

Improving Aviation Security Measures

by The Global Security Professional Group

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“Where We Are and Where We Need To Go”

By The Global Security Professional Group

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

Where We Are: This position paper is a collaborative effort to apprise decision makers in both the private and public sector; as to how security professionals view the current state of our global Aviation Security, and the measures that we recommend be taken, starting now, to make improvements.

Whereas, we are able to isolate and identify cause and effect events, our collective nationalistic and political wills have led to half-measures and reactionary policies in response to events like the Christmas Bomber attack. These practices in turn allow our enemies to succeed even when the ultimate objective is not achieved. Even attacks that fail to reach their ultimate goals create fear and frustration that result in: huge economic losses; large costs associated with reactionary measures to ease public concern; diversion of limited resources from projects that may produce greater security; and the tremendous burden of a loss in our quality of life which is rooted in feelings of insecurity.

Where We Need To Go: We clearly place the base causes of this situation on a mis-balanced emphasis on political correctness (PC); a serious misunderstanding of behavioral profiling (and its proven record) versus racial profiling; and a disproportionate focus on visible bodies and flashy technology (i.e. Full Body Scanners/ Electronic Strip Searches) at the expense of quality of result. Needed resources are no longer available for investment in building integrated solutions that weave a layer fabric of protection with each layer reinforcing the other.

A global strategy and professional leadership are needed to integrate, motivate, and manage the aviation-security efforts and, indeed, all of our global security efforts. Administrators and political appointees may be excellent people, but the result of their leadership has been multiple “silos” of activity with each 'silo' interested in its own mandate, staffing, and funding. The integration/coordination of these efforts requires strong experienced technical leadership in order to separate the inefficient, ineffective posturing and self-promoting from the investments in a solution that provides optimal protection.

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by The Global Security Professional Group

Recommendations: We recommend that a task force be created utilizing professional people from industry, government, and the military to collaborate in an environment that allows for true shared participation with one goal in mind: Identifying and deploying the best solutions available today, while creating a road map to future-proof the security issues as they arise. Specific recommendations for changes in organizations, policies, and practices would come from this task force.

We strongly recommend that the Intelligence Agencies reinforce their integrated, global, real-time data collection and analysis system, and that the same objectives as expressed above be reinforced with professional technically proficient management. We anticipate that their focus will be on the functional elements which will provide maximum protection against both overall and individual threat scenarios.

We recommend that the emphasis on screening for “things” that may cause harm be shifted to the Israeli approach centered on looking for the “people” that want to cause harm. The intersection of an effective intelligence collection and dissemination effort with a “force protection” program lies at the point of possible attack. The intelligence program has three primary objectives: to predict where, how, and by whom attacks will be initiated; to intercept and disrupt any attack before it is launched; and to equip those charged with force protection with what they need to identify and defend against such attacks.

In aviation security, force protection begins with preparation in anticipation of intent to do harm and becomes time critical at the point where the enemy actually initiates the process of moving resources (people and materials) toward the point of attack. The probability of significant damage and loss of life goes up exponentially as the enemies’ resources get closer to their target.

An overview of recommended changes to make improvements in the current passenger screening process is provided herein.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: 2

 Where We Are:..... 2

 Where We Need To Go:..... 2

 Recommendations: 3

TABLE OF CONTENTS 4

INTRODUCTION: 5

CONCERNS: 6

RECOMMENDATIONS: 11

 People Checks: 11

 Object Checks: 12

CONCLUSION:..... 13

SIGNATORIES:..... 14

Improving Aviation Security Measures

by The Global Security Professional Group

INTRODUCTION:

This position paper is a collaborative effort of Global Security Professionals to apprise decision makers, in both the private and public sector, on issues in aviation security that we contend with on a daily basis.

This is a blunt assessment including our recommendations on what we (and much of the public) recognize as a reactionary policy towards terrorism directed against the airline industry and the free world. The acts arising from this policy erode public confidence in their corresponding national governments and empower the Islamic fundamentalists and other criminal elements to continue practicing their brand of "Jihad" against innocent citizens.

Permit us to apologize for the candor of this collaborative report. No offense is intended against any particular agency, policy maker or the current administration. The issue at hand is a life and death issue, a zero sum game with no margin for error. That being said, we recognize that it would be irresponsible to claim that any measures or combination of them can provide absolute security.

It is our collective belief that the policy of half-measures and reactionary responses has proven to be impotent and that its inadequacies continue to empower extremists who are planning future attacks.

Terrorists have proven to be thoughtful and intelligent planners, who have invested hundreds of man-hours in research, training and analysis. The apparent abundance of funding that the Terrorists enjoy, affords them plenty of time for trial and error. We have been and remain on their timetable, not our own.

In the business of Global Security there is no margin for error. As it has been proven time and time again, when we are wrong, innocent people perish and economies suffer incalculable losses.

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by The Global Security Professional Group

CONCERNS:

In the recent Christmas Day bomber case, there is a general consensus among Security Professionals that the current policy of “full-body scanners” (FBS) or “electronic strip searches” (ESS), which appear to provide the latest in high tech surveillance; but, in practice, leaves travelers no safer today than they were on September 11, 2001.

