

Aviation security

[Engineering](#), [Aviation](#)



Prior to the 9/11 attack, the US Aviation had little concern over the threat of either hijacking or terrorism. Surveys detailing the passengers' concerns in flights were more directed towards the airlines' maintenance and safety than the risk of being hijacked or being attacked by terrorists (Rosenzweig and Kochems, 2005). But after the 9/11 attack, especially with terrorists having used planes as the instruments for initiating a global anxiety over terrorism, aviation security has become an utmost priority of the Department of Homeland Security (Decker, 2005).

Increased international concern over terrorist-related aviation security heightened after the attack. This is evidenced by several complaints and questions issued immediately after 9/11. According to the Citizens' Complaint and Petition as filed with NY AG Eliot Spitzer on November 2004, New York citizens were dissatisfied with official investigations done regarding the attack. Some of the implications of the complaint include the citizens' suspicion of unsatisfactory intelligence prior to September 11 and that some government officials are responsible for the attack and are directly to blame for the tragedy.

In other words, the citizens doubt that the tragedy was a result of mere incompetence on the part of the intelligence committee but more of an act of complicity between the terrorists and some officials. Quoting from the complaint: " A majority of citizens come to suspect high crimes and treachery within their own government, but cannot find officials with enough courage, power or independence to thoroughly investigate their concerns and restore the public trust (2004). "

Moreover, the citizens are concerned that the government is deliberately hiding the real results of the investigation regarding the 9/11 attack keeping their questions from being answered and their peace of mind untended. Representative Cynthia McKinney of Georgia responded to a 9/11 briefing saying that a number of families of the 9/11 tragedy's victims share her concerns about the truth on all aspects about the 9/11 attack: " This calls for another look at the government's account of 9/11, which guides so much of what has happened since.

Mistakes of fact, intentional or not, have changed and guided America into costly wars and increased insecurity at home. They need to be addressed and scrutinized, not dismissed and used to attack those who discover or raise those (2005). " Although not stated directly such complaints imply the citizens' concern for justice and the assurance that their government could be trusted with providing them with their right to a safeenvironment.

Such actions and concerns by the citizens force the government to respond by enhancing security measures especially in aviation, and improving intelligence and investigative capabilities as demanded by the rising anxiety resulting from the tragedy. The complaint also expressed concerns over the taxing effect of " exaggerated" security measures on civil liberty but notwithstanding, most are still willing to sacrifice the said liberty in exchange for the safety that they demand to be ensured of.

In this era of terrorist threat, the citizens regard their civil liberty as second only to their safety. This proves the growing concern of the public over security with its extent emphasized by the object they are willing to exchange it for (O'Connor, 2006). In ensuring the safety of the people and

the state, one very important factor to consider is the efficiency in allocation of resources. Clearly, it would be unwise to try to protect everything from terrorist attacks because of limited resources and the asymmetric aspect of risks and consequences afforded to different assets.

Here assets refer to people, structures, places, ideas, or any possible object (or non-object) that terrorists may direct their attack to (Rosenzweig and Kochems, 2005). The Secretary of the Department of Homeland Security, Michael Chertoff, recognizes the state's limitation in resources and emphasized in one of his speeches, the need for an " objective measure of risk (Rosenzweig and Kochems, 2005). " Here is where the risk-based approach to counterterrorism comes.

In other words, prioritization is very important in ensuring the efficiency in allocation of resources. The efficiency in allocation of resources can be realized by using the risk-based approach. Risk-based Approach to counterterrorism involves the identification and analysis of risks or threats, vulnerability, and criticality. The assessment of these factors is critical in determining how to allocate resources efficiently for maximum prevention of terrorism, which is the main purpose counterterrorism (Decker, 2005).

The analysis of threats involves the identification of current assets that are most at risk to terrorist attacks, the capacity of the terrorists to attack the asset, the chance of success of the possible attack and the possible consequences if such attacks were successful (Decker, 2005). If the analysis of threats involves the risks, the analysis of vulnerabilities involves the assessment of the state's limitations in terms of resources, capabilities and assets.

The identification of possible structures which are most at risk to being attacked, the limitations of intelligence, the limitations in terms of funds, are aspects which are important in the analysis of vulnerabilities because these weaknesses, aside from being easily manipulated by terrorists to their advantage, could also cripple our forces if successfully attacked (Decker, 2005). The analysis of criticality involves the possible effect of a successful attack.

Here, the differences in consequences afforded by successful attacks are considered. It is important to consider in the analysis of criticality, the assets' functions and the degree to which a successful attack would cause damage not only to the states' functions but also to the peoples' psychological status and moral excellence (Decker, 2005). To summarize, risk is the primary consideration in the actions and decisions executed for the prevention of terrorism.

