



“TSA: LOOKING FOR BAD THINGS, NOT BAD PEOPLE”

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by Kevin McCarthy

In watching the news stories, one has to wonder if the TSA is doing Security Theater or do they really believe they are protecting our nation.

The basic flaw I see with today's screening system is that we are looking for bad things instead of bad people. Our focus is on many inanimate objects, which in and of themselves are not likely to pose a threat to airliners. The terrorists of 9/11 did not carry any banned items onto their flights. In fact, the only illegal thing they carried was the intent to do grave bodily harm.

Passenger screening systems should become an intelligence-based technology-supported enterprise. The intelligence aspect is driven by the all-powerful concept of information sharing. In a crisis, information will not spontaneously flow across systems as needed unless organizations plan ahead and create actionable information sharing procedures. Through establishing a functional public-private partnership between the U.S. government and the airline industry, DHS can leverage the power of information sharing.

A great deal of data on passengers is held by the airline industry as well as the government; an example of this is U.S. citizens holding U.S. government security clearances. Clearly a person with a Top Secret clearance should not need to have a completely invasive body search when we already trust them with our national security. Registered frequent travelers about whom we have a great deal of information voluntarily submitted and with a level of trust may well move into a lower risk category. Some Congressmen are not held in the highest esteem, yet I would doubt they are a terrorist threat to aviation and could use a reduced procedure.

If TSA could access collated data assessment in conjunction with a boarding pass and positive identity check, a great number of travelers could be moved to a more expeditious screening line. Not only will this streamline the process, it will enable TSA to focus their resources on more viable threats and/or people about whom we have little knowledge.

One of the hot buttons in today's discord is the invasive screening of our airline crew members. As a former airline captain for a major U.S. airline, I have a great deal of experience with the issues at hand. One of the issues driving the TSA demand that all crewmembers be screened like all other passengers is that they do not have a locally issued airport identity badge for every airport. There are hundreds of commercial airports in the United States; obviously this is not possible. Yet, the local employees at that airport who

service the aircraft and load the bags are passed through a much-expedited process because they are trusted and known.

Airline pilots all are all carefully vetted by the U.S. government, and their employment and duty status is continuously monitored. More importantly, we already trust them with our lives and – as was demonstrated on 9/11- a weapon of mass destruction. They don't need any Bad Thing that a TSO is going to find by feeling their groin. TSA is ignoring their own operational technology, the Transportation Worker Identification Credential (TWIC) with its biometric capacity positively identifying the holder at U.S. seaports. Deploying TWIC to airline crew members would alleviate a significant friction point in the operational environment.

Current TSA procedures are demonstrating that DHS does not have control or understanding of the aviation situation. They are throwing money, people, and half-baked policies at aviation in hopes of detecting or deterring our adversaries. Meanwhile, our adversaries, whose strategic goal is destroying our economic system through asymmetric warfare, are accomplishing their goals with our help.

In an intelligence-based technology-supported system there is a strong reliance on emerging technologies, but the tech must work for us, not the other way around. Human-in-the-loop is the key to understanding intelligence data and recognizing indicators and warnings based on behavioral patterns observed by trained professionals. This is not profiling, rather, the simple premise that a person getting ready to commit a crime will behave differently from one just going on an airline journey.

Our focus must be to meet the threat proactively and efficiently while maintaining our economic system, the support of our people, and protecting cherished freedoms.