



Testimony

Transportation Security Administration's Efforts to Advance Risk-Based Security: Stakeholder Perspectives

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before the
United States House of Representatives
Committee on Homeland Security
Subcommittee on Transportation Security

APRIL 11, 2013

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Richmond and Members of the Subcommittee, my name is Sharon Pinkerton, and I am senior vice president of Legislative and Regulatory Policy for Airlines for America, the trade association for the leading U.S. airlines. Today, A4A members and their affiliates transport more than 90 percent of all U.S. airline passenger and cargo traffic.

Overview

We share a common goal with the TSA: the safety and security of our passengers and employees is our single highest priority. As such, we have been pleased to work cooperatively with the TSA on programs including Know Crewmember and TSA Precheck. As all of you who travel frequently know well: effective security and the efficient movement of passengers and cargo, are not mutually exclusive goals. A risk-based approach to security is an indispensable tool in achieving effective security in a way that facilitates air commerce.

Such an approach needs to accomplish three principal goals:

- Enhance security overall;
- Streamline passenger screening; and
- Expedite the movement of goods.

Prudent TSA policies, investment and deployment of resources can make aviation security both more effective and more efficient. Those outcomes, in turn, enhance travel and trade, which benefits the customers and communities that airlines serve as well as our nation's economy.

The Case for Risk-Based Security

A risk-based approach recognizes that "one size fits all" security is no longer the optimum response to threats. It reflects the realization that potent intelligence resources and extensive screening experience produce far more sophisticated security assessments than in the past. Risk-based programs consequently play to our government's strengths in this area.

Risk-based, intelligence-driven analysis has been a widely accepted approach to aviation security for some time. The 9/11 Commission, for example, in 2004 called for thorough, risk-based analysis in evaluating aviation-security issues.¹ This, however, is not a standalone solution; it is part of the multi-layered approach to security that TSA has emphasized.

TSA's Pre✓™ and Known Crewmember programs, and Customs and Border Protection's Global Entry program represent the entry into the security mainstream of known traveler programs. They do not, I want to emphasize, represent the full maturation of those programs. Important work remains for each of them. Moreover, these programs should be pursued recognizing the need timely coordination and communication with stakeholders.

The Need to Expand Risk-Based Security

The known passenger programs – Pre✓™ and Global Entry – should be expanded to realize their full potential. This will allow limited resources to be focused on unknown and elevated-threat passengers. That is a goal that TSA shares. Expansion of Pre✓™ should not be limited to customers who are members of airline frequent-flyer programs – which is a point that we have made before – or who have signed-up for Global Entry. Broader-based recruitment of qualifying passengers is needed and we believe that TSA should provide the leadership for that effort. Finally, in collaboration with TSA and the representatives of flight-deck and cabin crewmembers, we continue to enlarge the Known Crewmember program.

We also support TSA's Managed Inclusion pilot program. It enables TSA to assess passengers in the screening line and divert passengers deemed lower risk to expedited screening procedures.

With respect to cargo security measures, passenger airlines have met the 9/11 Commission Recommendations Act requirement to screen 100 percent of air cargo departing U.S. airports. In addition, with TSA's assistance we have met the screening requirement for international inbound cargo.

The growing reliance on risk-based aviation security in the United States and elsewhere highlights the desirability of exploring the mutual recognition of security programs. We do not suggest that U.S. authorities aim for universal recognition of such programs. We believe, however, that in a limited number of instances the congruence of the programs may justify mutual recognition. This could benefit regulators, as well as passengers and shippers.

The TSA Security Passenger Tax Should Not Be Increased

As the TSA is able to improve its efficiency through risk-based screening program, we see no need for additional tax funding at this time. It is simply common sense: if the TSA can more people to risk-based screening, it should need fewer resources, not more, and as such we are strongly opposed to a provision in the Senate-passed budget resolution that would immediately double and eventually triple the TSA security passenger tax. Airlines, passengers and shippers collectively paid a record \$2.3 billion in TSA taxes and fees last year. Indeed, they already pay more than their fair share of federal aviation taxes.

TSA's budget has increased 18 percent since 2007 while the number of passengers carried by U.S. airlines fell 4 percent in that period. We believe there are opportunities to achieve greater efficiencies at TSA – without greater taxes. We look forward to working further with TSA and the Administration to expand the risk-based security measures that the Subcommittee is reviewing today. That is the appropriate way to handle TSA's operating costs

¹ In its final report, the Commission stated:

“The U.S. government should identify and evaluate the transportation assets that need to be protected, set risk-based priorities for defending them, [and] select the most practical and cost-effective ways of doing so...” *Final Report of the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States*, at 391 (2004).

Conclusion

Risk-based aviation security has proven its worth. But more can be accomplished with it. We appreciate the Subcommittee's continuing interest in assuring that risk-based security fulfills its promise.