Analyzing the processes involved in the risk-based approach to counterterrorism, we can deduce that the factors influencing the "objective" value attributed to "risk" are the probability of attack, the probability of a successful attack and the probable degree of damage caused by the successful attack (Rosenzweig and Kochems, 2005). Considering the factors involved in the assessment of risk, aviation deserves to be one of those included in the list of high priority assets. The success of the 9/11 attack exemplifies the degree of risk involved in aviation.

The probability of attack is high considering the limitations in security especially when an airline is not on land, which also increases its chance of success. The damage involved includes the lives of civilians, the loss of the

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airline involved, disruption in economic activity and abstract losses such as psychological and morale discord. In response to the threat associated with aviation, TSA Administrator Kip Hawley announced changes in security procedures. These changes include more intensive screenings and a longer list of prohibited items.

Understandably, firearms, ammunition and any other explosive including fireworks are not permitted at the checkpoint and in any checked or carry-on baggage. Lighters, pocketknives, teargas and other weapons of self-defense are now prohibited at checkpoint (“TSA reminds passengers to:...”, 2006). A more intensive detection procedure for greater threats such as explosives and guns is now implemented. One security tactic implemented in aviation is that of unpredictability. This is called the layered-screening approach. Various random methods are now used to screen passengers.

According to Hawley, it is important that the aviation security is equipped with the “weapon of uncertainty” so as not to let terrorists gain the advantage of knowledge to easily maneuver situations for the accomplishment of their terrorist plans. Also, according to Hawley, this tactic will help the security team in focusing endeavors to preventing individuals from gaining access to the object of their harmful intent (“TSA Unveils Enhanced Security Screening Procedures and Changes to the Prohibited Items List”, 2005). Before, aviation security measures include only passing through metal detectors and the screening of baggage.

The new security measure now includes additional screenings such as screening of shoes and clothes for explosives, more extensive inspections of baggage and the passenger himself. All these additional measures are done

randomly in accordance with the layered screening approach (“TSA Unveils Enhanced Security Screening Procedures and Changes to the Prohibited Items List”, 2005). Secure Flight is a program specially designed for the enhancement of aviation security, specifically targeted to the prevention of terrorist attacks.

This program involves the screening of passengers against a terrorist watch list provided by the FBI: an enhanced screening process, identity authentication process, checking of a passenger name against a database and an appeals process for misidentified passengers (Elias, 2005). It is developed to displace the Computer Assisted Prescreening System. The reliability of the program has been questioned because of possible damage to civil liberties, as names are not always unique (Singel, 2004).

Although the detection of terrorist-passengers is essential in ensuring safety, the program’s imperviousness to hackers is questionable. Just recently, the Associated Press reported the suspension of the program because of this issue. Still, Hawley recognizes that the program is essential to aviation security (“Secure Flight”, 2006). In any case, the main problems associated with security checks involve damages to civil liberties and privacy. Programs like Secure Flight, CAPPs and Clear, operated by a private company, Verified Identity Pass, Inc. are continually being suspended due to issues concerning privacy.

In a report done by the Department of Homeland Security, the Electronic Privacy Information Center (EPIC), EPIC impels the TSA to suspend all private programs including Clear until the concerns over the implications of the programs on privacy are resolved, especially with the use of databases and <https://assignbuster.com/aviation-security/>

watch lists. Also, EPIC impels the suspension of the programs until regulations are polished to comply with laws on Privacy (“Comments on the Electronic Privacy Information Center”, 2005). PDD 39 or the US Counterterrorism Policy formally states the US’ position regarding terrorism.

It outlines the country’s purposes and procedures in implementing counterterrorism strategies. It treats all aspects of terrorism whether it is direct or indirect participation both as a crime and a threat to the national security. In this regard, the US Policy on counterterrorism vows to apply all means to fight terrorism (Clinton, 1995). Specifically, the US counterterrorism policy aims to reduce the state’s vulnerabilities against possible threats, deter terrorism, enhance facilities, prevent entrance of weapons of mass destruction and further lead agency responsibilities.

The implementation of such tasks is delegated to specific departments. In the case of aviation, it is the TSA, part of the Department of Homeland Security that is tasked in ensuring the safety of flight passengers as well as the transportation of cargo. In the event of increased threats of terrorism, the TSA’s security measures as outlined in the previous paragraphs, have been satisfactory in providing the citizens security (“Aviation Security: Efforts to measure...”, 2003). For instance, the more intensive screening done to passengers is consistent to the US counterterrorism policies.

One, it prevents the entrance of terrorists and thus their inducing terror to the citizens inside national boundaries. Also, the intensive screening and enhanced detection capacities prevent the entrance of weapons of mass destruction, reducing the risks such weapons afford the citizens and other assets of the nation. Specifically, the TSA policy involved in the prevention of

weapons of mass destruction is the stricter monitoring of freight, as well as the passengers' baggage (“ Airport Passenger Screening:...”, 2003).

