of suspicious activity as mentioned above. Response teams can either be within the TSA in certain airports or outsourced from other agencies.

However, there are many critics of the TSA. There has been a lot of backlash concerning the services that are provided by the institution. For instance, the TSA is considered to be self-regulating. TSA is under the umbrella of The Department of Homeland Security and is accountable to the secretary of homeland security. Even when changes are being made, the TSA is the only authority that deliberates on how their policies and procedures are written and executed. Secondly, politics play a significant role in the policies implemented by the agency (Ball, 2005). Issues such as the full body scanner are clearly an invasion of a person's privacy. Also, a lot of emphasis is put on luggage-checking and clearance though they have still been cases where they failed to detect weapons and explosives.

Critics have also accused the TSA of racial profiling. The individuals claimed to express behavioral and physical suspicion triggers were mainly African- American, Hispanic or people that originate from the Middle East. Whites who display suspicious behavior are allowed to

avoid closer screening. The employees have also been tried and convicted of stealing jewelry and other valuables during the luggage checks. The machines used for metal detecting within luggage are mostly defective and often give false feedback. Faulty equipment necessitates the passenger's to open their luggage for physical checking, increasing the chances of theft by airport employees. In some cases, the people who are on the no-fly list have been allowed to pass through security and fly. Afterward, flights are interrupted midway to the destination due to the presence of illegal passengers on board. The TSA is considered to be a costly investment as it uses government taxes and fees that it collects. The TSA is seen as ineffective while still holding lavish events that achieve no clear agenda.

Critics of the TSA's Policies and Programs

The TSA seems to push legal boundaries when it comes to prohibited seizures and searches. According to the fourth amendment of the Constitution, a person is entitled to protection from unreasonable stop and frisk, inspections and searches of property. Individuals with prosthetic limbs, catheters, and other medical appliances are mishandled during screening. The sickly and elderly are also manhandled while racial profiling is let loose. In addition, the TSA sometimes look for evidence beyond the scope for which they are allowed by law. They sometimes tend to act as though they are in charge of security authorities outside those of transportation and seize individuals on suspicion of petty theft or drug possession (Dixon, 2016). The institution is also thought to have a government-knows-all mentality. The policies put in place overlook the fact that government's programs may not be completely successful.

Effective Measures that can be put in Place

There are certain measures that are proposed to increase the TSA's effectiveness. Practices such as the cross-checking baggage with passengers will increase the organization's

usefulness. Cross checking allows the firm to confirm that all of the cargo from the passengers is accounted for. The luggage that seems to have no owners should be unloaded from the boarded plane. The second method that could be of use is the extended use of bomb-sniffing canines. The dogs have a keener sense of smell to detect explosives even in small quantities. They can be of significant help in the checking transported by cargo planes and luggage transported via passenger planes.

Also important is the acquisition of better explosive detection machines. The inability to accurately detect explosive items dents the credibility of the institution as a security corporation. There needs to be better analysis of information of the passengers and synergy of the data from the input stage to the boarding stage. The loss of luggage and illegal boarding of passengers that are on the no-fly list should not occur. The acquisition of employees with questionable character will be a thing of the past with correct synchronization of data. The usage of proxy measures to determine the outcome of new policies and strategies before implementation should also be a natural course of action for the organization. These actions ensure the effectiveness of a policy before application, thus saving on financial cost and time.

What Departments need Improvement?

Obliviously, there needs to be a streamline of the security checkpoint screening process. The issue of lengthy procedures and congestion during the security checks makes passengers irritated and tired of the process. The screening should not take more than ten minutes per passenger (Zellan, 2003). Enhancement of cargo security should be made with haste to reduce the levels of related terrorist attacks. A background check of employees is also an issue that must be addressed. Having a detailed and accurate picture of employee's history is important as it allows management to make well informed decisions regarding employment opportunities

In conclusion, the countries with top-notch airport security are those that have solutions tailored to their specific problems. Countries such as Israel advise on the avoidance of replacing human ability with technology while practicing airport security. The issue with airport security is the over-reliance on technology. In Israeli airports, personal contact with passengers is made certain with each and every one. An interview with each passenger by a well-trained agent is necessary to denote the suspicious traits pinpointed by TSA. Such measures would play a significant role in improving aviation security.

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