We feel that, while the proverbial wheel does not have to be reinvented, the use of common sense in our policies needs to be employed. It is our opinion that the system failed, in part, because of a peripheral sentiment of political correctness, whose origins were clearly aimed at avoiding an overt ethnic witch hunt, but at best has proven to be a counter-productive example as well as a misunderstanding of the values of the law abiding Muslim community both here and abroad. This sensitivity has blurred the distinction between racial, cultural, religious profiling (which do not work well) and behavioral profiling.

The continued reluctance to utilize a form of passenger profiling that allows efficient use of resources will render all technologies and security protocols moot. Pressure resulting from the Christmas Day attack demanded a rapid TSA response, but they have misapplied the rapid deployment of the 'Electronic Strip Searches' (ESS) as a stop gap measure. The ESS, for all its seeming benefits creates a soft target environment for a PETN attack whereby a thwarted bomber may choose to detonate within the airport queues that accumulate as a result of the ESS usage.

ESS has proven to cause time consuming delays, resulting in large and long queues where far more people will be vulnerable in the unsecured area of the typical airport terminal. The divergence of large amounts of funding and space toward this effort cripples programs that can provide real improvement in security. This kind of attack could prove to be more deadly than the destruction of a single aircraft; the after effects would be just as devastating to air travel. The result could be airport closure, re-routing of air traffic and an overall panic at airport terminals in every sector.

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by The Global Security Professional Group

An additional downside to utilizing ESS for main stream inspections for all passengers is more political in nature. Already cases in London are grounding passengers who are affronted by the intrusion and mistrust of the authorities in such realms of intimate space.

There is already a disruption to airline commerce. A continued decline in the use of transport will inevitably result in more economic downturn.

The Global Security Professional Group consists of many security professionals (8,700+ members) whose qualifications can be easily perused on www.Linkedin.com. The experience of the members of this group is both extensive and diverse. We actively engage in dialogue to address and help resolve the security problems of our times.

We are a valuable resource available to inform and to assist in the resolution of the problems that beset the current government of this proud nation of ours. Difficult decisions must always be made in the light of the government's need to adequately meet its "Duty of Care" to protect the public and also meet its democratic duty to inform the public when the public is divided both in its opinions and in its understanding of the greater good.

Misunderstandings are inevitable. In these matters our Group is willing and able to assist the government on whose shoulders rests the burden of making the final decisions that perhaps are perceived by the voting public as wrong.

It is our consensus that the security set up to prevent this latest case from occurring was obviously breached and in the public mind there was failure in our security procedures.

This observation has been confirmed by de-facto polling using twitter, face book, numerous blogs and all manner of current forms of public communications. Our analysis recognizes that the safeguards in place are an interlocking network of barriers and information transfers and as such should be viewed in their entirety.

Improving Aviation Security Measures

by The Global Security Professional Group

We also conclude, as we surmise that the 'man in the street' recognizes this as well; that after laying aside any political bias and looking through the lens of probability and outcomes; that the latest case, the Christmas day bombing attempt, was indeed a successful terrorist attack on the USA. Fortunately the device malfunctioned and providence has afforded an opportunity to have these discussions in hindsight of a “security success,” as it has been portrayed by some. The reality, of course, is far different.

It will not be long before the terrorist planners who have proven to be adept at learning from their mistakes develop a strategy that will be successful in every sense of the word. We must become just as adept. Like any chess game we must begin to anticipate several moves in advance.

Time is our collective adversary and the time to coordinate is passed due. We wish to detail a strategy that will assist the Government in its own planning and training of existing assets in an effort to secure as many vulnerable points as possible.

We offer this, not due to our own ego-centric views but as another set of experienced eyes, as consumers and users of the existing protocols while in possession of experience to notice the shortfalls in the same way that our antagonists also view them.

It is with this singular goal in mind that we present our own recommendations and thought processes. We realize that there is a huge emphasis on hiring and training a lot of people for behavioral screening, document inspection, personal screening, etc. There is a plan to throw a lot of equipment and operators at body searches. Without an effective plan on how to properly equip, manage, motivate, evaluate (audit), train/retrain and deploy these resources, the system will deteriorate into ineffectiveness.

Improving Aviation Security Measures

by The Global Security Professional Group

If the various "silos" of activity are not coordinated and integrated into a holistic security solution, we will fail. We can have all of the pieces in place on paper, but it requires leadership from the top down to pull things together and to focus on common objectives. It is not enough to have a "get together" to discuss each other's activities and how they should work together. Design by committee only works if there are clearly defined and enforced goals and measurements that are understood by everyone. The Concerns raised above are not recent revelations. As an example, similar concerns were addressed in "Presidential Decision Directive 63, May 22, 1998."¹

The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) parallels the Department of Defense (DOD) in its criticality to the survival of our country. Other countries have similar organizational concerns. The military has evolved over the years into an organization of career professionals with a clear set of objectives. There are Executive oversight protections via the appointed civilian management (with Congressional approval) and Legislative oversight via appropriations and various sub-Committees. However, in the military, there is not a major change in the operational integrity, defined tactical objectives, or leadership structure with the election of new political leaders. Strategic policies may change and sometimes the military may get programs they did not request or be denied resources they felt important; however, their internal structure and decision making tree remain intact. This is not true with the DHS, or with the attempts to better coordinate the various intelligence agencies.