Other TSA policies that are consistent with the US counterterrorism policy is its enhanced list of prohibited items. Now that pocketknives, teargas and even lighters are prohibited at checkpoint, the probability of hijacking is reduced. Efforts like training screeners also deter terrorism by decreasing the likelihood of small detection errors that could have caused heavy damage to the nation. Proposals like the implementation of CAPP and Secure flight, although plagued by criticisms (Singel, 2004), are also aimed to comply with the US Counterterrorism policies.

Both of which could be placed under the “ enhancing counterterrorism capabilities” aspect of the US counterterrorism policies. Counterterrorism measures, aside from its mission being to combat terrorism, are done to give the citizens a perception of safety with its heightened efforts to ensure their security. This is very evident in the security measures implemented in airports where passengers are doubly screened, to the dismay of those with terrorist purposes and those shouting for their civil liberties.

Given the extra efforts by the Department of Homeland Security to grant the citizens their right to safety, the citizens were supposed to feel extra safe. This is not the case. Extra efforts to provide the citizens the safety they deserve only confirms the degree of danger they perceive to be in to. To add to this, the media overly emphasize the risk posed by terrorism fueling with publicity-derived strength.

If the government's efforts are directed towards giving the citizens security or at least a perception of it, the terrorists, being what they are, aim to instill fear and terror, if not physically with bombs, at least psychologically. It appears that the media and the perpetrators of terror are living symbiotically: the media are giving the terrorists its required publicity to instill terror in the minds of the people and the terrorists provide the media with good stories to tell.

In addition, it is the media which gives so much coverage to the extra counterterrorist efforts given by the government which reflects not only the strengths but also its weaknesses. The very idea that the efforts of the government to provide the citizens with security are with loopholes has much more effect in the people's minds even if its strengths outweighs the weaknesses. The result is the realization of terrorist goals which is to instill fear and terror in every possible way as well as influence the media audience with distrust in the government's security efforts (Bowdish, 2006).

The internet seems to provide the terrorists with one of the best means to disseminate fear, taking advantage of the anonymity and its fast-paced nature. Lots of websites in the internet are now being maintained, unbeknownst to the civilians, by terrorists (Glass, 2001). This medium is especially useful in speedy dissemination of visuals and ideas that instill fear. Other methods include: manipulating reports by promoting contrived neutrality, indirectly aimed at making civilians question any actions done by the state, its policies, security measures and its legitimacy.

Some civilians, with their good intention of fighting for freedom are unknowingly influenced by propaganda tactically planned by terrorists

(Bowdish, 2006). They are unknowing victims of terrorist machinations. With the government's passing of new policies aimed at securing the people, specifically, the layered screening done in airports, and the new and unpredictable methods strategically imposed to prevent easy entrance of terrorists in the US, the government has satisfactorily defended the state and most importantly its citizens from terrorism.

Unfortunately, the government could only do so with the physical aspect of terrorism. Information can easily be manipulated and with very minimal censorship through the media and from this terrorist weapon, the government can do very little to protect the citizens. The government is not in control of the information disseminated in the media, nor do they have the power to choose which information to be withheld and which information to be broadcasted.

In addition, it would not be unwise to control the media as this would only add to the psychological effect that the terrorists, with the help of the media, are producing (Bowdish, 2006). Counterterrorism methods employed today are very much similar to the methods employed in the 1980's during the Drug War when in 1984; President Ronald Reagan militarized the drug war starting from urine testing and forfeiture of properties towards a decreased threshold of arrest with only hearsay evidence and the use of surveillance systems ("Drug War", 2004).

Similar to the counterterrorism methods expounded in the revised US Patriot Act, the government officials have expanded powers over gathering information which involves, like that in the Drug War, lower threshold of evidence needed for the arrest of suspected individuals, and forfeiture of

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properties of those suspected to be working for terrorists. Like in the Drug War, the efforts and procedures employed in combating terrorism are not fully supported by the citizens.

Both in the 1980s drug war and today's counterterrorism involve the citizens' derision over the loss of their civil liberty and their petition for human rights ("Drug War", 2004). In both events, there is an increase in government spending, in 1980's, to contain drug use and at present, to combat terrorism and increase national security. During the drug war, campaigns for and against the legalization of marijuana had spread in all mediums of communication: radio, newspaper and television. In today's war against terrorism, the internet has been added to the list of mediums used in campaigns.

Like today's war against terrorism, the efforts in reducing drug use in the 1980s seemed to be futile. Despite the government's efforts in preventing increase in drug use through the passage of laws and implementation of stricter penalties, the rate of drug abuse had not changed significantly. Today's war on terrorism involves the same seemingly futile efforts. Terrorists, being as they are, would not be easily deterred by any law or security measure (Bowdish, 2006). They would always try to find means to gain access to whatever vulnerability the nation may have and actuate their terrorist plans.

But still, even with this seeming futility, the government is supposed to act towards the betterment of the society and that betterment does not include any hazard and that includes both drugs and terrorism. References "Airport Passenger Screening: Preliminary Observations on Progress Made and <https://assignbuster.com/aviation-security/>

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