

Running head: Combating Terrorism

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## Abstract

On September the 11<sup>th</sup>, 2001, radical Islamic terrorists proved that the United States was unprepared for terrorist type attacks. Since then the government has gone to great lengths to secure its borders, airlines, infrastructure and improve it's law enforcement abilities. Massive sums of money have been spent in each of these areas with mixed results. Training has been expanded and agencies are now working together that never did before the attacks. Weaknesses that were completely unknown are being addressed. Yet, while the country is much safer today than six years ago, the United States must continue to improve current programs while utilizing all resources to ensure that systems are in place to prevent future terrorist attacks.

## Airport Security

Prior to 11 September, 2001, American airline passengers were able to travel freely throughout the United States by commercial airlines. Airport security was nearly non-existent. Americans didn't have to worry about arriving early at the airport to go through strict security checks. Americans were able to roam freely throughout the airport, hand carry items onto planes, and family members were able to accompany loved ones to the airplane. Since 11 September 2001, American airports have been mandated to increase their security procedures. Transportation Security Administration (TSA) increased their security procedures by implementing strict passenger and cargo screenings. U.S. Air Marshals began flying on all flights. Passengers were restricted to certain areas of the airport. Passengers are also restricted from hand carrying certain items on commercial airlines, and families are unauthorized to accompany loved ones to the airplane.

## Airline Security

### *Cargo Screening*

Since the terrorist attacks on 11 September, 2001, the number and types of equipment for screening cargo has grown dramatically. The use of X-ray and gamma ray machines has tripled since the attacks. All airports are required to use these types of technology to scan air cargo that accompanies passengers on aircraft. Each day more than 50,000 tons of cargo is transported by

air. According to a TSA report to Congress “While a great majority of this cargo is placed on cargo-only aircraft, 26 percent is transported in passenger planes” (Transportation Security Administration, 2006). Transporting air cargo is an important source of revenue for air carriers and our economy. Before the terrorist attacks cargo stored in the cargo bays of passenger aircraft were never inspected for hazardous materials. Post 9/11, Transportation Security Administration was mandated by the Homeland Security Committee to employ a multi-layered security system in air cargo areas. TSA has since strengthened the entire security system and introduced unpredictability. TSA now only allows known shippers to ship cargo on passenger aircraft. Canine units have been incorporated throughout the cargo areas. TSA screens all cargo with electronic explosive detection systems and they mandate that their inspectors’ conduct scheduled and unscheduled inspections on random cargo. High-risk cargo is inspected 100% before being placed on any passenger aircraft. All cargo is eligible for screening without exception or consent. By incorporating these procedures and other counter measures, TSA ensures the security of their passengers. TSA continuously evaluates possible potential enhancements to ensure cargo security. There are two major factors that hinder the inspection of cargo and the security of airline passengers. First, funding is an on going battle with the Homeland Security Committee. TSA requires additional funds for security; the Homeland Security Committee is not willing to commit to the additional funds. Second, the X-ray machines and the gamma ray machines are bulky and susceptible to environmental exposure and mechanical breakdowns. Maintenance and care for the security machines is becoming very costly.

### *Passenger Screening*

Since 11 September 2001, TSA has intensified their passenger screening. Law mandated that TSA thoroughly screen air passengers to ensure that prohibited items and undesirable passengers don't board commercial airliners. TSA screens millions of bags and passengers for contraband and other explosive devices each day. As a result of the mandate, TSA now has over 7,200 baggage screening locations at over 450 airports nationwide. TSA states in its web site that "We are most visibly present through our 43,000 trained and certified Transportation Security Officers stationed at over 450 airports across the country" (Transportation Security Administration, 2006). Due to 9/11, TSA was also directed by the Secretary of Transportation to associate with the Department of Homeland Security's Technology Research Lab for research and for using modern technology. Through rigorous research, TSA has fielded the latest sophisticated technology to screen all passengers and luggage. TSA is constantly fielding the latest products and regulations. This allows the newest technology to be implemented for both checked baggage and passengers. Technologies, such as X-ray machines, body scan machines, computer enhanced screens displays, and explosive trace detectors have helped TSA inspectors to deter violators of airport security. TSA also states in its web site "In an airport security test, between October 2001 and January 2002, TSA inspectors overlooked 65% of the knives, 25% of the guns, and 55% of the test bombs in passenger's luggage. In the same security test, smugglers were successful in smuggling makeshift bombs through TSA security 20 of 20 times" (Transportation Security Administration, 2006). TSA is working diligently to train their inspectors on a regulatory basis and supply them with the latest technology. Screening will never be perfect, but illegal items such as knives guns and bomb making materials should never escape our TSA airport security.

*U.S. Federal Air Marshals*

The U.S. Federal Air Marshals Service serves as the number one security agency in the TSA. Before 11 September, 2001, there was only 50 U.S. Air Marshals who flew on international flights only. After the terrorist's attacks in September 2001, Secretary of Transportation expanded the U.S. Federal Air Marshal program. With the directive, U.S. Federal Marshals began flying around the world and on United States flights. "As a result of the attacks, President George W. Bush ordered the rapid expansion of the Federal Air Marshal Service. Over 200,000 applications were initially received, from which several thousand qualified Federal Air Marshals were selected. Those who were hired came from a diverse background of experience including other federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies and the military" (Homeland Security, 2006). As a result of 9/11, the U.S. Federal Air Marshal Service pre-positioned twenty-one field offices in and around our nation's airports. There are several hundred of the Assistant U.S. Federal Air Marshals stationed directly at airports in the United States. There are also U.S. Federal Air Marshals attached to each of the fifty-six Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) Joint Terrorism Task Forces nationally. The U.S. Federal Air Marshals play a major role in homeland security since the terrorist's attacks. They continue to work with public and local security forces to deter security violators and to promote a safe and secure atmosphere for passengers. As of now, the U.S. Federal Air Marshals serve in various staff assignments and positions at organizations like the National Counter-terrorism Center and the National Targeting Center. U.S. Federal Air Marshals are in-bedded with local law enforcement and liaison assignments in an alert crisis and during national holidays. By directly placing U.S. Federal Air Marshals strategically throughout the United States, they are able to quickly respond to changing security

threats as they occur. U.S. Federal Air Marshals are trained to high standards and they train on a daily basis to maintain those standards. U.S. Federal Air Marshals have the highest firearms qualification requirements in law enforcement.

### Conclusion

The TSA has incorporated numerous security procedures to prevent contraband and undesirable passengers from boarding commercial airlines. Even though multiple security procedures have been incorporated, statistics and tests have proven that contraband continues to slip through security checks. TSA needs to continue to upgrade their security procedures and require their personnel to adhere to the standards set fourth by the Department of Homeland Security Committee.

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