Take a look at the top leadership in the TSA, CIA, and NCTC. Look at the head of SCO and other key positions. Start looking at their education, field experience, and managerial experience. For the most part, these folks are not technically trained, experienced in the field, nor cross-trained on the many disciplines that need to be understood in order to direct and lead. Training in Law, Public Administration, Public Service, and the like are fine, if the person has proved themselves with

¹ http://www.justice.gov/criminal/cybercrime/white_pr.htm

Improving Aviation Security Measures

by The Global Security Professional Group

outstanding performance over a career that would qualify them to set security policy, procedures, and lead in the execution of these.

Certainly there are outstanding exceptions to this stereotype of those in charge of overseeing our civilian national security. We do not question that the people currently in charge want to do the proper things. However, there does not seem to be a political will to put well qualified people in these positions. It seems that if they can talk a good talk and present a good image this is more important.

With all due respect to the many dedicated, well-qualified government employees that we have worked with over the years; similar to a large corporate environment, many do not pushback against the political boundary for what they feel are the best of career reasons. Commissions with no authority may expose issues and make recommendations, but will they get corrected? There needs to be experience and technical qualifications that are verified making the tough decisions.

Improving Aviation Security Measures

by The Global Security Professional Group

RECOMMENDATIONS:

We recommend that a task force be created utilizing *professional* people from industry, government, and the military to collaborate in an environment that allows for true shared participation with one goal in mind: Identifying and deploying the best solutions available today, while creating a road map to future-proof the security issues as they arise. Specific recommendations for changes in organizations, policies, and practices would come from this task force. It is anticipated that such a task force will call for a major organizational shift in the DHS toward a structure modeled along the lines of the military. Like the military, the DHS goals would be deterrence, protection, and recovery. The defining difference is the focus on domestic security versus international security.

Our expectation is that the Intelligence Agencies will implement an integrated, real-time data collection and analysis system and that has the same objectives as expressed above of professional technically proficient management and focus on the functional elements that will provide a total and individual threat scenario. We recommend a security protocol for passenger screening based on a multi-layer (i.e. multidiscipline) strategy (where the existing gaps in each layer don't line up) and where the parts strengthen the whole.

People Checks:

- Beginning with collection of basic travel document information and the conditions of ticket sale initial security and no fly list checks are performed (Similar to Secure Flight program, but with essential differences and an international scope)
- Matching of patterns of travel, booking, flight routes, etc. against profiles that represent known risks.
- Boarding passes issued at departure Airport check in.
- Identity verification of all passengers/crew boarding flights
- (TIC) – Terrorist Identification and Classification – (Behavioral Profiling) Check in and Security check point.

Improving Aviation Security Measures

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Object Checks:

These checks are integral with continuous observation of behavior. Interrogation and processing beyond Tier One should be done in isolation and be based on a combination of “random (but filtered)” and “perceived risk.” The escalation to each tier should be based on the perceived risk.

- Tier One - Standard metal detection protocol and other non-obtrusive measures such as “sniffers” as technology evolves
- Tier Two - Full body scanning technologies for high profile candidates.
- Tier Three - Interview - actual strip and cavity search when warranted.
- Continual training of TSA personal (Security shift team building) Testing, multi level certification levels attached to earning potential and advancement, attached to performance level, i.e. motivate and reward
- Real-time performance auditing of all TSA activities
- A revamped and improved Air Marshall Program with better management and technology enhancements to aid their effectiveness and create uncertainty in the minds of would be terrorists.
- Evaluate testing procedures and test protocols for relevance and integrity.
- Technology Interventions: smart chip, biometrics, document authentication, automobile/cargo scanners, etc.

Improving Aviation Security Measures

by The Global Security Professional Group

CONCLUSION:

Attacks on aviation security are attacks on our way of life. The very lives of our people and those around the world are in serious jeopardy. We as a nation and a part of the family of nations must lead and put forward our best effort to protect our future. We must all put aside petty politics and selfish interests and join forces as businesses, government agencies, military, citizens, and security professionals to define, devise, and deploy a multi-tiered solution eliminating all agendas except the one that makes real-life sense.

We hope that this paper is received in the spirit of our intent; to initiate the cross-over between the private and public sector, and to add new eyes to an ever expanding and increasingly complex issue. We are bound together as the ultimate success of this mission affects us all. Failure is not an option.

We could no longer stand by and pursue our professional goals without offering our observations as they co-mingle in the same arena; we share the same goals and shall suffer the same fate if our society suffers another blow, as we did on September 11, 2001.

So, with the echoing sentiment of Thomas Paine,

“If there must be trouble, let it be in my day, that my child may have peace.”²

We humbly submit this for your consideration and review.

² Thomas Paine, The American Crisis, No. 1, December 19, 1776

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